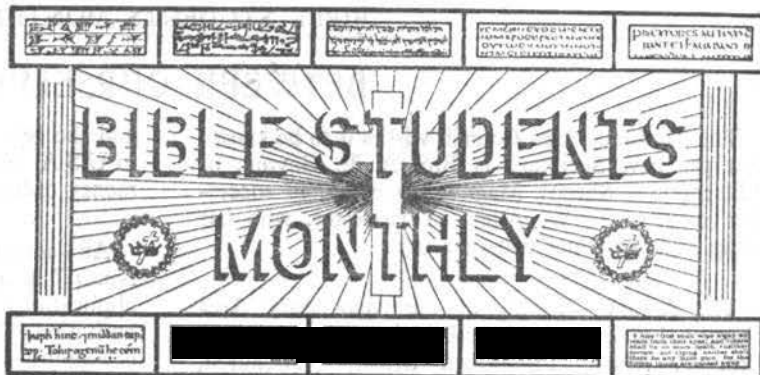




Thou, therefore, endure
hardness as a good
soldier of Jesus Christ.



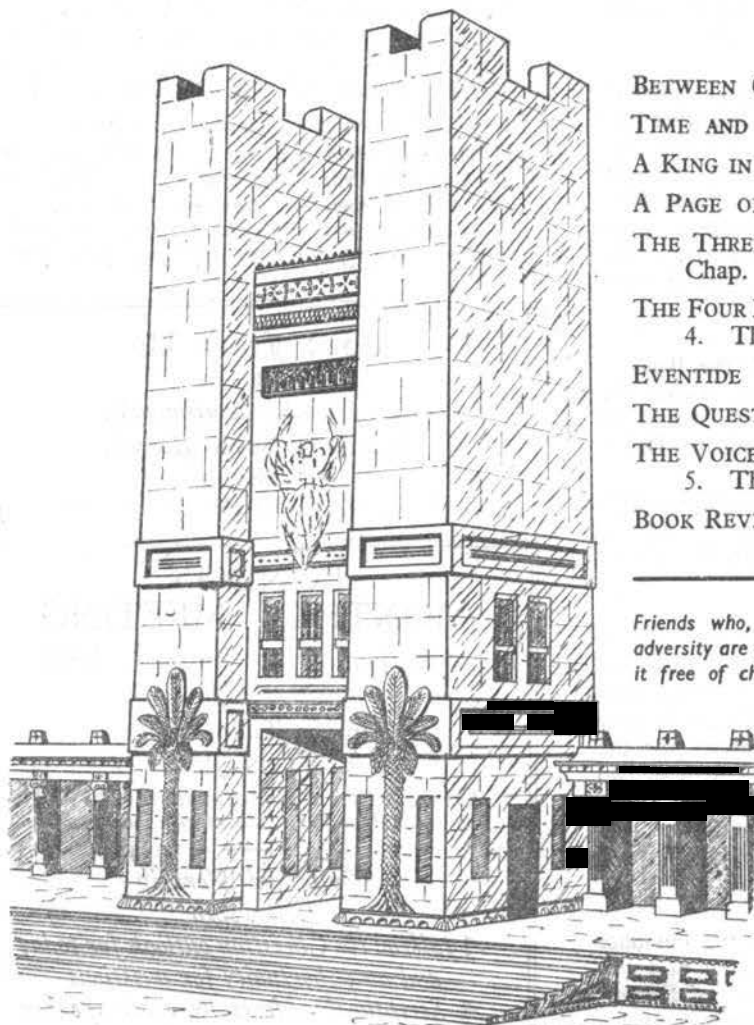
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JANUARY, 1950

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*Friends who, through old age, infirmity or other
adversity are unable to pay for this journal may have
it free of charge upon request, renewed annually.*



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

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BETWEEN OURSELVES

The Midlands Area Council wishes it to be known that the new Secretary is Bro. A. E. Gayton, of "Beirnfels", Sheepy Magna, Nuneaton, in succession to Bro. T. W. Allen, of Leicester, who has completed the usual two-year term.

* * *

The Annual Meeting of the Manchester Area Council has been held and it is announced that Bro. F. Musk, 14, South Street, Newchurch, Rossendale, Lancs, has been re-elected Secretary. The year's programme of activity is now being planned and friends wishing to co-operate or to share in the arrangements to be made are requested to communicate with Bro. Musk immediately.

* * *

The attention of our American and Canadian readers is drawn to the fact that following the devaluation of the British £, the annual subscription to the "Monthly" in these countries will now be one dollar instead of \$1.50 as heretofore. Remittances should be sent preferably in the form of dollar notes, less preferably by money order, but not by bank check; the cost of collection of these latter is considerable.

* * *

Communications in connection with the Benevolent Fund (for relieving needy friends within the confines of Great Britain and Ireland) should be sent to Bro. E. Allbon, 20, Sunnymede Drive, Ilford, Essex.

Communications in connection with the German Relief Fund, and gifts of food or clothing for the same, should go to Bro. H. E. Nadal, 35, Palace Gardens, Buckhurst Hill, Essex.

* * *

Will organisers of conventions and others interested please note that the supply of hymnals available on loan for use at such gatherings, formerly cared for by Bro. G. A. Ford of Luton, is now held at Welling, and that all applications for the use of same should be addressed here. At least two weeks' notice must be given, stating quantity of hymnals required. It will be appreciated if borrowers will defray cost of carriage both ways, returning books promptly after use.

* * *

It is with considerable pleasure that we announce the publication, by our Australian brethren, of a new edition of the well-known work "Poems of Dawn." This book has been in good demand for many years and its appeal seems never to diminish. We now have a consignment of "Poems of Dawn" in stock here and can fill all orders by return. The book is, like the last edition, cloth-bound and reneo-printed,

and the price is 7/6 post free (one dollar to friends in U.S.A. and Canada—remittance by dollar note or money order, please).

* * *

An adequate supply of "Millennial Message No. 3" is again available for free distribution, and applications for quantities may be made without hesitation. Please state how many are required and can usefully be distributed.

"It means so much to me, that, when He came,
They called Him 'Jesus!' 'Tis a gripping name
That takes a saving hold on one like me,
Who lifts new-visioned eyes that now would see
All false lights fade in presence of the true—
WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU?"

"It means so much to me, in crisis hours
When right seems baffled by opposing powers
To hear His strong voice call, 'Be of good cheer,
For I have overcome this world of fear.
Here's refuge in My Word—My Word is true!'—
WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU?"

Gone from Us

Sister Pender (Portsmouth).

Brother H. Spain (Harvel).

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

LONDON MONTHLY MEETING

Saturday, 21st January, 1950
6.30—8.30 p.m.

In the Tudor Hall
CAXTON HALL

Caxton Street, Westminster, S.W.1
5 mins. St. James Park Station and Victoria Street

Praise and Worship
Fellowship

A talk on the Christian outlook for today
and an opportunity for questions
A Scriptural address by guest speaker

Chairman: Bro. A. O. Hudson.

Speakers: Bro. A. J. Lodge.

Bro. T. Holmes.

TIME AND JUDGMENT

"Because to every purpose there is time and judgment, therefore the misery of man is great upon him." (Eccl. 8. 6.)

Men can neither judge their times nor time their judgments; God can do both. It is because He can do so that those who believe in God's fixed intention to lead mankind into a life of everlasting peace can rejoice and be exceeding glad at a time when the misery of man is so great upon him that it almost invariably shows itself plainly in his face. Man is notoriously incapable in his handling both of time and judgment. He has been endowed with a brain of so complex a structure, and mental and intellectual faculties of so high an order, that God can say to him, as He did once through the prophet Isaiah, "Come, let us reason together". At any rate, those faculties are more than sufficient for the intelligent planning of human life on earth so that all may take their fill of earth's bounty and live in the full and unrestrained acceptance and enjoyment of all that God has provided for their happiness. But man's judgment is so much at fault that he finds himself ploughing back into the land the food he has grown, instead of consuming it; throwing back into the sea the fish he has caught, instead of eating that; going to war to preserve his freedom but accepting in order to do so a bondage from which he finds he cannot escape when the war is over, and in a hundred ways demonstrating to the observer's satisfaction if not his own that the misery that is great upon him is very largely his own fault. The continued degeneration of the human race in consequence of its unrestrained use—or abuse—of its own powers of judgment is equalled only by the progressive deterioration and despoiling of this planet on which it lives, and that is another consequence of the same cause.

Neither has man made any better use of time. Historical records go back five thousand years. Bible history goes farther—probably to seven or eight thousand years. The Bible is more candid about the results than is ordinary history, but the consequences to-day are getting plain enough for all to see. Throughout this long span of man's time, man has succeeded in doing nothing except make tolerably certain that his time has about come to an end, and that if anything is to follow at all it must be God's time. Men have had plenty of opportunity to try out their judgment on how the world ought to be run and society conducted, and all they

have to show for the outcome is that the misery of man is great upon him. The only apparent fruitage of man's experiment with time appears to be that, unless God intervenes, this twentieth century will see the end of the experiment, and time, together with man, and so far as man is concerned, be no more.

But Solomon was not thinking about human manifestations and use of time and judgment when he uttered his famous dictum. He was thinking of time and judgment of a higher order, of that associated with God. Solomon knew, what so many many to-day do not know, that the centre of all things both in space and time is God, and that whatever is, is by His permission if not of His direct interposition. No one who has any real understanding of the character of God would accredit Him with responsibility for the entrance of sin and evil into the world, or suggest other than that God hates evil with all the vehemence of His Divine purity; that same understanding should guarantee an appreciation that the fact that evil is still with us after these many thousands of years does not by any means indicate that God has lost either interest or control. The whole point is that God is bringing two great influences to bear upon mankind. The one is time, and the other judgment. When both have done their work God will have achieved His great intention, an intention that has never altered, and man will have achieved his destiny. And if one should cavil at the suffering experienced by man while the process is being worked out, it may very reasonably be asked—*what about God?* Is He not affected also? Man has at most seventy or eighty years of life in which to experience his greatness of misery; God has been watching the unbelief, the perversity, the wickedness of man, the oppression, the injustice, the devilry, for a hundred times as long. And who of mankind can hope to understand the grief of the One who created this fair earth a garden and placed upon it a creature made in His own image and likeness, compelled then to watch His creation reduced to a shambles and His creature transformed into the image and likeness of the Devil? For full five thousand years the love of God was held in leash until His judgment decreed the time ripe to intervene in human affairs by sending His Son to show mankind the way out. Not until then was the "fulness of time"; not until then had the

development of mankind progressed to that point at which the message could do its work; not until then could He inspire the sublime words "*God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life*"!

Men rejected him; their judgment at fault again. "*Ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of Life.*" Time had not run its full course; men in general were not yet ready to listen to the voice that spoke from heaven. Judgment came upon that generation but still they did not repent. For two thousand years longer man has set his face determinedly away from God; and still is his misery great upon him.

But the end of even the longest day comes at last, and all the signs now are that the time of man's dominion has nearly expired; God is about to take over. The world is very evidently entering into judgment; the imminent collapse of the present world order will affect all nations and races of men on the face of the earth, for all now are dependent one upon another. The collapse is due to the selfishness and greed of men and their refusal to abide by the standards and laws of God; it is therefore the judgment of God upon them even although it is at the same time the natural and inevitable sequel to their own wrongful course. But when it is over men will be ready to listen to God; they will have to, for there will be no other in a position to speak with any confidence or authority. So time and judgment come to their climax together and God is able at last to talk to mankind with some prospect of being heard.

Now this is just for what the disciples of Christ have been waiting for hundreds of years. It is foretold that "the saints shall judge the world". The sublime promise given through Isaiah was that the consecrated people of the Lord would be employed in opening the blind eyes, bringing out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house. The net result of their ministrations would be that every man should sit under his own vine and fig tree, and none make them afraid. The prospect of so desirable a consummation to the message and work of Christianity is of itself so attractive that the danger is—we forget there is something to be done first.

That something is the training and the qualifying of the teachers and leaders.

One reason that time and judgment has had to delay the introduction of this long hoped for future Age of universal wellbeing has been that God, in His inscrutable wisdom, decreed that the teachers and leaders of men in that Age must themselves have been drawn from the ranks of men, and must be

trained and fitted for their future work by the manner in which they make use of life's experiences now, and the knowledge of human frailty and sin that they gain now. Until the teachers are thus qualified God is not ready to make a start. Time and judgment, therefore, is operative in a special sense towards the disciples of Christ at this day and hour. Time, because God is working to a time-table and the opportunity to join with Him in the work of restoring mankind to righteousness must eventually close, and judgment, because the calling to which we are called is a serious and important one and there must be a decision at the end as to whether we are really fitted for the duties to be required of us. In the parable there were many who said "*Lord, lord, in thy name have we done many wonderful works . . . we have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets*" but He has to say, nevertheless, "*I never knew you; depart from me*". Whatever they may ultimately become fitted for, they have not become fitted for the work of administering the affairs of the Kingdom of Christ in the Millennial Age.

A very natural but a very tragic mistake on the part of those who would "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth" even to association with Him in the conduct of Millennial affairs is the conclusion that a life of extreme piety and much acquiring of Christian doctrinal knowledge, together with considerable withdrawal from contact with the world and its affairs, is the life to which God is calling. If the Lord should be looking for inmates to staff a celestial monastery in the hereafter there might be something in the suggestion, but He is not. He is looking for workers, for men and women who will be able to go out into the Millennial highways and byways and bring the lost and dying to the warmth and light of Christ's fold. He is looking for those who will be like the Lord Himself, merciful and sympathetic administrators; merciful and sympathetic, because they have learned mercy and sympathy in their experiences with their fellow-men in life before. So that while piety is very necessary, and knowledge very useful, in the formation of that mature Christian character without which no one will make his "calling and election sure", it must be the piety and the knowledge which is acquired in conjunction with the world and with some very first hand knowledge of its problems. The religion which will at the end be stamped with the hall-mark of Divine approval will be that which was branded by the Lord's own half brother, James, as "true religion and undefiled before God", the religion that not only keeps its professor unspotted from the world but also visits the fatherless and widows in their affliction. On the memorable day when Jesus began his life's work by preaching in the

synagogue at Nazareth He took the book of the prophet Isaiah and read these words "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised*". And for ever after that day He interpreted that commission in terms of going about doing good—preaching the gospel of the kingdom, yes, but at the same time accompanying that preaching by acts of goodness and benevolence, so that little children ran toward him and the afflicted and sorrowing brought their troubles to Him. That is the example we are bidden to follow, and although it is not within our power to work the miracles that He worked, it is by all means well within our power to manifest His spirit of kindness and benevolence toward all who are in affliction and sorrow, and do what we can to lighten the weariness of the way for those who begin to find life well nigh intolerable. There are plenty such

now, and there are going to be plenty more in the very near future. "*Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren*" says the king at the last "*ye have done it unto me!*" That parable relates to humankind in the next age, but the principle is equally applicable to us in this Age and day. The sincerity of our desire to help and lead mankind into the way of peace in the Age when we have all power is attested by the degree to which we try to do it in this Age, when we have little or no power. Until the fulness of time has come the misery of man must remain great upon him. Until the judgment of God upon a dying world order has been executed the misery of man must remain great upon him. But while these two factors continue to hinder the emergence of mankind into the life and light of the Millennial kingdom there is much that we can do to alleviate the lot of some, if only a few, of earth's children, and so demonstrate that we have indeed partaken of the spirit of our Father which is in heaven.

A King in Righteousness

*A study in the Millennial
Visions of Isaiah*

Isaiah, the statesman-prophet, lived in the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah and Manasseh, five successive kings of Judah; his prophetic ministry covered a term of more than sixty years. A priest by descent and legal right, he was a close student of the political developments of his day and a constant adviser to the royal court—especially to Ahaz and Hezekiah. The first thirty-five chapters of his prophecy record his utterances during the first thirty years or so of his ministry, up to the early years of Hezekiah. They comprise prophetic glimpses of the order of things in the Millennial Age set against the background of the evils of his own day. His understanding of the virtues and vices of kings, priests and peoples, and the principles upon which God will act to accomplish His purposes with them, fitted him very specially to be the prophet of the Millennial Age. More than anything else, therefore, his prophecies enshrine in symbol the principles that will govern that Age.

* * *

The theme of Isaiah's message in chapters 30 and 32 is kingship. This resolute, upstanding man of God had much experience of kings; he spent his

life more or less in and out of the royal presence in the palace at Jerusalem, and he was by no means without knowledge of the kings of nations round about. Judah at this time was a flourishing state; its boundaries were extended almost as far as they had been in the days of Solomon, its armies were a power not to be ignored, and it was able to play off its two powerful neighbours, Assyria and Egypt, the one against the other in the best diplomatic tradition. A new power, Babylon, was coming into prominence—rather, an ancient power that had been eclipsed by Assyria for several centuries and was now coming into its own again—and Judah was flirting with that power too. Isaiah, the far-sighted and astute statesman, warned the kings of Judah, one after another, of the risks they ran, but his warnings were very usually ignored and during his own life-time the nation came perilously near to disaster, being saved only by Divine intervention in the destruction of Sennacherib's host; and a century or so after his death it did suffer the inevitable consequence of its political mistakes and was taken captive into Babylon.

But Isaiah also knew of another king, one who would, in time to come, reign in righteousness and bring peace and prosperity to the people. He knew that it would not be in his own time; like Abraham of old, he had to look forward into the then far

distant future, but look forward he did, and, again like Abraham, he "rejoiced to see" that day, "and was glad". So, when the prophetic power was strong upon him, he thought first upon the kings he knew in his own experience, their weakness and their folly, and warned his hearers of the ruin that must surely come; then as the vision of the present dissolved into that of the future his mind took a great bound forward into the coming Age, and he told of the better King who would accomplish all the good for humanity that kings ought to accomplish now, but which the kings that men set up, or suffer to take the dominion, have never and will never accomplish.

The thirtieth chapter opens with a message of condemnation upon Israel for seeking alliance with Egypt instead of trusting in the Lord their God for protection from the menace of Assyria. "*Woe to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of me . . . that walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt.*" "*Woe to them that go down into Egypt for help . . . but they look not to the Holy One of Israel*" (ch. 30. 1-2. ch. 31. 1). Israel had been delivered from this same Egypt seven centuries previously; now of their own volition they were becoming entangled with its fortunes again.

Not for nothing has Egypt been accepted as a symbol of the world. Many a time since the days of Isaiah have those who should have trusted in God chosen instead to entangle themselves with worldly policies and methods and alliances; the result has always been what it was to Israel in that far-off day—disastrous. Now in our own day the same determination is manifest in the world's counsels and councils. "*There is no God*" is in all their thoughts" is a true quotation when applied to the great men of the earth to-day. It is not so much that they do not believe in the existence of God; many of them are quite sincere in the profession of some orthodox form of the Christian faith. But they are persuaded that salvation can only come by the strong right arm of human power—reasoning and agreement, if possible, and if that fails, then by force. Under no circumstances will they risk either the "loss of face" or the—to them—appearance of weakness involved in casting their dependence upon God. Israel was like that too, here in this thirtieth chapter of Isaiah, and onward until faced with a crisis, when Egypt had manifestly failed to deliver, and Sennacherib's army stood before the gates of Jerusalem. . . .

But that great deliverance was still future. Here Isaiah is pronouncing Divine judgment upon this

unbelieving generation and its king. "*Go, write it before them . . . in a book, that it may be for the time to come . . . that this is a rebellious people . . . that will not hear the word of the Lord*" (vs. 8-9). From that he goes on to declare the utter destruction that will inevitably come, and that did in fact come in the days of Nebuchadnezzar. Even in this extreme the Father again appeals to His erring children (vs. 15). "*For thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, 'In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength'*"; and Isaiah adds, sadly but sternly, "*and ye would not. But ye said 'No; for we will flee upon horses' . . .*". So he passes sentence; they shall indeed flee, and be broken, and be scattered, until none be left in the land.

Now although this is the pass to which Judah's kings have brought their subjects, and the people have been willing to have it so, God is by no means prepared to let matters rest there. True, the people must endure the judgment they have brought upon themselves. The weakness of Egypt will be made manifest; the Assyrian power in their own day, and the Babylonian power in their children's day, must stalk through the land, burning, destroying and slaying, but God has a plan that extends beyond all this, and will yet reach out for their deliverance. So, at this point, Isaiah begins to see into the future. What he beholds is dim and shadowy at first, and he speaks only in general terms; later on in the thirty-second chapter, he perceives more distinctly and speaks more clearly. But even now he apprehends the promise of deliverance. The Lord will wait "*that He may be gracious unto you . . . for the Lord is a God of judgment; blessed are all they that wait for him. For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem; thou shalt weep no more; he will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear it he shall answer thee*" (vs. 18-19).

Here again the one unalterable, indispensable principle is reiterated. The people have entered into the bitterness and retribution for their fault; they have spurned the word of the Lord and rejected His prophet, and have reaped the consequences. But there is to be another opportunity for them; for God is a God of a second chance and a third chance and as many chances as may be necessary to teach His wandering ones their lesson, always provided that the proffered further chance is based upon some real possibility, some reasonable hope, that it will bring the wanderer somewhere nearer to God. So, once again, Israel may return and be delivered, *if they believe*, and trust no longer in Egypt. "*He will be very gracious unto thee at the*

voice of thy cry"; there must be the cry of faith and repentance before He can hear, and hearing, answer with His graciousness.

From that time forward, says Isaiah, peace and security will return. ". . . the increase of the earth . . . shall be fat and plenteous; in that day shall thy cattle feed in large pastures" (vs. 23). The images of gold and silver will be cast away and the curse of idolatry lifted from the land (vs. 22). The true and sincere worship of God and absolute trust in Him will go hand in hand with a restored and luxuriant earth that will meet man's every need.

There will be discipline. In this coming golden age, man, who is still imperfect and weak, will need strict parental care and training before he can be trusted with full liberty in life. The old depraved tastes and desires will shout to have their way and they must be restrained. The old impulses of selfishness and greed, mayhap even of hate and strife, will struggle for expression; and they must not be allowed to have free rein. There will be swift and certain retribution for every attempt to do evil. All of these disabilities will still afflict humanity, albeit in diminishing degree as the Age proceeds in its work of reconciliation, but there will be teachers at work, teachers who are no longer despised and rejected, but standing before men in the full light of day. "Though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction" as He must do, even in the day of light and gladness, cries Isaiah (vs. 20) "yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers; and thine ears shall hear a word behind thee saying, 'This is the way, walk ye in it' when ye turn to the right hand or to the left". That is the distinguishing characteristic of the Millennial Age; the presence of experienced and qualified teachers ever on the alert to perceive the slightest deviation from the path of true rectitude and uprightness, and to guide the traveller with unerring wisdom into the ways of peace.

Who are these teachers? They are, first, the faithful consecrated Christian disciples of this present Age, of this period between Pentecost and now, and, second, the "Ancient Worthies", faithful men of previous ages, before Pentecost. Both companies alike, by reason of their past lives' experiences with man and his sinfulness, and of God and His power in their own lives, will be able to turn men from the power of sin to serve the living God. These will be the sure teachers of mankind "in that day".

Thus it is that in the words of verse 26, the "light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the

light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of His people . . .". In Scripture symbolism the sun is often put to represent the light of the Gospel, and the moon that of the Law of Sinai, which preceded the Gospel and yet is only truly illuminated by the Gospel. So, in that day, the light of those teachers who were of the days of the Law, and the light of these teachers who are of the days of the Gospel, will together shine resplendently "as the light of seven days" upon men being healed. If it is true that the history of mankind on earth can be said to cover seven days, seven prophetic periods of time, and if it is true—as we know it is true—that each of those historic "days" will contribute its share of "teachers", either earthly or heavenly teachers, to the work of the Millennial Day, then surely it may be said with truth, that the light of the moon and the sun will then be as the light of seven days; the accumulated wisdom and experience of the seven ages of human history will be laid under tribute in the teaching and training of all men in the Millennial Age.

These few fragments are fugitive glimpses of Millennial conditions, stray gleams of light, shooting as it were across the dark background of Isaiah's present message of reproof and condemnation; the full glory of his vision has yet to come. There is a further message to be given first, a further aspect of the judgment that must precede the blessing. Israel's chastisement has been foreseen and described, and that of mankind in general under the figure of Israel, and there is no concealment of the fact that the judgment is directly in consequence of unfaithfulness and unbelief. But what of the agent of judgment, the scourge of God ready to His hand for the purpose? What of the Assyrians who were so ready to ravage Judah and to carry out the Divine work of retribution? Are they themselves without guilt, and has the Lord no account to settle with them? By no means are they without guilt; and a very heavy account the Lord does have to settle with them. Even though they have, unwittingly, played a part in the execution of the Divine purpose, their own personal responsibility for the evil they have done remains; they did not undertake the invasion and ravaging of Judah from any consciousness of effecting God's purpose or any desire to do Him service. They entered the land completely and entirely from motives of greed and hate and lust and every other vicious attribute. They too were alien from God and fighting against Him, and they too must enter into judgment, before in their turn they can stand before the Great White Throne and hear the terms of life, and turn to find those same teachers waiting to teach them also. So Isaiah has a word for the Assyrians, a word of fierce denuncia-

tion and ruthless determination. In reading that message let us not forget that those Assyrians pictured the forces of this world in this, the end of the old Age, that fight against the incoming Kingdom of Christ, that indeed stand as it were between us and the Kingdom. Every institution, every organised power, whether financial, political or religious, that sets itself up as instead of God, and leaves God out of its counsels, and suppresses the things of God in its domain, is of those to whom the prophet addresses these words; and the judgment is certain, and the end thereof sure.

"The name of the Lord cometh from far, burning with His anger . . . His lips are full of indignation, and His tongue as a devouring fire; and His breath as an overflowing stream . . . and the Lord shall cause His glorious voice to be heard, and shall show the lighting down of His arm . . . with the flame of a devouring fire, and tempest, and hailstones. For through the voice of the Lord shall the Assyrian be beaten down . . ." (vs. 27-33).

Here it is that the prophet's understanding widens immeasurably and his field of vision takes in the broad sweep of colour that is the Millennial Age. The strife and confusion and shouting, the darkness and tempest and earthquake, of that Armageddon which marks the time of judgment humanity has brought upon itself at this end of the present Age dissolves and metamorphoses into the radiant glory of a great Throne set up upon earth, and the resplendent figure of a King, a king such as earth has never before known. Here it is that Isaiah embarks upon a detailed description of the kingship of the Millennial Age, of the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth. Raising his eyes to drink their full of the resplendent scene, he cries out in tones of exultation. "Behold," he cries, "Behold, a King shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment" (ch. 32. 1). The King is Jesus Christ, returned to earth in the glory of His Second Advent, in the exercise of that power which He could have wielded at His First Advent, but refused so to do because only in being "led as a lamb to the slaughter" and giving "His soul an offering for sin" (Isa. 53) could He establish the transcendent truth that the only one who can be trusted with absolute power over mankind is the One Who has demonstrated His willingness to share the sufferings and the death that is the lot of all mankind. But now the time of suffering and death is past and the King comes forth in glory and power and takes His place upon the throne of earth, an absolute monarch indeed, but a monarch to whom all men can give unqualified loyalty and obedience, for He is a King Who will reign in righteousness. So, in another place, Isaiah cries rapturously "It shall be said in

that day, 'Lo, this is our God. We have waited for Him, and He will save us'" (Isa. 25. 9). David, seeing the same thing, sang (Psa. 72) "He shall judge thy people with righteousness and the poor with judgment . . . in His day shall the righteous flourish . . . He shall spare the poor and needy . . . men shall be blessed in Him, and all nations shall call Him blessed".

Men have never known an absolutely righteous king and have no conception of the benefits such a monarch can bring to his people. It has been well said that "power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely" and power in the hand of fallible men, however well-intentioned, has very generally been abused to a greater or lesser extent. Some of the most ruthless men known to ancient as well as modern history have commenced their conquering careers with the best of motives and have ended them to the accompaniment of tears and curses from those who have suffered under them. In our own day men of the people have risen to positions of power, loudly proclaiming that they will administer freedom and equality for all men; too late, their hapless dupes have realised that the shackles of bondage have been riveted upon them more firmly than ever. Those rulers were sincere enough when they started out; the possession of power has been more than their integrity could withstand.

A king who will reign in righteousness, then, is a new thing to this world and the results of His reign will be new too. The first reaction of His people will be one of relief and growing confidence. A new hope will be born in the hearts of men, a hope that at last the long-desired but ever elusive peace and prosperity may indeed be within reach.

This is the theme of the remainder of the thirty-second chapter. Having passed from the reign of death and evil, and seen the last of earth's evil power perish in Armageddon, the prophet is free to devote himself to a detailed picture of the benefits which the king who reigns in righteousness brings to his subjects.

(To be continued)

Paul counselled Timothy to hold fast the traditions which he had been taught. The Greek word here rendered "tradition" means a thing handed down, as a legacy. There is no thought here of holding on to myths or legends, such as our English word tradition would imply. Paul's meaning clearly is that Timothy and those with him were to become the custodians of the "faith once delivered to the saints"; that faith which they had received from the Apostles; and that, maintaining it in its purity, they must in their turn pass it on to others when their own life's work was finished.

A Page of Poems

AFTERWARD

∞

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

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

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

LIFE MORE ABUNDANT

∞

He liveth long who liveth well !
 All other life is short and vain ;
 He liveth longest who can tell
 Of living most for heavenly gain.

He liveth long who liveth well !
 All else is being thrown away ;
 He liveth longest who can tell
 Of true things truly done each day.

Waste not thy being ; back to Him
 Who freely gave it, freely give ;
 Else is that being but a dream :
 'Tis but to be, and not to live.

Be what thou seemest ! live thy creed !
 Hold up to earth the torch divine ;
 Be what thou prayest to be made,
 Let the great Master's steps be thine.

Fill up each hour with what will last ;
 Buy up the moments as they go ;
 The life above, when this is past,
 Is the ripe food of life below.

Sow truth, if thou the truth wouldst reap ;
 And reaping, grow in truth again.
 Erect and sound thy conscience keep ;
 From hollow words and deeds refrain.

Sow love, and taste its fruitage pure ;
 Sow peace, and reap its harvests bright ;
 Sow sunbeams on the rock and moor,
 And reap a harvest home of light.

Horatius Bonar.

DELIVERANCE

∞

Still o'er Earth's sky the clouds of anger roll,
 The curse of sin lies heavy on her soul.
 Yet shall she rise—though first by God chastised—
 In glory and in beauty then baptised.
 Then on thy soul shall deathless verdure spring ;
 Break forth, ye mountains, and ye valleys, sing !
 No more your thirsty rocks shall frown forlorn,
 The unbeliever's jest, the heathen's scorn.

The sultry sands shall tenfold harvests yield,
 A greater Eden deck the thorny field.
 E'en now we see, wide-waving o'er the land,
 The mighty angel lift his golden wand,
 Courts the bright vision of descending power,
 Tells every gate, and measures every tower ;
 And breaks the tardy seals that yet detain
 The Lion of Judah from his destined reign.

Bishop Heber.

The Three Epistles of John

Comments on the writings
of the "Beloved Apostle"

Part I. I John 1. 1-5.

John's three epistles were written in the serenity of old age. The words run on in easy, undisturbed flow, with no outbursts of ebullient zeal or passionate declamation as might be expected if the pen were being wielded by a younger man. The great days of John's activity were over, and his life now was given up to exhorting his brethren in brotherly love and Christian consistency. The doctrinal disputations and the opposition of false brethren belonged to a bygone time; his letters now were addressed, not to immature fledglings in the faith, requiring care and attention lest they be ensnared by the specious teachings of their opponents or drawn away from their profession by the persecutions of civil rulers, but to mature Christians of many years' standing, men and women who had known and laboured with the "beloved disciple" over many decades of years. And not knowing that he was yet to sit on Patmos and behold the wondrous visions that have become his last message to the Church of God, it seems he must have composed these three gems of thought as his final exhortation before the Lord should call him home.

We do not know exactly when the three epistles were composed, but it must have been somewhere round about the year 90 A.D., when John himself was about eighty-five years of age. It seems they must have been written during a time when the Church had rest from persecution, for there is no hint of persecution in any part of the epistles and no exhortations such as might be expected if the brethren were undergoing such trials. The time of their writing must therefore have been some while after the terrible days of Nero and the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70) but before the time of the Roman emperor Domitian (81-96) in whose reign and in consequence of whose persecution John himself was banished to Patmos. Sometime between 80 and 90, therefore, fifty years after the Crucifixion and twenty years after the death of Paul, John, probably by then the only surviving Apostle, sat himself down to write these precious words to the Church.

Where were they written? Again, we cannot be certain. The tradition is that they were written at Ephesus. The New Testament tells us nothing about John's movements after the Council of Jerusalem recorded in Acts 15, which would have

been held in or about A.D. 51. He does not seem to have been at Ephesus when Paul took leave of the elders there for the last time, in A.D. 60 (Acts 20). But Ephesus was a notable centre of the Church for a considerable number of years afterwards. Timothy was its elder for a long time. Probably John took up residence there after the destruction of Jerusalem and spent perhaps twenty-five years there in devoted service before he was exiled to the rocky island on which the Lord appeared to him in the vision of the Book of Revelation. He may have even written these epistles in anticipation of exile or martyrdom, and in such case he would obviously have expected these letters to constitute his final leave-taking of his brethren in the flesh.

Why were they written? That, at any rate, is an easy question to answer. They were for the comfort and admonition of his brethren and for all who should come after them and read his words. They were written in fulfilment of his commission as an Apostle, not only to his own generation and people, but also to all who in every place and in every time should call upon the name of the Lord. They were written that we who live nearly two thousand years later may derive Christian instruction and enlightenment from the Spirit filled mind of the "beloved disciple". "He being dead, yet speaketh."

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life . . . that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us" (1 John 1. vs. 1-3, omitting the parenthesis which is verse 2).

"That which was from the beginning"—not only Christ as a Person, but as the glorious Divinity Whom we acknowledge and revere. The use of the term "that" instead of the personal pronoun "He" indicates that John is including all that Christ stood for, all His Gospel, all the treasures of wisdom laid up in Him, all His reconciling power and all that His redemptive sacrifice will yet achieve for the sons of men. All of this was provided and foreseen in God's Plan for the "Lamb slain before the foundation of the world" and it is all this that John is going to declare unto us. But the centre of it all

is the Person of Christ; the focal point of all that he is going to talk about and to which he is going constantly to point is the Man of Nazareth, Jesus, Who gave Himself a Ransom for All and, being resurrected, is drawing all men unto Himself (John 12. 32).

The beginning, then, to which John refers must be that beginning when the Son took His place beside the Father and commenced to exercise those mighty powers which have resulted in creation as we know it. "Without Him was not anything made that was made" (John 1. 3). The "Wisdom" passage of Prov. 8 has its application here. "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old, or ever the earth was . . . then I was by Him as one brought up with him, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him" (Prov. 8., 22-30). The Jews of old looked upon this passage as describing the embodiment of the Divine mind and wisdom directed towards this earth, its creation and its affairs. We know that they were right, and that Jesus our Lord is the embodiment of the mind of God so far as this creation in which we live and move and have our being is concerned. In just what way the "Logos", as the Jews termed this personification of Divine Wisdom, came into being and commenced to exercise the powers that we believe the Logos did exercise from the beginning of creation we do not know. God speaks of Him as His "only-begotten Son" and that definition we must accept and there leave the matter. It touches upon mysteries too great for us. But John in his gospel brings it into the realm of understandable things when he says that the "Logos was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, full of grace and truth" (John 1. 14).

However the Logos came into being, in the recesses of far-off time, from the mystery which is God, we do know that in the person of Jesus of Nazareth He appeared to us in form as a man, having laid aside the glory which He had with the Father before the world was (John 17. 5), taking upon Himself the bondsman's form for the suffering of death (Phil. 2. 7) and moving amongst us, seen and heard of all. There was a heresy current among the early Christians of John's day called Docetism which claimed that Jesus of Nazareth was not really the Christ at all, that the Christ had entered into a human Jesus at Jordan, inhabited his body, phantom-like, for three and a half years, and departed from it when that body was nailed to the Cross, so that it was only the human Jesus who died. There are many varieties of such "phantom" or "incarnation" theories in Christian theology and they are all wrong and dishonouring to God. Jesus

Himself said plainly "I leave the Father and come into the world; again, I leave the world and go unto the Father" (John 16. 28), and at that the disciples exclaimed "Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb" (parable). They could understand that; so John here in his epistle is able plainly to say that this very One Who was from the beginning is the very One Who, in the days of His flesh, we saw with our eyes, and heard with our ears, and handled with our hands. Acceptance of that plain Scriptural truth is essential to a right understanding of the Divine Plan of salvation.

"Of the Word of Life." How often it is that the Scriptures associate the three words—Word (or Logos)—Life—Light! "In Him was life", says John, "and the life was the light of men". That was the true Light, that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. The same "that" as we have here in the beginning of the epistle; the "that" which was from the beginning and was made flesh and appeared unto us. This is really a three-fold definition of Christ's appearing and His message. As the *Word*, or Logos, He came to us from the Father, speaking in the Name of the Father. As the *Light*, He is the Light of the world, enlightening men with the knowledge of His truth and dispelling the darkness of ignorance and superstition and fear. As the *Life*, He is the source of all that men have to hope for in the coming Age, when He Himself is to be the everlasting Father (Isa. 9. 6) giving life to the willing and obedient of all mankind. It might truly be said that in these three words is summed up all His great works of three Ages—in the *past*, He was the Word of God, the Logos, by which Word all that has been made was made, the all-sufficient agent of the Father, the personification of the Father's boundless creative energy and activity, of His infinite Wisdom and Power. In the *present*, He is the Light, shining first into our hearts to give knowledge of His glory and grace, and through us to pierce with its streaming rays the darkness of this world's sin and death, bringing comfort and hope to weary souls. In the *future* He will be the Life, calling all men from the grave and the sleep of death, setting their straying feet on the high road that leads to eternal life itself, revivifying with His mighty power not only the dead hearts of men but also the wasted and despoiled earth itself so that the desert may blossom as a rose and the land shall yield its increase. When death shall be no more and the heavenly Jerusalem reign supreme over the peoples, when the River of Water of Life glints its sparkling waters back to the blue sky of God's faithfulness above, and the Trees of Life give their fruit for the sustenance of all men, then indeed will Christ

be the Life in which all will move and find their being.

The subject is so entrancing and glorious to John, and he is so anxious to impart his assurance to his readers, that he had to throw in a parenthesis between verses 1 and 2, a parenthesis which does not break his chain of thought but intensifies what he has to say. For, he says, "*the life WAS manifested*, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you, that eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us". He repeats himself time and time over in his eagerness to impress his points. The tremendous wonder of the revelation of Christ to the disciples was that they *saw*; they *heard*. To a Jew that must have been a tremendous thing. The nations round about them

were accustomed to seeing the images of their gods, but the child of Israel grew up and lived all his life in the teaching that God is invisible and cannot be seen by mortal eyes. Even Moses was permitted but a glimpse of His passing glory, for "there shall no man see me, and live" (Exod. 33. 20). And now God had found a way to reveal Himself to His worshippers. The Word, made flesh, could be seen and heard of men, and it was a wonderful thing. Peter was smitten with the same awe when he said "we were eye-witnesses of His majesty . . . and this voice that came from heaven *we heard*, when we were with Him in the holy mount" (2 Pet. 1. 18). The Logos was manifested, was seen and heard, and they would never lose sight of that great truth.

To be continued.

The Four Horses of the Apocalypse (PART 4)

The Fourth Seal

The symbolism of the fourth horse is made quite clear to us by the name of its rider, Death; the horse is the *Spirit of Death*.

We noted in connection with the second and third horses that the spirits of Enmity and Darkness had both operated in the earth prior to the time of Christ, but that the horses of these visions represented the special operations of these spirits during the present very special age, the Gospel age. The same fact holds good in regard to the first and fourth seals. The spirit of Truth operated in the earth at various times and in different ways, from the Creation to the First Advent: the prophecies of the Old Testament could not have been given without its help and guidance—see 2 Pet. 1. 21 and Heb. 1. 1; but the going forth of the white horse represents the special going forth of the spirit of Truth during the present age, for the great and special work of the age—the call and development of the New Creation.

So, too, in the case of the fourth horse; Death has operated against mankind through the long centuries prior to the Gospel age, and all men are subject to it; it is part of the curse which followed the Fall—"for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return". (Gen. 3. 19). Death from what are called "natural causes"—i.e., from either gradual decay, or from some illness or disease natural to the human race—is the usual end of man, and the greater part of mankind have passed out of life in this way. But death can come in various other, abnormal, ways, and the fourth horse

represents some of the special operations of the spirit of Death during the present age. They are four in number: to kill with the sword (i.e., through warfare), with hunger (i.e., through famine), with death (i.e., through pestilence) and with the beasts of the earth. These latter are to be interpreted symbolically, not literally, for death by the action of literal beasts has been but a trifling matter; whereas death as the result of the manifold operations of the symbolic beasts—the Gentile powers (the fourth beast of Daniel, chap. 7), and the two great religious "beasts" of the present age, depicted in chap. 13 of the Revelation—has been considerable, and serious indeed.

The warfare depicted in this vision would doubtless refer to the many wars waged during the present age because the nations have been under the influence of the spirits of bitterness and darkness, and which would never have occurred had the nations or their rulers been controlled by the spirit of Truth. Many indeed have been such wars; the pages of history are full of them. What is history, indeed, but one long record of strife between one nation and another, or between different sections of one nation (civil war)? And the further down the age we go, the greater the sacrifice of life involved in these wars, because of the increased destructiveness of the weapons used; contrast the effects of the bows and arrows of the battle of Hastings in 1066 with the effects of the atomic bombs dropped in Japan in 1945!

Terrible indeed has been the work of the spirit of

Death, acting in conjunction with the spirit of Darkness. Confining our thoughts to three instances only, known to us all, we remember the Napoleonic wars which ravaged Europe in the later part of the 18th and early part of the 19th centuries; would these have taken place if the mind of Napoleon had been enlightened by the spirit of Truth? Scarcely so. Would the first World War have taken place, had Kaiser William been under the control of the Truth as it is in Christ, and as he ought to have been, since he lived in the twentieth century and knew the Bible and its teachings in general? But instead of being controlled by the Word of God, he was under the power of the spirit of darkness, and so the first great World war, with all its death and suffering, involving millions of people, resulted. Likewise, the second World war, with its still greater consequences, was due to the fact that Hitler's mind was also under the control of the powers of darkness. Who shall measure the death and suffering caused by the second World war? Who can possibly measure the enormous amount of death and suffering caused by all the wars waged during the present age as the result of the operations of the spirit of Death, following the preceding operations of the spirit of Darkness? The number runs into almost countless millions.

Wars of any severity have always been followed by periods of food scarcity, as we who live in these days surely know well. Other famines have occurred apart from war, some due to natural causes, and others due to the misguided actions of men themselves, such as the imposition of taxes on the products of the earth. Most such taxation, we might add, is an outcome of war; if the nations had not waged war against each other, the greater part of taxation would be quite unnecessary. It has been estimated that about two-thirds of the taxes that we in England pay to-day are the outcome of either the wars of the past, or of keeping ourselves prepared for war in the future.

Pestilences also are frequent after-effects of either war or famine, and have caused at times great loss of life. And again, as in the case of famines, some pestilences have arisen from purely natural causes, while others have arisen from, or their effects have been increased by, the foolish actions of man himself, such as the crowding together of the poor in small, dark houses in narrow streets, in miserable sanitary conditions. But whatever the cause, either of the famines or the pestilences, there is no doubt whatever about the very large number of people who have lost their lives from both these afflictions during the present age. It is stated, e.g., that the epidemic of influenza which occurred in 1918 and 1919, after the first World war, caused as many deaths as did the war itself. The great Plague of

London, in 1665, caused the death of about 100,000 people; while equally large numbers have died at other times from outbreaks of typhoid, smallpox, and so on, not in England only, but in many other parts of the earth.

And finally, the symbolic beasts of the earth during the present age have also been responsible for causing a vast amount of unnecessary death (quite apart from that due to war), by either cruel and unjust laws, or by cruel and unjust rulers or agents of those rulers. The fourth beast of Daniel's vision, chap. 7, was an inclusive picture of the empire of Rome and all its later subdivisions, the kingdoms of so-called Christendom; and not for nothing was it described (ver. 4) as "dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron feet: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it." True to life is this description; the Gentile powers of this age have indeed been dreadful and terrible, not only in warfare, but in many other ways, devouring and breaking in pieces countless thousands in their cruel rule. So it was in Roman times; so it has been through the centuries, in each subdivision of the Roman empire; and so it is still to-day in some of them.

As an instance of harsh law in our own country of England, we would ask, how many scores of people, including even children, have been put to death by hanging for the comparatively simple crime of theft? As an instance of a cruel governmental agent, we would mention Judge Jeffries, who sentenced three hundred people to death after the Monmouth rebellion in 1685, in the reign of James 2nd; most of these people were quite innocent. Other hundreds of people have rotted their lives out in prison at different times during the age, through nothing but cruelty on the part of those who had power to inflict it. And so on down to our own day, when not hundreds or even thousands, but some millions of people were put to death in the infamous concentration camps of Hitler: this, please note, in the twentieth century, in a nation possessing its full share of natural intelligence, and highly enlightened in regard to such things as science and art.

So the sum total of loss of human life caused by the spirit of Death acting in these four different ways—through war, famine, disease, and the Gentile governments—during the present age has been very great indeed—colossal, we may truly say. But note the limitation of its power set by Divine providence: it was to be over only a fourth part of the earth. This quite possibly, or even probably, refers to the fact that the fourth horse exercises its power chiefly in the so-called civilised parts of the earth; the events of the seals do not particularly

concern heathendom, and as the latter (Africa, India, China, Japan, etc.) even to-day forms something like a half of the earth's population, the civilised parts would probably not form more than a quarter of the human race, if we take the age as a whole.

The operations of this horse, then, are under Divine control, just as were those of the first three horses.

"And hell", or Hades (as all modern versions put it), "followed with him". How this was represented in the vision we are not told; but death (i.e., the process and act of dying, in multitudinous ways) and the grave (the state of death) are usually associated together, both naturally and in the Scriptures (e.g., in Hos. 13. 14). So it is perfectly in order to find the two together here. How glad we should be that, as Bible students, we know what hell, or Hades, means, and that we can, and do, look forward to the time when, as the passage just quoted from Hosea tells us, both death and Hades shall be destroyed. As *they* have done to mankind, so shall God do to *them*; He will be just as merciless to them as they have been to the human race. "Repentance shall be hid from his eyes."

The colour of the horse, as in the case of the previous horses, was in harmony with its rider. It was pale; Rotherham and Moffatt use the adjective livid—i.e., a bluish, leaden colour, the unhealthy colour associated so often with the dying process.

The four seals, then, cover the whole Gospel age in their operations, acting together, as we reasoned out earlier in our consideration of them. It is, indeed, the going forth of these four horses that has given to this age its main characteristics, and has made the age what it is, as distinct and different from the previous ages. (1) The Gospel message, enlightening so wonderfully those who receive it, and leading indirectly to the general structure of "Christendom", with its many religious systems of more or less Christian worship, and with its cathedrals, churches, chapels, etc., in every city, town, and village in the land. (2) The religious bitterness and discord of the age, causing trouble and strife between individuals, between families, between organisations, and even between nations, and still going on to-day. (3) The multitudinous operations of the powers of darkness, acting again in small ways and in great, on individuals and on nations, until we have the present state of the world, or mankind, with their numerous creeds and their various philosophies, with their atheists, agnostics, free thinkers, and so on: almost all considering themselves to be highly enlightened members of the human race, but all in gross darkness as regards knowledge of, or belief in, the great and glorious Kingdom of Christ, now so near. "When

the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18. 8). And (4) the special operations of the great power of death, through war, famine, pestilence, and the Gentile kingdoms, causing suffering and sorrow to mankind century after century, until in our own day we have had the whole earth twice drenched with death and sorrow to an unprecedented degree. Such, in brief, is the history of the Gospel age; such are its main characteristics; and they are all portrayed in this comparatively simple, yet all comprehensive vision of the Revelation, in which four horses and their riders go forth, depicting the Spirit of Truth, the Spirit of Enmity, the Spirit of Darkness, and the Spirit of Death.

(To be continued)

A NEW DEFINITION OF FREE-WILL

A lady in a Northern town received a prize of 10/6 for this very modern interpretation of the Christian faith, in the attempt to justify the Sunday opening of cinemas.

"Our Lord meant us to be happy and gave us the Ten Commandments as a guide to our dealings with each other, with a free will to keep them or not as we choose."

* * *

During the fourth watch of the night, from the midst of the storm and the gloom, in the breaking of the dawn, Jesus Himself will appear to His toiling disciples—and how eager we shall be to behold Him. At His arrival all our labours will be over, and like the disciples in the boat, we shall find ourselves immediately at our destination; home suddenly, unexpectedly; caught up to meet Him, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, to be forever with the Lord. (*Forest Gate Bible Monthly.*)

* * *

Prayer could be a very harmful thing. A weapon like prayer would indeed be a very dangerous weapon to put in the hands of any person but for one essential law of prayer. It is that no man can use prayer simply for his own ends. Prayer is given only for a certain purpose, and if anyone tries to use it in a way that does not accord with that purpose, his prayer will remain unanswered.

* * *

It is true that we cannot all be intellectual giants, but many of those who want to serve their Lord seem content to do so in a "first-form" way, and then are surprised and hurt when the "sixth formers" will not listen to them. Let us "give attendance to reading", for the Truth's own sake, for the sake of the generation to which we must witness, and for the sake of our own soul's growth and experience.

Eventide

"So he bringeth them unto their desired haven"



Expectations were running high in Israel, for the times fore-appointed were almost run out. The sixty and nine heptads unto Messiah the Prince (Dan. 9. 25.) were almost at an end, and "all men were in expectation" of the Coming Prince. How would He come? From whence would He come? How would they know He had come?

Were not these the points of endless debate in the home and Councils of Israel. (See John 7. 40-42 and 52.) Of course He would come in all His might and majesty, spreading confusion and dismay in the ranks of Rome, throwing proud defiance to its Imperial Majesty! And again, both He and they would be victorious, for does it not stand written in the prophecy "And the kingdom and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High." (Dan. 7. 27.) Were not they the people of the saints of the Most High? To whom if not to them, could that signal honour be given? So undoubting was this expectation that its certitude permeated every discussion as the salt did their bread.

What then must have been the consternation in the mind of one pious son of Israel when his own very brother—his own mother's kindred son—came to him exultingly and most persuasively said "We have found Him"—"*We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law, and the prophets, did write Jesus of Nazareth . . .*" (John 1. 4-5.) Can we wonder at the humorously doubtful nature of the rejoinder? Nazareth—a mere village place, far out of the beaten track; a mere cipher in the history of Israel! "Jesus of Nazareth! can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Unabashed at his brother's seeming levity, Philip quietly said "Come and see". Suiting the action to the word Philip quietly led his brother along, but not before Nathaniel had equippingly stepped aside beneath the shelter of a near-by tree. Fortified by this resourceful experience, Nathaniel went along to see for himself this animating cause of his brother's newly-found enthusiasm. Forestalling all introductory greetings Jesus said, even while Nathaniel still approached, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" An Israelite, true to its name, neither caught nor catching other men with guile! What a commendation for a careful man! "Whence knowest Thou me" asked Nathaniel surprisedly. "When thou wast under the fig tree, I

saw thee" was the ready reply. That was enough for that pious soul.

Here he was face to face with One who could read the motives of the heart, through an external act. Unknown to himself those searching eyes had seen him sheltering in his quiet retreat, and understood why he had gone aside. Willing to be convinced, yet not ready to be duped and led astray, this true son of Israel undoubtedly had lifted up his heart to heaven for guidance and safe keeping in this crisis hour. If, as Philip said, the Christ had truly come, even though so unostentatiously, he wanted with all his heart to welcome Him; yet, if his brother had been deceived, he wished to escape the entangling net himself and break the deception also that held his brother in its thrall.

At once the deeply moving forces of his soul welled up, and found expression in the words "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel!" These words have the ring of the thinker and the strong-convictioned man! They show the cast and mould of that pious soul! "King of Israel", yes! that was an easily reached conviction, but "Son of God"! that is something more. Yet that conclusion lay latent in the Messiahship, as Jesus later found to his cost. (John 10. 31-36.)

"*He that seeketh findeth.*" Nathaniel was a seeking soul, and He also found Him in whom his soul found delight!

"*We have found Him!*" Yes, we too in our throbbing day "have found Him" thank God! Oh yes, of course God has found us too (John 6. 65) but that is not the whole story of the "finding". He who drew us on has led us to His Son for "*no man can come to Me, except the Father which sent Me draw him.*" (John 6. 44.)

Here again there must be the sincere, pious, hungry soul seeking something for his soul's deepest welfare ere he finds Jesus of Nazareth. What do we find in Him, as day by day we tread the narrow way?

*But what to those who find? ah this
Nor tongue nor pen can show,
The Love of Jesus, what it is
None but His loved ones know.*

Perhaps it is true to say that what I want Him to be to me will depend in the main on what I want to be to Him. Am I satisfied to know Him as my distant Friend—my occasional Friend, to

whom I turn my heart just once in a while—just now and then ; or do I want Him for my near, my most intimate and desirable Friend, to whom I turn myself many, many times a day, from whom I can scarcely bear to be parted even by the urgent task of the daily round ? Even here there is a tie that binds, and if that tie is one of true affinity, then as the magnet draws the steel so shall He and I be closely drawn together. Have I truly learned to sing :—

*I've found a Friend, O such a Friend,
He loved me ere I knew Him ;
He drew me with the cords of love
And thus He bound me to Him.
And round my heart still closely twine
Those ties which naught can sever,
For I am His and He is mine
For ever and for ever.*

*I've found a Friend, O such a Friend,
He gave His life to save me :
And not alone the gift of life
But His own self He gave me.
Naught that I have my own I call
I hold it for the Giver,
My heart, my strength, my life, my all
Are His and His for ever.*

*I've found a Friend, O such a Friend,
So kind and true and tender
So wise a counsellor and guide
So mighty a defender !
From Him who now doth love me so,
What power my life can sever ?
Shall life or death or any foe ?
No ! I am His for ever.*

Surely at some time we have found Him to be all that ! but what have we found in Him to-day ? What has "my finding" brought to me in the hurly-burly of this fitful day ?

*If I find Him, if I follow
Is He sure to bless ?
Saints, Apostles, Prophets, Martyrs
Answer Yes !*

*If I ask Him to receive me
Will He say me nay ?
Not till earth and not till heaven
Pass away !*

"We have found Him of whom . . . the prophets did speak."



THE QUESTION BOX



Q. "God . . . hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5. 13). What is this "ministry of reconciliation" ?

A. The expression defines the process by means of which God will reconcile all men to Himself ; not only those who in this Age come to Him but also all who in the next Age will do the same. The whole of Paul's argument in these chapters is to the effect that God is now gathering and training His ambassadors, those who will be entrusted with the task of teaching all men the principles of Divine Law in the next Age. The necessity for wise and efficient administration in a world which will contain all the failures, the criminals and the human derelicts of all past history, clearly requires an arduous course of training. It is none the less arduous in that the disciples of Christ, who are the ones now undergoing this training, can show little of its results in their outward actions, until after perhaps a lifetime of Christian experience the transforming influence begins to reveal itself in a glory which is not of this earth. Yet in the little things of life, in our daily conduct and behaviour toward our neighbours and acquaintances, we should expect something of that higher standard to be

manifest. Those who expect to be entrusted with a task which the noblest and best of men in all ages have consistently failed to achieve should be able to demonstrate in some small measure that even now they are capable of sober and right judgment. They should be known amongst their neighbours as men of integrity and reliability ; as women of understanding and kindness. They should be incapable of a mean action ; slow to partiality or prejudice. A sane and balanced outlook upon the affairs of everyday life ; a quiet conviction that righteousness is mighty and will at last prevail ; a keen desire to instruct those who will listen in the ways of our God ; these are the present characteristics of those of whom Paul again says, "Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world. . . . Are ye unworthy then to judge the smallest matters ?"

Q. "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life." (Jno. 5. 39.) Why is emphasis placed on "ye think" ? Was there any doubt as to eternal life being found in the Scriptures ?

A. The answer is perhaps best given in the words of the Diaglott rendering. "You search the Scrip-

tures because you think by them to obtain eternal life—and they are those testifying of me. And yet you are not willing to come to me that you may obtain life.” The Pharisees and others to whom the words were addressed were habitual readers of the Scriptures because they thought by that they would obtain eternal life, not realising that such reading in formal manner was useless for

that aim. Those very Scriptures testified of Christ, and in accepting the Scriptures as the means of salvation they really accepted that which should have led them to Christ, but they would not. The very standard they took as their own was the very one that spoke of Christ—but they would not come to Him for the life that they claimed to seek and yet could only obtain through Him.

The Voice of the Monuments

5. The Siloam Inscription.

Deep down in the limestone strata that underlies Jerusalem an inexhaustible supply of fresh water forces its way through cracks and crevices, following the general slope of the rock layers toward the south-east, until at length it comes to the surface at what is now known as the Virgin's Fountain. From the dawn of history that water has flowed. It was the main source of supply for the Jebusite city of Jerusalem ruled by Melchisedek, the Priest-King of Abraham's day. It once served the Crusaders' need when Jerusalem was besieged by the Saracens. To-day it waters the market gardens of Jerusalem. And it has made Biblical history.

The Virgin's Fountain lies half way up the rocky slope of Ophel, the south-eastern projection of the mountainous mass upon which Jerusalem is built, and outside the ancient walls. In the dim days before Abraham entered Canaan the industrious Jebusites had cut a tunnel into the mountain to conduct the waters to the foot of a vertical shaft which they had made leading up to the city on the heights above. They called it Gihon, and by its means they were able in times of siege to obtain water without venturing outside the walls. It was their undoing eventually, for when David beset the city Joab and his stalwarts made their way along the tunnel, climbed up that shaft and took the Jebusites by surprise, so capturing the city for David (see 1 Chron. 11. 6 and 2 Sam. 5. 8—the “gutter” of the latter text is this shaft.)

But it was at a later date that the fountain demanded a king's anxious thought. In the days of Hezekiah, Sennacherib of Assyria invaded Judah with his armies. Once again Jerusalem was threatened with siege. The first thing to do was to ensure the water supply. The measures Hezekiah took to accomplish this end were considered so noteworthy as to justify incorporation in the histories of the times. Says the chronicler (2 Chron. 32) “There was gathered much people together,

who stopped all the fountains, and the brook that ran through the midst of the land, saying ‘Why should the kings of Assyria come, and find much water’ . . . Hezekiah also stopped the upper water-course of Gihon (the shaft into the city) and brought it straight down” (“underground” is the literal meaning) “to the west side of the city of David”. The Book of Kings supplements this by saying (2 Kings 20. 20) when recounting the deeds of Hezekiah “. . . the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and how he made a pool, and a conduit (aqueduct) and brought water into the city, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah.” And in the Apocrypha, Ecclus. 48. 17 informs us that “Hezekiah fortified his city, and brought in water to the midst thereof; he digged the hard rock with iron, and made wells for waters.”

King Hezekiah's tunnelling operations, interesting as they must have been to the people of his own day, had little or no interest for more recent generations, and the story was speedily relegated to the background by students. In later times, however, speculation began as to whether this tunnel had any real existence. The critics dubbed it legend; others were not so sure; but there was no external evidence. Dr. Thomson, the Palestine missionary and author of the well-known work “*The Land and the Book*” says of the water channels and fountains of Jerusalem, when describing his own investigations, “Hezekiah and his ‘much people’ stopped them up so effectually that they could never be found again, even by the Jews themselves.” The historians of the Old Testament had left no geographical indication of the locality of the tunnel—at least, it was accepted that no such indication existed until someone, reading the familiar words of Isa. 8. 6 “*forasmuch as this people refuse the waters of Shiloah that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son . . .*” realised that here was a clue. “The waters of Shiloah that go softly”!

The Pool of Shiloah (Siloam is the New Testament Greek form of the word) was well known and had been well known for generations. It was, and is, the most constant reservoir in the city. Artificially built, more like a tank than a natural pool, some fifty feet by twenty, and about twenty feet deep, it has served the needs of generations of Jews and Arabs without question. It was common knowledge that the water reached the pool from the mouth of an arched orifice in the rock, but no Arab had ever dared to venture far inside. So far as can be ascertained, the first to make the attempt was Dr. Robinson, early in the nineteenth century. Stepping into the water of Siloam, he waded into the archway and found himself in a narrow tunnel, two feet wide but ten to fifteen feet high, the stream that supplied the Pool flowing along its floor. He followed the winding course of the passage for about one-third of a mile, knowing from the direction he took that he was some hundred feet or more beneath the streets of Jerusalem above. At length he splashed his way into daylight again and found himself at the Virgin's Fountain, outside the City and on the steep slope of the Valley of Jehoshaphat.

Later on it was ascertained that the first hundred feet or so of the tunnel at the Virgin's Fountain end is in fact the ancient Jebusite aqueduct, and the vertical shaft leading up into the city was discovered, and signs that the old tunnel had been blocked at that point in order to divert the waters to the Pool of Siloam. The correspondence here with the account of Hezekiah's action in 2 Chron. 32 seemed almost complete.

Then in 1880 some Arab schoolboys were playing around the Pool of Siloam and one of them fell into the water. Scrambling out, he ventured, boylike, into the tunnel and, clambering along its wall, noticed, what no one had ever noticed before, some rough Hebrew characters chiselled in the rock. He told his teacher, Dr. Schick, who investigated for himself. He found a complete inscription in archaic Hebrew characters. The following year Dr. A. H. Sayce, the celebrated archæologist, visited the spot and copied the inscription. When examined it proved to be an account relating to the building of the tunnel, written in Biblical Hebrew of the 8th to 6th centuries B.C. Since Hezekiah's reign falls within this period there remained no reasonable doubt that the tunnel was in fact the one described in the Old Testament as built by Hezekiah at the time of the Assyrian invasion.

Various translations of the inscription differ in minor details. Here is a fair representation.

"Behold the tunnel. Now this is the history of the tunnel. While the miners were still lifting up the pick, each towards his neighbour, and while

there were yet three cubits to excavate, there was heard the voice of a man calling to his neighbour, for there was an excess in the rock on the right hand, and on the left. And after that on the day of excavating the miners had struck pick against pick, one against another, the waters flowed from the spring to the pool, a distance of twelve hundred cubits. And a hundred cubits was the height of the rock above the tunnel."

Those miners must have worked hard! Spurred on by the imminent threat of invasion, they excavated and removed, by hand, over two thousand tons of rock to make that tunnel. Every bit of that material must have been passed in baskets along a line of men to the open air. And when the work was done someone from among them, a man perhaps for ever unknown, left this writing, chiselled in the everlasting rock, to give its witness in due time to the accuracy of the Bible story.

These explorations yielded another detail of interest in relation to the New Testament. The account of Christ healing the impotent man at the Pool of Bethesda is well known. The Pool was famous because at intervals, said the Evangelist, an angel came down and troubled the waters; whoever first stepped in after the troubling was cured of his complaint. Such a phenomenon as is thus described is seen daily at the Virgin's Fountain and the Pool of Siloam. Somewhere far underground beneath Jerusalem, where the water which supplies these fountains collects, there must be a great reservoir shaped by Nature into the form of a siphon; periodically, generally two or three times a day, the water comes gushing into the Virgin's Fountain, and from thence through the tunnel into the Pool of Siloam, as though a hidden store had been suddenly let loose. This freak of Nature has never been discovered, but the signs are conclusive that the water builds up slowly until it overtops some bend in the outlet and then the whole accumulation siphons away. The situation of the Pool of Bethesda is not established with certainty; even though it prove to have been in some other part of the city the probabilities are that it received its supply from the same ultimate source as Hezekiah's pools, and the "troubling of the waters" occur there, just as to-day it still occurs while the villagers of Siloam satisfy their needs at the place made famous by Judah's pious king.

In very truth, they who most find their infirmities and weaknesses a burden and who are heavy-laden with their faults, find also the verity and certainty of enthroned Grace to be a fact, and know the blessedness of finding a power not of themselves, stealing into their hearts and hushing their contrite spirits to rest.

BOOK REVIEWS

"Mark These Men!" (J. Sidlow Baxter). Marshall, Morgan & Scott. 192 pp. 9/6.

A most interestingly drawn series of pen-pictures; thirteen outstanding Biblical characters of widely diversified characteristics, living at widely separated times, from Balaam and Gideon to Ananias and Simon of Cyrene. The lessons of their lives and experiences are driven home by a practised hand. Saul, Daniel, Lazarus, Hezekiah, are only some of those well-known men who pass before the reader's eyes in animated procession. The explanation of that story about Elisha and the bears is excellent and well worth making one's own; the light that is turned upon the mixed character of Balaam illumines that strange narrative in a most penetrating manner. The background of the book is one that will appeal in special sense to our readers; here is an author who believes that Jesus is to return to earth to set up His Millennial Kingdom, and is not afraid to say so and to proclaim this as the great hope before the Church and for the world. "Very soon now" . . . he says "if we mistake not the signs of the times . . . He shall take the throne of David. Invention shall be no more prostituted to the furtherance of war and wickedness. Science and art shall pay tribute at his feet. War shall be banished. All nations shall be comprehended in His millennial empire. 'Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly!'" Altogether a useful addition to the book-shelf.

"Heaven on Earth" (Arthur Longley). Victory Press. 74 pp. 3/-.

This book was published several years ago but unfortunately had escaped our notice until recently. Its outstanding merit entitles it to this belated notice. "Heaven on Earth" is written to demonstrate that sound reason underlies the hope of the second coming of Christ and the establishment of His kingdom on earth. Starting with the obvious failure of mankind to order human life aright and the impossibility of their ever succeeding in doing so, the author goes on to show that Divine intervention for the salvation of the world, fantastic as it may seem to the ordinary man to-day, is actually the only logical thing to expect. He dwells at length on the economic arrangements of the "new order", shows that only the disciples of Christ of this Age have the hope of immortality held before them, and sees clearly what so many Christians to-day fail to see, that the call of the Church and the reward of all true disciples is a future of hard work for world conversion in the next Age, rather than one of eternal idleness in a heaven of golden harps and trumpets. The book is written in a forthright, forceful—one may reasonably say pungent—style; the author has evidently given much thought to the principles that must govern Millennial administration and what he has to say is worthy of consideration. Very few readers of the "Monthly" would fail to be interested in this book.

"Lives of the Prophets" (Caiger). S.P.C.K. 333 pp. 10/6.

The sub-title of this book is a very accurate definition of its contents. "A thousand years of Hebrew prophecy

reviewed in its historical context". But the book is much more "live" than that quiet phrase suggests. This is really the drama of Israel, from the days of Samuel until the ministry of the prophets was ended, with all those prophets, one after another, passing across the front of the stage. The history of Jeremiah, occupying some fifty pages, is particularly fine. Frequent and lengthy quotation of Scripture as the lives of the prophets are recounted enables the reader very easily to fit the narrative to its Bible sources as he proceeds. The writer acknowledges his acceptance of the conclusions of modern critics, placing the books of Daniel, Jonah, Zechariah and Joel much later than most of us would accept, and assuming the multiple authorship of the Book of Isaiah to be a foregone conclusion. It is difficult to understand why, in the story of Isaiah and Sennacherib, there is no mention of the destruction of the latter's army outside Jerusalem; after all, both Berosus and Herodotus indicate that something very strange *did* happen to that army at that time. One gets the impression that the author does not feel too certain about the miracles of Scripture. But the book is more concerned with the lives and preaching of the prophets than their connection with manifestations of Divine power, and as such it is vivid, life-like and eminently readable.

CHILDREN'S BOOKS

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Bible Story Book. 608 pages, 234 stories, 160 illustrations, 16 coloured plates, embossed cloth bound, gold lettering with art coloured dust jacket, packed in cardboard box, size 9½ in. x 7 in. x 2 in.; weight 4 lb. A superb gift for children of all ages. 17/6 post free.

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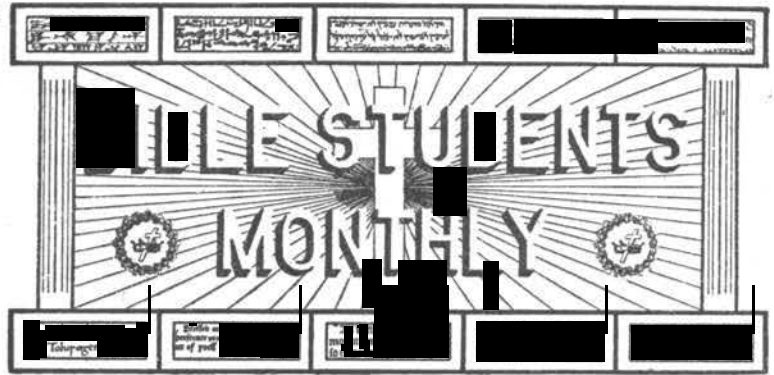
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| 101 Times of Restitution. | 109 Creation of Man. |
| 102 Call of the Church. | 110 The Second Advent. |
| 103 Day of Judgment. | 111 Armageddon. |
| 104 Where are the Dead? | 112 Restoration of Israel. |
| 105 What is the Soul? | 113 The Three Worlds. |
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Thou, therefore, endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.



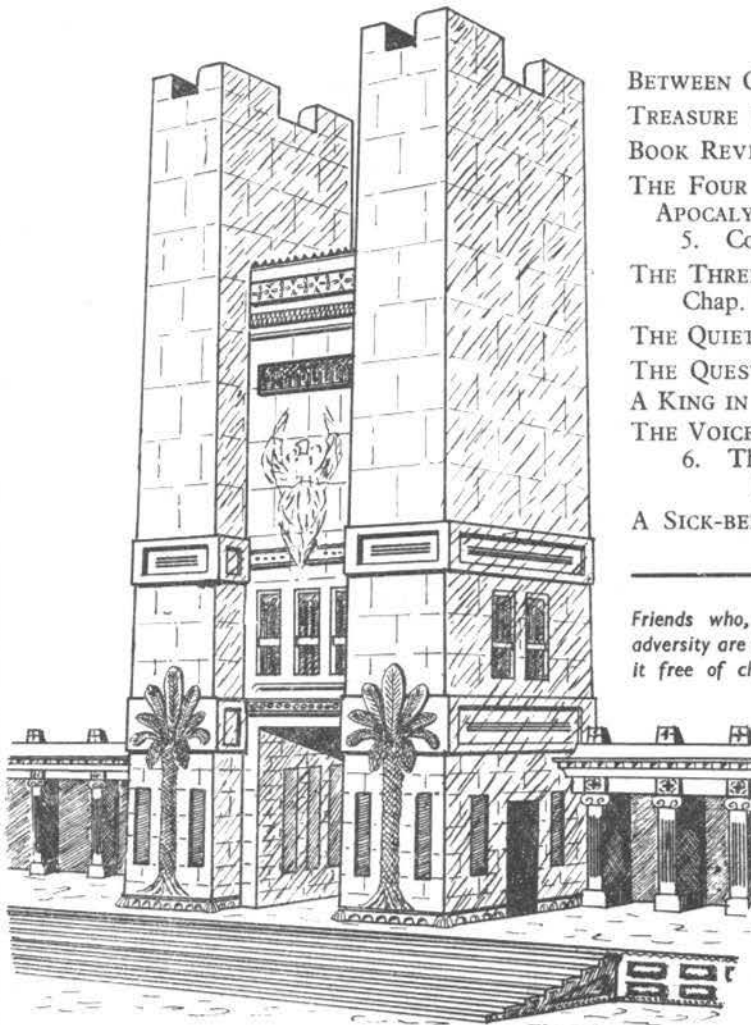
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Friends who, through old age, infirmity or other adversity are unable to pay for this journal may have it free of charge upon request, renewed annually.



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

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BETWEEN OURSELVES

We would acknowledge with sincere appreciation the receipt of £1 gift to the funds from a Northern Midlands city.

* * *

Special attention is drawn to the fact that the February meeting at Caxton Hall will be at 7.0 p.m. instead of the usual 6.30, and will close at 9.0 p.m.

* * *

For the convenience of friends desiring to obtain copies of the book "*Heaven on Earth*" reviewed in the January issue it is announced that this book is in stock at Welling and can be supplied on request at 3/6 post free. In case some did not see the earlier notice it may be said that this book, published by the Victory Press, deals with the Millennial Age as a logical sequel to the history of mankind and gives many interesting side-lights on some of the probable characteristics of that Age, or perhaps, in the main, of the transition from this Age to that one. It is a book that many of our friends will find most interesting.

* * *

Ferrar Fenton's Translation of the complete Bible is now in stock at Welling and can be supplied at 26/- post free. A new edition of the Septuagint in Greek and English parallel columns is also in stock at 31/- post free.

* * *

The attention of our American and Canadian readers is drawn to the fact that following the devaluation of the British £, the annual subscription to the "*Monthly*" in these countries will now be one dollar instead of \$1.50 as heretofore. Remittances should be sent preferably in the form of dollar notes, less preferably by money order, but not by bank check; the cost of collection of these latter is considerable.

* * *

Communications in connection with the Benevolent Fund (for relieving needy friends within the confines of Great Britain and Ireland) should be sent to Bro. E. Allbon, 20, Sunnymede Drive, Ilford, Essex.

Communications in connection with the German Relief Fund, and gifts of food or clothing for the same, should go to Bro. H. E. Nadal, 35, Palace Gardens, Buckhurst Hill, Essex.

* * *

Will organisers of conventions and others interested please note that the supply of hymnals available on loan for use at such gatherings, formerly cared for by Bro. G. A. Ford of Luton, is now held at Welling, and that all applications for the use of same should be addressed here. At least two

weeks' notice must be given, stating quantity of hymnals required. It will be appreciated if borrowers will defray cost of carriage both ways, returning books promptly after use.

* * *

It is with considerable pleasure that we announce the publication, by our Australian brethren, of a new edition of the well-known work "*Poems of Dawn*." This book has been in good demand for many years and its appeal seems never to diminish. We now have a consignment of "*Poems of Dawn*" in stock here and can fill all orders by return. The book is, like the last edition, cloth-bound and reneo-printed, and the price is 7/6 post free (one dollar to friends in U.S.A. and Canada—remittance by dollar note or money order, please).

* * *

An adequate supply of "*Millennial Message No. 3*" is again available for free distribution, and applications for quantities may be made without hesitation. Please state how many are required and can usefully be distributed.

Gone from Us

Bro. H. H. Mayes (Richmond)

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

LONDON
MONTHLY MEETING
Saturday, 18th February, 1950
7.0—9.0 p.m.

In the Tudor Hall
CAXTON HALL
Caxton Street, Westminster, S.W.1
5 mins. St. James Park Station and Victoria Street

Praise and Worship
Fellowship
A talk on the Christian outlook for today
and an opportunity for questions
A Scriptural address by guest speaker

Chairman: Bro. J. Thompson.
Speakers: Bro. L. Smethurst.
Bro. W. Fox.

TREASURE IN HEAVEN

"Lay not up for yourselves treasure on earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where moth and rust do not corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal." (Matt. 6. 19-21.)

This laying up of treasure is for a purpose. It is not just an idle storing up of something that is valuable and is not to be touched or used again. It is not a mere amassing of wealth for the sake of possessing wealth, or for the self-satisfaction that misers feel in the knowledge of their riches. There is no place in heaven where goods may be stored up for possible use in a future "rainy day," neither are there any strong-rooms devoted to the custody of possessions not at once required by the owner but the benefit or use of which he will not allow to others. Everything in Heaven is live, virile, dynamic, and neither idle beings nor idle forces can be found in all its wide realm. Whatsoever therefore is laid up in Heaven is serving God's ever-working purpose even in the time of its laying-up.

Neither is the laying up of treasure in heaven merely a kind of insurance whereby a seat in the realms of celestial bliss is guaranteed the depositor when at length he must depart this life. There are politicians, business men and others who realise that for various reasons a day will come when they must flee the country of their residence and end their lives in a foreign land. In order to make preparation for the event they take care to invest their money in the land of their choice, and acquire the title to property there, so that when at length they land on its shores they will have the wherewithal to live and eat. "Salting it away", the process is called, in the expressive language of our times. But if anyone should think that God will sit on the throne of His holiness accepting the offerings of His people for no other purpose than that, he must needs think again. The Most High is not so short of resources, nor yet so niggardly, that He will not make abundant provision for the future lives and activities of those whom He eventually receives into the glory of His presence. Jesus has already gone to prepare places for His disciples in the heavenly mansions. And what God will have ready for the entrants into heaven will far transcend anything that we weak, puny mortals could hope to "lay up" for ourselves by way of

fruit of our own efforts. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for them that love Him." (1. Cor. 2-9.)

We who are Christ's have given our lives to Him for purposes of training. Christians to-day are in training for a great future work, the work of reconciling the world to God. It is not going to be an easy work: the habits of sin and the effects of sin have become deeply ingrained in the human character, and even although men and women will rise from the dead at the commencement of the Millennium with new and perfect bodies, their minds and characters, carried over and reproduced from the old life, will still be imperfect and need regeneration. That work will not be done as it were miraculously, at the wave of a magic wand or in obedience to some potent word from the Almighty. Had it been so, the story of sin and death need never have been enacted and the Fall would not have occurred. Men and women in the next age will need to be converted and induced to accept Christ, so becoming reconciled to God, just as truly as is the case in this Age. And they will need in their endeavours to obtain human perfection the assistance and guidance of those who know and understand the difficulties in the way because they themselves have faced the same difficulties and found the way to overcome them. It is the ability thus to be "merciful and faithful priests", "ministers of reconciliation", in that Age, that constitutes the "treasure in heaven" which we are bidden to lay up in full confidence that it will not fail us when the time for its use has come.

Knowledge—experience—character—ability; these are the things which we shall never lose, once we have acquired them. They will all be laid up in the memory and power of the Father, and when the call comes, and we divest ourselves of this earthly frame and appear before Him in all the glory of the spiritual body, we shall receive all these things back in full measure, and go out from the Divine presence fully equipped for saving the world. But not unless we have gained them first and so entrusted them to the Divine keeping!

In this there is a place for all, and none need feel discouraged or doubtful because another appears to have greater ability, deeper strength of character, wider experience, or more accurate knowledge. The same variety which characterises God's earthly

creation must be manifest in His spiritual creation also, and just as now, in the flesh there are "differences of administration, but the same Lord" (1 Cor. 12. 5) so it will be then. Each one of the glorified New Creation will assume quite happily and willingly the place that God has marked out, working in harmonious co-operation with his fellows in the ministry, knowing that it is of the Father, who doeth all things well. The restricted experience and lesser knowledge of a faithful soul whose opportunities in life have not been great will without doubt be just the "treasure" that the Father requires to fit into a certain place that could not be so well fitted by anyone else. There is the same spirit of service in the heart and it is that which is of importance.

It is this spirit of service for others, this willingness to become the servants of men for their salvation, and to use one's own powers and possessions to that end, that is the real lesson behind the story of the man who had such increase of goods that he had to pull down his barns to build greater. "Soul," he said to himself, "thou hast much goods laid up for many years. Eat, take thine ease and be merry" (Luke 12. 15-21). The sin lay not in acquiring great wealth, providing that he came by it honestly, and there is nothing in the story to suggest that he did not. Neither was there anything immoral in his enjoying greater wealth than his neighbours and in being rich beyond them all. His offence lay in that, having the command of all these material advantages, he proposed to reserve them entirely to his own selfish enjoyment instead of using them, the bounty of God, in the service of and for the benefit of God's creatures. His sin was self-sufficiency. He asked nothing of God nor of any man; he proposed to give nothing to God nor to any man. His riches were the increase from that which God must have given in the first place, for God made all things, but this man owned no obligation on that account and made no acknowledgment thereof. His motto was "What I have I hold" and in his own strength he proposed to stand.

Now the law of God which is at the same time the law of creation declares that no man liveth unto himself. We are all members one of another, and that is as true in the natural realm as in the spiritual. In the Millennial Age the man who does not take his rightful place in the community and assume his rightful obligations as a member of the human family will die; there is no alternative. He either fits into his destined place or he is wastage—a castaway. It is not surprising therefore that in the story Divine judgment follows immediately upon the impious man's bold declaration. "Thou fool" came the stern, scornful words "this night

shall thy soul be required of thee. Then whose shall those things be in which thou hast trusted?"

The spirit of service and sacrifice, then, is essential if we are effectively to lay up treasure in heaven. Our Lord exemplified this in the highest degree when He gave Himself on the cross for the sin of man, and undertook all that He did undertake in order that He might be able to lead men back to God. "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points proved like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4. 15). Jesus Himself said "I am among you as he that serveth" (Luke 22. 27). "Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might become rich" (2 Cor. 8. 9). That is the very negation of the attitude displayed by the man who built bigger barns in order to keep his riches.

All the same, service for one's fellows is not enough. So many Christians have made the mistake of thinking that it is, and have devoted their lives and all their powers to doing good for their neighbours and to all men, believing—and believing rightly—that the Christian commission is made up in large part of this very doing good unto all. "As we have therefore opportunity" writes the inspired Apostle "let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6. 10). "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this" says James "to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1. 27). All this is right and proper, and to the extent that we ignore the injunction to go about doing good, as Jesus went about doing good, to that extent we shall find leanness to our souls. But that is not all, and the reason why it is not all is revealed to us in the story of the rich young ruler.

He was a likeable youth, this rich young ruler. Brought up, probably, in a comfortable and cultured home, he had all the refinements of speech and bearing which the education befitting such an upbringing would involve. Jesus, looking upon him, loved him. There is a world of significance in that remark. Jesus loved all men, and because of that love He was in the world to save them: for the chronicler to record especially that Jesus loved this one it must have been evident that there was something in his freshness and sincerity that made a special appeal to the Saviour.

"All these things have I kept from my youth up!" There is no mistaking his honesty. So far as he himself could see, he had performed very faithfully all the commandments of Moses. He had been a true son of Israel, and he looked for the reward of the covenant—eternal life. Yet it was denied him, and he wanted to know why.

There were two reasons, said Jesus, two reasons which were really one. "Sell that thou hast, and give to the poor"—that was one reason. "Come, take up thy cross and follow me." That was the other: and at that the young man went away grieved, for he had great possessions.

Must we of necessity assume that the young ruler's stumbling block was the exhortation to give of his possessions to the poor? It has often been so suggested. But if this man had indeed been as scrupulous about keeping the law as he himself had averred—and Jesus did not deny the validity of his claim—he surely must already have done something for the poor, for that was enjoined in the law of Moses. Is it not much more likely that it was the second injunction that found him wanting? Whilst he could retain his comfortable home and respected station in the midst of his neighbours, dispensing his benevolence in such fashion as not to cause him any personal inconvenience or any appreciable financial loss or sacrifice, then indeed he could with clear conscience claim to have kept all these things from his youth up, and still enjoy to the full those good things of this life that were in his possession. To take up the cross was a very different proposition. He looked around at the intently listening circle of dusty, travel-stained disciples. He noted their rough clothing, their tanned faces. He knew they led a life of labour and discomfort, scorned and derided and even persecuted by those to whom they would minister. Was it *that* from which he shrank, and the prospect of a life of sacrifice and suffering that caused him to bite his lip, and draw back from the kindly gaze of Jesus to reflect awhile, and then in sadness and disappointment of heart to turn and go away sorrowing? Jesus' words to the disciples, as his figure retreated into the distance, seem to suggest as much. "*Children, how hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God!*"

The rich young ruler could have sold possessions, and given to the poor, without entering into the Kingdom of God; he could by no means enter into the Kingdom of God without he first took up his cross and followed Christ. And that, it was plain, he was not willing to do.

There is the lesson for us! Our laying up of treasure in heaven can only be if we have added to our good works the taking up of our cross to follow Christ. That means nothing less than the full and wholehearted consecration of our lives, our possessions, our talents, our abilities, all, to the service of God to be disposed in accordance with His will. Thus, and thus alone, may we rely upon the safe storage of all that we commit to God, that it may be ours again in that day when we shall need it wherewith to give life to the world. The experience we have gained and the lessons we have learned, the abilities we have developed and the talents we have improved, all will be of inestimable value to us in that day when it shall be the privilege of each one of us to carry the word of life to a sin-sick but hopeful world. It will only be by what we have developed in this Age that we shall be qualified to deal with man in the next; that which we develop now of knowledge and experience, of love and mercy, of patience and hope, of righteousness and justice, of faith in the goodness of God and understanding of the wisdom of God, all is being stored up for us, treasure in Heaven that can never be corrupted or stolen. And the power of these things will be bestowed upon us in the great Day of revealing when the kingdoms of this world have passed away, and the time has come that "the saints possessed the Kingdom," and those who have this treasure laid up for them will "shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of the Father" to the deliverance of all mankind.

BOOK REVIEWS

"*A Simple Index to the Gospels*" (Garton) S.P.C.K. 46 pp. 9d. Paper covers.

A classified list of incidents, allusions, miracles, parables and sayings of our Lord, with the texts in which they occur, seemingly covering almost any point to which quick reference may need to be made. A most useful little booklet to keep handy when at study classes. Under section 20, "Our Lord's Teaching", for example, we have on just one portion of the page the subjects of faith, fasting, fear, forgiveness, golden rule, great commandment, Holy Spirit, etc., with all Scriptures cited.

"*The Book for To-day*" (Coggan) S.P.C.K. 84 pp. 1/3. Paper covers.

A record of radio talks on the Bible, broadcast to African listeners in 1947. The book is designed to introduce the Bible to those who are unfamiliar with it, is written in an easy style and should appeal to those for whom it is intended. Whilst there is nothing in it that is new to the mature Christian it is very suitable for passing to people as a means of awakening their interest in the things of God and could do much toward clearing away popular misconceptions.

The Four Horses of the Apocalypse

(PART 5)
Conclusion

This part concludes the exposition of Rev. 4. 1-8, which appeared in our last four issues, with a review of the subject and a few general remarks on the "four horses of the Apocalypse".

* * *

Notice the progression shown in these four seals. First goes forth the Spirit of Truth, received by some, but not by the great majority. Of the latter, some treat the truth with indifference, while others adopt an attitude of active opposition. The Spirit of Enmity has its opportunity there, and persecution is the natural result. Then follows the Spirit of Darkness, which operates in the hearts and minds of all who reject the truth of the Gospel message, whether actively or not. And finally comes Death, which is the end result of all evil; "the wages of sin is death". The acceptance of the Truth in Christ brings life; conversely its non-acceptance brings death; and it is on the minds of those under the power of the spirit of darkness that the spirit of death has its opportunity of working, and has worked so greatly in the various special ways depicted in the vision.

We would repeat that which we noted earlier in our consideration of the four horses, that truth, enmity, darkness, and death have all been at work in the earth during previous ages, from the time of Adam and Eve onwards; it is the special operations of these forces during our own special age that are depicted in this Revelation vision.

And we would emphasise again the fact, shown in several ways in the vision, that each of these powerful forces has been throughout the age strictly under the Divine control; they have only operated by Divine permission, and have only been able to operate to a certain limited degree. This is definitely shown in regard to the third and fourth horses, and would be true also concerning the second, though no limit is spoken of in the vision. On the operations of the first horse and its rider, no limit would need to be set, because the Spirit of Truth was in full accord with the Divine Will.

If we meditate a little on the work of the last three horses, we cannot but note a great paradox shown in connection with them. At the beginning of the age God gave to us in Christ a wonderful manifestation of His love—a manifestation of Divine love almost too great to be put into words. As for the love displayed by Christ in giving His life a ransom for all on the cross of Calvary, it

surpasses knowledge, as Paul said (Eph. 3. 19). He was also the Light of the World; and in Him was Life—Life for all who will receive it now, and for all humanity in the age to come. Love, Light and Life were forthshown in Christ in a supreme and wonderful way at the beginning of the present age; and we *might* have expected that as a consequence mankind would have been thrilled, and the earth filled, with these beautiful things—Love and Light and Life. Instead, we have just the opposite, and at the end of the age the earth is filled with discord and discontent, darkness and death. What a contrast! What a paradox! And this amazing contrast, this extraordinary paradox, is the outcome of the going forth of these three horses, the spirits of Enmity, Darkness and Death: three of the most powerful and important forces that could operate, and that have operated, amongst mankind during the nineteen centuries of the Gospel age.

It is only as we grasp the greatness of the power of these forces, and the immense results of their operations, that the full meaning of the words of chap. 5. 2, 4 comes home to us: no one was able or worthy to open the book and to look thereon. The forces to be released were so tremendous, their activities were to be so widespread, the consequences of their work so serious, and the suffering resulting from the last three so terrible, that indeed no one but the Son of God Himself *was* worthy to take the book and to open its seals; and only He was worthy *after* He had manifested His love and faithfulness and obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, and after He had been raised from the dead and exalted to His place in the midst of the throne of the Almighty God.

Thus the correct interpretation of the four seals throws light upon their setting or context, even as the latter helps us to a proper understanding of the seals.

We conclude our study of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse by passing in review the seals as a whole, and by noting how certain logical conclusions regarding the latter fully support our exposition of the former.

1. The scroll represents the Divine purposes for the present, and possibly also for the next, age: but particularly for the present age.

Therefore the seals—the opening of which represents especially the loosening or going forward of these purposes—are of special relationship to the

present or Gospel age.

2. The Revelation can be described as the Photo-Drama of the New Creation. The chief work of the present age—the great work, the work of first importance—is the call and development of the New Creation. All other events are of minor significance compared with this.

Therefore the events of the seals must be closely, vitally, connected with the Church and the Truth. They cannot be mere secular events.

3. After the two fundamental and general visions of chaps. 4 and 5, the opening of the seals takes the first place among the subsequent visions. Further, the events of the seals are such that no one but the Lamb of God, slain, risen, and exalted to the throne, was worthy to set them in motion.

Therefore the events of the seals *must* be of very great importance; they cannot possibly be small or local events.

4. The horses and their riders only come forth when the seals are opened, and the living creatures give the word of command. This shows that the events of the seals are specially under the Divine supervision and control.

5. The seven seals form a definite series. Therefore the events of each one are connected with those of the others. This helps us in our understanding of them and should prevent us from being led into sidetracks concerning any one of them.

6. The events as a series cover the whole of the Gospel age; they begin soon after the Ascension, and take us up to the end of the age, as shown by the sixth seal and the position of the seventh. This shows us again that the seals cannot refer to small or trivial matters.

7. The horses and their riders go forth, but are not pictured as returning. This suggests that their events are of a continuous kind and of a widespread type: that they continue throughout the age, and operate throughout the earth. No small or local events would fit the picture of these horses.

To sum these points up, we would say that the events of the seals must fulfil the following conditions. They must be:—

1. Specially related to the Gospel age.
2. Vitally connected with the Church and the Truth.
3. Of great importance.
4. Under Divine supervision and control.
5. Closely connected with each other.
6. Spread over the Gospel age, as a series.
7. In regard to the first four seals, of continuous action and widespread operation.

These deductions concerning the seals as a whole are logical and virtually inescapable; and all Bible

students will surely admit that the exposition of the four horses, as the spirits of Truth, Enmity, Darkness and Death, is in full agreement with them. These four spirits are four of the greatest powers operating during the present age. They have acted throughout the age, and the events produced by them cannot be exaggerated in importance.

The exposition is in full harmony with the Scriptures, especially with the statement of Zech. 6. 5, regarding the comparable horses of Zechariah's vision, and with the book of Job, where Satan himself is depicted as going forth from the presence of God, to do his evil work by the Divine permission and under the Divine supervision and limitation. The restrictions of Job 1. 12—"only upon himself put not forth thine hand"—and of Job 2. 6—"but save his life"—are exactly comparable to that of Revelation 6. 6—"and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine". The exposition is in full harmony also with the Divine Plan as a whole—i.e., with the great Drama of the Permission of Evil. What are the last three horses, indeed, but a picture of the special permissions of evil during the present special age? Would we not expect such important events to be shown somewhere in the Revelation visions, and if so shown, would we not expect to find them occupying a place of importance? I think we should; and here we have them, in the very place expected, occurring immediately after the two great fundamental visions of Jehovah God upon the Throne, and the Lamb in the Throne.

Wonderful pictures! Wonderful Symbols! So much in so little! O, the depth of the riches indeed, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

THE END.

A READER'S COMMENT

The following observations on the series "The Four Horses of the Apocalypse" have been received from a brother who has himself made a close study of the subject and are reproduced here in the belief that they will be of interest.

* * *

In his introductory remarks the author states that if we keep clearly in mind that the events of the seals are something vitally connected with the Divine purposes for the present age, we may rightly conclude that the so-called historic fulfilment of the seals cannot be the true explanation of the visions.

Certainly the seals are vitally connected with the Divine purposes, for until they were broken the scroll of God's last Revelation to the Church would

remain secret. Beyond that their vital connection does not go, even as once you have broken the seal of a letter the seal is forgotten in your contemplation of the contents of the letter.

If we consider a literal sealed scroll, the thought conveyed is that of a record which has been sealed up and cannot be seen until the sealing is broken. In the symbol seven seals suggests a perfect sealing, the seals being arranged along the initial end of the scroll to seal it against the adjacent layer of the rolled up scroll. Hence, as in the case of the literal scroll, before what is written within can be revealed, all the seals must first be broken, so it must be the case in the symbolical scroll, in both cases the breaking of the seals having nothing to do with the contents of the scroll.

If then the scroll represents God's revelation to His servants the Church at a time during this Gospel Age when their circumstances would require such a revelation to show them the true state of affairs; then it seems that the conclusion is inescapable that the sealing visions have very little to do with the message of the scroll.

The breaking of the seals seems to have been used to represent a series of events in history to connect up from immediately after John's day to the time when the Church would need guidance to enable her to understand the extraordinary change which had come over her experiences in the world.

This is brought out in the seal visions by the fact that no mention is made of the Church until the 5th seal in which the cry goes up of those who had suffered for their faith. While their cry was the desperate one of those suffering what seemed to them to be a never ending persecution, there is no suggestion of perplexity as to why they were suffering, but only as to the length of time of such suffering. They were experiencing the fulfilment of our Lord's words to the disciples: "in the world ye shall have tribulation". The issue in that interim period up to the establishment of Latin Christianity was clear-cut: The Church suffered because they were Christians. And there seems to be a hint at the sufferings of the Church that would take place under Latin Christianity in the words "they should rest for a little season until their fellow servants also and their brethren that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled".

The next seal, the sixth, depicts in symbol that extraordinary change in the Church's experience, when the Pagan religion was overthrown, and Constantine, after defeating the protagonists of Paganism, Maximin and Licinius, adopted Christianity as the official religion of Rome. It was a tremendous social upheaval, and is well represented by the symbol of a great earthquake, and the fear which came upon the pagan inhabitants of the

Roman earth as they realised that those whom they had persecuted were now to be favoured and they cast out as it were.

With the thought of what a seal is, and that its breaking signifies something outside the special message contained in the scroll, the vision under the breaking of the first seal would seem to indicate a period shortly after John wrote Revelation. One would expect that even as in Daniel's time the universal empires of Babylon and Medo-Persia were introduced under the symbols of beasts into the visions given him to give the connection between Daniel's day and the beginning of the fulfilment of the prophecies concerning the fortunes of his people, so in John's day one would expect that Rome would be introduced into the vision granted to him. Now Pagan Rome used the horse as one of its principal national emblems, so that a horse and its rider would symbolize the Roman Empire and its director the Emperor. The changing colours would indicate important changes in the empire.

What then did the rider on a white horse indicate? The clue to the answer is found in the second seal vision where the horse is red and the rider given power to take peace from the earth. This latter implies that the first horse and its rider represented a time of peace over the Roman Empire. All historians agree that if one wished to indicate the most peaceful era of world history, there would be no hesitation in pointing to the era of the Antonines whose first emperor was Nerva. This was the era immediately subsequent to John's receiving the Revelation, and would therefore account for the horses being white. A further very interesting confirmatory clue is the bow. Roman horsemen did not use bows, but the bow was the peculiar weapon and badge of the Cretans, and the Emperor Nerva, who was the first emperor not of Roman or Italian origin, was a Cretan. It was during this era also that the Roman Empire experienced considerable expansion of its borders under conditions favourable to itself and the countries it conquered.

If the subsequent development of the Roman Empire is followed, it will be seen that the symbols of the three following horsemen fit the facts very closely.

In harmony with this interpretation of the seals we find that when the seventh seal was broken there was no accompanying vision; there was silence in heaven for the space of half an hour. This is a fitting description of the dramatic pause which would naturally follow when the last seal of this most significant scroll had been broken so that the contents of the scroll were now going to be revealed.

The Three Epistles of John

Comments on the writings
of the "Beloved Apostle"

Part II. I John 1. 6-10.

From verse six of 1 John 1, the beloved apostle begins to talk of fellowship. The theme is linked up with his previous words. In the first few verses of the chapter he has shown how the Word, the Logos, was manifested in the earth, that He was Life and the source of life, and then that that Life was the light of the world. Now he passes on to show the connection between that life and that light, and the fellowship which we claim with God and with our brethren, and which, truly entered into, is the hall-mark of our acceptance with God. "We know that we have passed from death into life, because we love the brethren" (1 John 3. 14). But such a fellowship is not easily entered into nor lightly bestowed; and the word itself implies much more than is generally supposed.

"If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not tell the truth. But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (vs : 6-7).

What is that fellowship with Him?

The word really means communion, and that in turn is the same thing as common union. The bread which we break, asks the Apostle Paul in 1 Cor. 10, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? The same word in the original there, is here rendered "fellowship". "By whom ye were called unto the fellowship—communion—of His Son Jesus our Lord" (1 Cor. 1. 9). This fellowship with God is something much more deep than a mere feeling of oneness arising from our desire to work the works of God. Abraham was called the Friend of God; David a man after God's own heart; Daniel one "greatly beloved"; and all of these entered into close converse with God and some considerable measure of understanding and knowledge of Him. But none of them—nor any others in Old Testament times—entered into the fellowship with God which John is talking about here. This fellowship, this communion, is reserved for those who in this Age come to God to be included in that "people for His Name" (Acts 15. 14) which He is taking out from the nations to become His means of world blessing and world conversion in the next Age. And the proof of this lies in the fact that the indispensable foundation of this entering into fellowship is that the blood of

Jesus Christ His Son first cleanses us from all sin. We cannot enter into this fellowship with God until that has taken place. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand" (Rom. 5. 1.). None of the heroes of Old Testament times—even although they were justified by faith (Jas. 2. 21)—could know this reconciliation to God by faith in Christ, because Christ had not yet appeared and the Ransom had not yet been given. Even Abraham, and Samuel, and Daniel, must wait until their return from the grave in the Millennial Age for that justification.

John tells us that we cannot walk in darkness and have communion with God at one and the same time, and that if we say we can, we lie, and do not the truth. The fact ought to be self-evident; but of course we tend greatly to walk in darkness without admitting or even realising the fact. We are so apt to make the best of both worlds, to reconcile the irreconcilable, to take the standards of God on our lips and by way of profession, and in action to give tacit acceptance, at least to some degree, to the standards of the world. John condemns that. He demands nothing less than absolute sincerity; only thus can we hope to walk in the light. Paul, too, is equally emphatic. "What fellowship" he enquires scornfully "hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" (2 Cor. 6. 14-16). There can be no two ways about this; if we would enter fully into communion-fellowship with God then we must renounce all those things which are not of God and give ourselves completely and unreservedly to His service, faithful to our covenant for the rest of our days. That is consecration.

It is thus that we are enabled to walk in the light, for God is light, and he who walks in fellowship with God cannot help but be walking in the light. "He that followeth me" said Jesus, "shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8. 12). John's Gospel is full of these little sayings of Jesus concerning light and the way of life: it is a theme on which his heart was evidently set. "If any man walketh in the day,

he stumbleth not, but if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth" (John 11. 9-10), and logically then, "he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth" (John 12. 35). To have fellowship with God means to dwell, by faith and in the spirit of the mind, in "the light which no man can approach unto" to be in the presence, again by faith, of Him "Whom no man hath seen, nor can see" (1 Tim. 6. 16).

This is the position we must occupy if we would have fellowship with God, and that is why it cannot be that we have fellowship with Him if we are still walking in darkness.

Now John begins to verge on to important doctrine. He begins to talk about sin. Now sin is a dread reality in the world and in our lives. Men to-day decry the idea and even Christians are oft-times disposed to treat sin as something inherent in our nature which we will one day outgrow. Human development will leave sin and the effects of sin behind, say some. That is a dangerous error. There is no substitute for the plain Bible teaching that man was originally created perfect and sinless, that sin came in from outside and was willingly received, and that in consequence all men are born under the reign and power of sin, with the effects registered in their minds and bodies. Therefore from their very birth all men are sinners. And just as sin came in from outside, so only from outside may come deliverance from sin. The way back to the perfection and sinlessness of the first man can only be by the power and help of One Who Himself was never sinful, who knew no sin, but who is "able to the uttermost to save those who come unto God by Him" (Heb. 7. 25). But not unless we recognise the fact that we are sinners and that all the world stands guilty before God can we honestly and sincerely accept the only way of freedom from sin that is possible, and so attain, at length, to the perfect state which is the Divine desire for us.

Some there were in John's day among the ranks of the Christians who began to argue that those who had been justified by faith in Christ and freed from Adamic condemnation—the sentence passed upon all the race as represented in the person of Father Adam—were on that account free from sin and that the indwelling Holy Spirit constituted their bodies sinless vessels—perfect, holy, acceptable unto God. Therefore, argued they, there could be no such thing as sin in the life of the child of God; all that was done away with by the sacrificial death of Jesus and the merit of His Atonement. A specious argument, having a semblance of truth, but truth misapplied. And how easy, after that, to go on and assert that the body's imperfections, the slips and stumblings and faults, the things that

in other men would be counted as sin, were on this account altogether ignored by God and therefore whatever was done in the body was of no consequence. So, in a very short time, it fell out that some among the Christians became guilty of the grossest acts of sin under the impression that since it was only the body that thus transgressed it was not the believer who sinned at all.

But:—

"If we say that we have no sin

We deceive ourselves

And the truth is not in us. (Vs. 8.)

If we say that we have not sinned

We make Him a liar

And His word is not in us. (Vs. 10.)

If we confess our sins

He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins

And to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

(Vs. 9.)

John cuts through all the theological argument and gets right down to the root of the matter. Even although we have been justified; even although we are no longer under condemnation; even although we have been accepted as sons of God and because of that acceptance God esteems us according to the intentions of our will and not according to the deeds of the body, it remains true that we are still in the flesh, still subject to the weaknesses and imperfections of human nature, and still liable to stumble and fall. True, we have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as Lord and King, and endeavour to put His principles into practice in our daily lives; but there is always the possibility that in consequence of some one influence or another that bears upon us in the ordinary conduct of life, we may become temporarily blinded to, or diverted from, our course, and be guilty of some action that, because it is out of accord with what we normally realise is right, is sin. There are plenty of misdemeanours of which we are liable daily to be guilty which in the Lord's pure sight are classed as sin, because they constitute violations of Divine law. That is why we have a throne of grace to which we may come daily in time of need. That is why we have an Advocate before the Father, a helper, one to stand by our side, as John goes on to tell us in a little while. A sinless man needs none of these things. A sinless man needs not to come before the Father in the name of Jesus Christ, or to claim access to the Holiest of All by faith in Him. He can come as of right, for a sinless man is the completeness of God's purpose with any individual, and when he is sinless and has demonstrated that he will always remain so he takes his place in God's permanent creation, on his own merit, and has the fullest of fellowship with his Creator and Father. Paul was in no doubt about this matter. He found

a law in his members (Rom. 7. 21) that, when the will to do good was in him, evil was still present with him, so that the good he would do, he often failed to do, and the evil he would not do, that he did. Paul knew full well that despite his whole-hearted allegiance to his Lord and the inestimable gift of justification which was his, the processes of sin were still at work in his body and that until the day of his death he must carry that burden. "Who shall deliver me from this body of death?" he cries, and gives the answer to his own question—"God, through Christ Jesus our Lord". And in the comfort of the assurance of that sure and certain deliverance at the end of his earthly course he reconciles himself to the knowledge that in the meantime "with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin" (Rom. 7. 25).

It is in this sober appraisal of our true position as men and women of this world whose hearts the Lord has touched that we find our true strength. We do not delude ourselves with the false security of a fictitious perfection and righteousness which we do not possess; neither do we suffer ourselves to be cast down at the thought of a weight of sin and imperfection of which we cannot be relieved. Our sins exist truly enough, but God has cast them all behind his back (Isa. 38. 17). Our bodies are imperfect and frail, without strength, mentally and physically, but God has promised to clothe the mind with a new body, which is neither imperfect or frail, in due time. Our character development, our growth into the likeness of Christ, the result of all our strivings and efforts and prayer in our walk before God, will all be carried over into the spiritual world and impressed upon the new spiritual body, but the weakness and sin of the old human body will be left behind. Then we shall indeed be able to rejoice in the fact that we are without sin; but as for the present, if we claim to be without sin, we both deceive ourselves and make God a liar. On the other hand, if we recognise the true position, and remain contrite and repentant before God for every respect in which we fall short of His ideal for us, for the little failings as well as the big faults, then He is indeed faithful and just to forgive us those things and to cleanse us from all the unrighteousness which must inevitably cling to us if we fail thus to walk in holiness before Him. The Word that is life and light to us can only remain so if we prepare the way and maintain the way by repentance and confession. That is the privilege and responsibility of the disciple; the heart thus open to the power of the Holy Spirit becomes a receptacle of Divine life and a medium for the shining of Divine light.

To be continued

UNSUCCESSFUL WORKERS

Desponding Christians do not make successful workers or valiant soldiers. "Feeble-Hearts", and "Ready-to-Halts", and "Little Faiths" win no battles, and wear no crowns. They are so occupied with themselves, with their own experiences, their own evidences, their changing moods and feelings, that they have no time for manly, noble service. They are so busy trying to perform "acts of faith", and having performed them, they are so intent upon analysing them, in order to ascertain whether they be all of the exact quality or quantity which will recommend them to God, that they leave no space for "joy in blessing", and no room for the free, large-hearted labour which such joy cannot fail to lead to. Tossed up and down on the waves of unbelief and fear, they have no heart to work. Shutting their eyes against the light, they grope their way uncertainly, and cannot run the race. Afraid to believe, but not afraid to doubt; afraid to trust, but not afraid to distrust: doubting themselves, and making that a reason for doubting God; putting away peace, and giving full scope to gloom; refusing light, but letting darkness reign within them; they are not in a condition to do hard work—nay, to do any work at all. Strength comes from joy, and of that joy they have none. They refuse both food and medicine, and they become lean and sickly. They are fitter for the hospital than the battlefield. They seem, too, to get more and more emaciated, though the food provided is abundant. Labouring under what physicians call atrophy, the more they eat the less they seem to be fed.

(*Horatius Bonar.*)

Those of us who are Christian workers need a warning—and this needs to be repeated often. Let us, when studying our Bibles, forget the platform, the Sunday-school, the Bible-class, and read "unprofessionally", for ourselves alone. "Open it", Bishop Moule once said, "as simply as if you were on Crusoe's island, and were destined to live and die there alone with God".

* * *

Let us face seriously up to the fact that the Sinless One has invited us and assured us that we may, in very deed and truth, "drink of His Cup", and let no doctrinal mis-understanding deprive us of our blessed privilege therein. It will be a serious matter for us if we allow our ill-defined doctrines to blind us to the primary purpose behind our "calling".

THE QUIET TIME

"My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places."

ALL IN ALL

*In Christ all fulness dwells; from Him proceeds
All fallen man, poor, wretched, guilty, needs,
In Him the contrite, bruised in spirit, find
Whate'er can heal the sorrows of the mind—
Forgiving love, that saves from blank despair;
Rich grace, that banishes each anxious care;
Soft pity, that relieves the bursting sigh,
And truth, revealing joys that never die.
Thrice happy they who to His word attend,
His favour seek and on His strength depend;
To share His smile and in His name rejoice.
To them, reclaimed in mercy from the fall
And Heavenward marching, Christ is all-in-all.
In want, their treasure—in distress their stay.
In gloom, their dayspring; vigour in decay—
'Mid foes, their guard—in solitude their guest—
In storms, their hiding place—in toils, their rest.
In bonds, their freedom—their relief in pain.
In life their glory, and in all things, gain.*

GOD TURNS A LEAF

Have you not noticed that in the history of this planet God turns a leaf about every two thousand years?

God turned a leaf, and this world was fitted for human residence. About two thousand more years passed along and God turned another leaf, and it was the Deluge. About two thousand more years passed on and it was the appearance of Christ. Almost two thousand more years have passed by, and He will probably soon turn another leaf. What it shall be I cannot say. It may be the demolition of all these monstrosities of turpitude, and the establishment of righteousness in all the earth. He can do it, and He will do it. I am as confident as if it were already accomplished. (*Talmadge.*)

THE KING WHO GAVE

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

DISCIPLINE

The family discipline is the discipline of wisdom. He who administers it is the God only wise. What deep wisdom there must be in all His dealings; He knows exactly what we need and how to supply it, He knows what evils are to be found in us and how they may best be removed. His training is no random work, it is carried on with exquisite skill. The time, the way and the instrument are all according to the perfect wisdom of God.

FAITH

All things are possible to him who *believes*; they are less difficult to him who *hopes*, they are more easy to him who *loves*, and still more easy to him who perseveres in the practice of these three virtues.

PRAYER

The poet has well defined prayer as being "The soul's sincere desire, uttered or unexpressed". Another has well declared that it is "The Christian's vital breath"—that is to say, Christian character cannot be maintained without prayer any more than a human life can be maintained without breathing. Who has not noticed that all the great Bible characters used of the Almighty were accustomed to go to him regularly in prayer and to seek for guidance from Him in respect to every matter. Even the great Redeemer, holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners, needed to pray to the Father—needed His fellowship and communion—needed to be in touch with the Infinite One. Several of his prayers are recorded, and we are told that He spent the entire night in prayer on more than one occasion.

WAIT

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

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



THE QUESTION BOX



Q. I have heard Isa. 6. 4-6 applied by a speaker to the Jews now returning to Palestine and to their present organisation as a nation. Can this Scripture be correctly so applied? If verse 6 belongs to them as a promise ("Priests of the Lord") what order of priesthood could it be?

Do we not understand that God's Priesthood for all mankind is the Melchizedek Order—Christ and His Body Members—that the Aaronic Order was the "Shadow" and that "Our Great High Priest" with His associate Under Priests will be the "substance", the true and only Priesthood, operating from God's Throne?

A. From Isaiah's 40th chapter onward the prophet develops the theme of what has been called the "suffering servant". The whole burden of those magnificent prophecies is that God is developing a people for His purpose of world conversion in the next Age. This people is accepted for its future work because of its utter and complete consecration to God and His service, thus becoming His "servant". It is qualified for that future work by its willing acceptance of hardship and suffering now, thus earning the title "suffering servant" although that precise expression does not occur in Isaiah. What is made very plain as one studies these chapters is that "Israel after the flesh", the natural descendants of Abraham, are to have an important place in this work of administering the new Kingdom and bringing Divine blessings to the nations, so that in some measure they may be regarded as part of the "servant", although in its primary sense the title belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is described from this viewpoint in the celebrated 53rd chapter. The essential principle is that the people described in Isaiah 61 are wholly consecrated to God and qualified by reason of past suffering and hardship endured in His Name to take up the glorious work described in that chapter. That cannot be said either of the nation now gathering into Palestine nor yet of any considerable party among them. They do not manifest one single element of the characteristics which must mark out the earthly Seed of Abraham, the holy people of God, in the Last Days. They are organised as one of the "kingdoms of this world", with civil administration, army, navy and air force, and everything else, modelled after the pattern of the world around

them. As such, that nation as now organised would share in the ruin that will come upon all the kingdoms of the world when our Lord takes to Himself His great power and commences His reign.

What do present events indicate, then, in prophecy? Certainly they indicate that the land is being prepared in a physical sense for the coming of that people. The foretold prosperity is on the way and the territory is being reclaimed from the grasp of the nations and developed for the habitation of that holy people that shall eventually inherit it. Very possibly many of those now living there will experience a change of heart by reason of some great happening that we cannot as yet foresee, and Israel's blindness begin to be turned away. But the fact must be stressed that the people who will hail the coming of the Kingdom in that land, and who will be in control when the Word of the Lord begins to go forth from Jerusalem, will be composed of individuals prepared beforehand for their mission and will come to the scene ready for the work. Chief among them will be the "Ancient Worthies", the faithful prophets and other mighty men of God of past ages, restored from the grave to take control of affairs in the new world.

The verse "*Ye shall be called the Priests of the Lord; men shall call you the ministers of our God*" need not be taken in too "theological" a sense. Isaiah was not necessarily thinking either of the Melchizedek or the Aaronic priesthoods when he spoke those words. His point was that the mission of the holy people in the Holy Land in the Millennial Age will be to act as priests to mankind—dispensers of Divine favour. Men will look upon them as their ministers, the ones to explain to them the things of God. The Aaronic Priesthood will have passed away for ever; that priesthood belonged to the Age of Sacrifice and in the Millennium sacrifice of that kind will find no place. The true sacrifice for sin, our Lord's death, will be fully efficacious for "every man that cometh into the world". The figure of the Melchizedek Priesthood is fulfilled in the rulership of Christ and His Church over the world, ruling as kings and priests, like Melchizedek himself in the days of Canaan. There is no Scriptural suggestion that the earthly people in the Holy Land are pictured in the symbol of the Melchizedek priesthood. But so far as mankind in general are concerned, they will be the visible representatives of that priesthood and men will acknowledge them as such.

A King in Righteousness

(Continued)

A study in the Millennial
Visions of Isaiah

"By me kings reign, and princes decree justice" declares Wisdom, speaking as a person in Prov. 8. 15-16. "By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth." That is the ideal but it does not appear in practice as yet, and will not until the king that shall reign in righteousness has commenced His beneficial rule. In the day to come Wisdom will be enthroned on high and there will no longer be the spectacle of earth's rulers hesitating and vacillating about their policies, sacrificing principle to expediency or quite openly and frankly using their positions to oppress their subjects and serve their own indulgence. Righteousness includes every right and uplifting quality, and a king who reigns in righteousness is a king who is guided in all his ways by unerring wisdom. So the King of the Millennial Age will be characterised by that wisdom from above which James says is pure, peaceable, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and hypocrisy.

"Princes shall rule in judgment." (vs. 1.) This must without doubt refer to the "princes in all the earth" of Psa. 45, the "judges and counsellors" of Isa. 1. 26. The writer to the Hebrews tells, in his eleventh chapter, of men who maintained their loyalty and faithfulness to God at different times in past history and were laid aside in death "not having received the promise" but yet were persuaded that God had "prepared for them a city". And so He has. In the day that Christ reigns as spiritual King from His exalted place in the heavens, these men of Old Testament days, these "Ancient Worthies" as they have been called, will be raised from the dead to assume the positions of administration upon earth for which their past lives' experiences have qualified them. Sterling characters such as Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Samuel, Daniel, Nehemiah—certainly Isaiah himself—besides others whose names have not been recorded and whose deeds are not known, will certainly be found in the forefront of affairs in that day. They will be men who can be trusted with the oversight of affairs upon earth because they, like the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, have esteemed the service of God and of their fellow-men of greater worth than anything else that life can offer. Already well versed in the plans and purposes of God, and firm in their stand for the principles of Divine government, they will indeed be "princes" that "rule in judgment".

The manner in which these "princes" will take

control of earth's affairs and begin to lead mankind into the ways of peace is somewhat problematical. It is evident that their raising from the dead must be some appreciable time before the revelation of their identity to the world at large; they all will quite obviously require some time to become adjusted to life as it is lived to-day and to acquire the necessary knowledge of the course of history between their original lives on earth—two, three or more millenniums ago—and the time of their awakening. It may well be that their obviously exceptional intellectual powers and their quick perception of humanity's troubles will speedily bring them to the forefront so that men are half ready to accept them as leaders when the tremendous manifestation of Divine intervention that is to mark the establishment of the Kingdom occurs. Suffice it then to realise that when they are revealed they will be men who can be trusted, princes who "rule in judgment".

"And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." (ch. 32. 2.)

Who is this "man"? Are we to understand a third factor in the ruling administration of the new Kingdom here introduced to notice, or in the alternative another aspect of the rulers already mentioned? There seems to be little doubt that the "king" of vs. 1 is here referred to. He is a king, but he is not like earth's usual kings, remote, untouchable, surrounded by a panoply of royalty which separates him from the touch or gaze of the common multitude. He is, as it were, one of them, one who knows their condition and their needs, and can claim to have walked with them, borne their griefs and shared their sorrows besides carrying those same sorrows. He is a merciful and faithful king because he knows what his subjects must have for their true welfare and happiness and he intends them to have it. And the first thing they need, he knows full well, is defence and protection. They have been so buffeted and tormented, persecuted and driven, by enemies of all kinds in life before, that now they need more than anything else a time of respite from trouble, a freedom from fear and apprehension, that they may begin to take fresh heart, and look up to the heavens, and listen to the voice that is to speak to them in words of wise guidance and vital instruction. So the first aspect

of this kingly work of the Millennial Age is couched in terms indicative of covering and of protection. "A man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." The simile is taken from Palestinian scenery. The hot winds from the *midbar*, the southern desert lying between Judea and the Red Sea, laden with sand and dust, beat fiercely upon the unprotected traveller, so that, like Jonah at Nineveh in similar plight, he might well wish to die and not live. This king will be a protection from the incessant winds of adversity and give the traveller time to recover. He will defend from the rains and tempests of disaster. He will provide refreshment and sustenance, "rivers of water in a dry place", and He will be as the shadow of a great rock on a sun-baked plain, tempering the heat of midday with His presence.

One cannot help noticing the care with which these symbols are selected, as if Isaiah meant very definitely to indicate the protection that would be given, in that day, from the great plagues that do at this present time afflict humanity. His four symbols are wind, waters (the tempest), drought, and noon-day heat. Those four are symbolic in the Scriptures of great curses that afflict mankind—war (wind and tempest), famine (drought) and pestilence (heat). The fear of all these things will disappear completely when Christ is king and is in control; violence and want shall be no more. This man will be as an hiding place and men will realise as never before the meaning of the old saying "the name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe".

Zechariah, much later on, saw this king in the glory of His symbolic manhood, this Son of David who is also David's Lord, and said of Him (6. 12) "*Behold the Man whose name is the BRANCH*" (His very descent from David in the days of His flesh becomes a title of honour forevermore) "*and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord . . . and shall sit and rule upon his throne, and he shall be a priest upon his throne.*" There is some clear indication here that, in the Millennial Day, men will be constantly reminded that the glorious One Who is now their King was once one of themselves, walking the earth with them, talking to them about their troubles and triumphs, their joys and sorrows, sympathising, counselling and helping . . .

"*And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken. The heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly.*" (vs. 3-4.) Here the work of the Millennium commences in earnest. The first

necessity of the sin-blinded and sin-weakened human race is education, instruction, and it must be given without any opposing influence being allowed to retard its work. The arch-enemy of mankind, Satan, will have been bound for the entire period, the "thousand years" of Rev. 21. 1, and there will no longer be blindness and deafness imposed from without. No more will it be said as it is said of this present day "the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them". (2 Cor. 4. 4.) Leeser seems to appreciate this fact when in his translation he renders this passage "the eyes of those that see shall not be blinded *again*". They were blinded once, in the past, but now they shall see, and see more and more plainly as they make progress in the knowledge of the things of God that are manifest in that Day. "The heart also of the rash" says Leeser again "shall be attentive *in order to know*". There will be a thirst for knowledge and men will eagerly come to the fountain of wisdom that they might learn the way of life.

Now the prophet turns himself and surveys another class of men who will be in evidence in that day. Not all will come to the proffered way of life for not all will want to embrace the ways of righteousness. Some there will be who, at first at any rate, will want none and will have none of this new order of love and unselfishness, and who will endeavour at least to go back to the old ways of self and sin. They will be quite unable to harm their fellows, for nothing will be permitted to cause any kind of hindrance to those seeking the way of righteousness—"they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain"—but those whose hearts are fully set in them to do evil will succeed in doing a lot of damage to themselves and unless they do eventually repent and come to the fountain of life they must inevitably reap sin's penalty—death. But Isaiah is not seeing so far as that in this particular vision; in fact he seems to be viewing only the commencement of the Age, its first early years, and his words must be understood in that light. What he does say is illuminating enough. He says that there will still be vile (Heb. *nabbal*, brutish, worthless, sensual) persons and that they will still speak and work their villainy with the object of oppressing their fellow-creatures. But the "liberal"—noble, bountiful, is the meaning of the word—will have devised effectual counter-measures and in consequence the machinations of the vile will be of no effect.

The Septuagint gives what is perhaps the clearest rendering of this particular passage—at least the sense is more easily understandable in relation to

the context—and when applied to the operations of those who in the early days of the Kingdom attempt to oppose its work is very eloquent. “*For the fool shall speak foolish words, and his heart shall meditate vanities, and to perform lawless deeds, and to speak error against the Lord, to scatter hungry souls, and he will cause the thirsty souls to be empty. For the counsel of the wicked will devise iniquity, to destroy the poor with unjust words, and ruin the cause of the poor in judgment. But the godly have devised wise measures, and this counsel shall stand.*” (vs. 6-8.)

These are they who in another place are said to “yield feigned obedience”. Outwardly obedient to the laws of the Kingdom, conforming to the general regulations which will be made for the conduct of daily life in general harmony with the principles of righteousness, they will nevertheless be seeking

opportunity to work their nefarious schemes to the detriment of others and most certainly will refrain from that service of helping others that is to be so characteristic a feature of Kingdom conditions. The parable of the sheep and goats makes mention of these same. These are they who, standing before the great white throne, are accused that, having the opportunity to do good to their fellows for whom Christ died, refused so to do, and the Christ the King tells them that in that failure they offend, not only against their fellows, but against Him also. Refusing to accept in their own lives those principles by which alone human life on earth—or life on any plane of being—can be conducted harmoniously and to give glory to God, they are but as the wastage of God’s creation and can have no part or lot in that edifice which He is building to stand for all eternity. *To be concluded*

The Voice of the Monuments

6. The Babylonian Story of the Flood.

In the year 1872 George Smith, an assistant at the British Museum, was engaged in sorting and classifying fragments of cuneiform tablets when he came across a piece bearing the words “. . . on Mount Nisir the ship stood still. Then I took a dove and let her fly”. He realised at once that he had found a tablet bearing the Babylonian version of the Flood story, and after searching for and discovering further fragments was able to piece the story together in a fairly complete form.

That the Babylonians had their story of the Flood was already well known and had been for centuries. Many ancient historians had recorded the fact and some had quoted portions of it. But this was the first time that modern scholars had set eyes upon one of the actual tablets bearing the record.

The pieces assembled by George Smith had come from the library of Asshur-bani-pal, king of Assyria in the days of Manasseh king of Judah, shortly after the death of Isaiah and not quite seven centuries before Christ. They were soon found to be copies of older tablets, and to form part of a great epic poem describing the deeds of one Gilgamesh, king of Erech, at a remote time which might fairly be said to correspond with the days of Eber the ancestor of the Hebrews (Gen. 11. 14-17) a good while after the death of Noah but long before the birth of Abraham. Gilgamesh, smitten with a deadly disease, had made his way through difficulty and danger to where his ancestor Khasis-atra lived,

on the other side of the waters of death, to beg of him the secret of life and health. Khasis-atra, after granting his request, proceeded to tell him how he himself in his own lifetime had been saved from the waters of the Great Flood.

Since George Smith’s time a number of other copies of the story, belonging to various earlier dates, have been found. The oldest, deciphered by Langdon in 1912, was written as far back as 2100 B.C. which is round about the time of Abraham. Some of the copies are in the Semitic language, and some are in the older Sumerian. They differ in details, as might be expected from a narrative which has been told and re-told, copied and re-copied, century after century, for several thousands of years, but the main features show unmistakably that here is the story of Noah, preserved through generations of Noah’s descendants in lines other than that of Abraham and the Hebrews.

As might be expected, the accounts are set against the background of those mythologies of “gods many” that had their origin after the Flood, when the clear knowledge of God that was the possession of the sons of Noah had faded from the minds of so many of their posterity. The stories tell how the gods, angry with men, decided to destroy them by means of a great Deluge. The god of the sea, Ea, determined that he would save one man who had been faithful to the gods. That man’s name

is given in the Semitic versions as Khasis-atra and in the Sumerian versions as Ziudsuddu. In both cases he is represented as being the *tenth* and last king to reign before the Deluge. (Noah, it will be remembered was the *tenth* of the antediluvian patriarchs.) The story follows very generally the Bible account, particularly as respects the sending forth of the birds and the appearance of the rainbow, this latter being represented as the jewelled necklace of the goddess Ishtar spread across the sky by way of guarantee that the Flood would not come again. At the end, Khasis-atra and his wife are taken to dwell for ever "at the mouth of the rivers"—the Sumerian paradise.

The value of these tablets lies in the evidence they offer that long before Abraham's time, in the country of his birth, there existed such records of the Flood of Noah. Embellished with fanciful details as they undoubtedly are, having been incorporated into various poetic compositions with all the licence that poets take with such things, they must, nevertheless, have originated from a source which also provided the basis of the story that now comprises the sixth to eighth chapters of Genesis. We may reasonably say that the Bible account came from the hand of Noah or from someone writing during his lifetime—for he survived the Flood for some three hundred and fifty years. That account was preserved by the sons of Shem who settled in North Syria. When, after a lapse of centuries, those Semites moved down into Mesopotamia they found that the sons of Ham, who had by then set up the Sumerian civilisation, had preserved *their* story of the Flood, altered to suit their system of many gods, but substantially the same.

Most of the accounts, when translated literally, are difficult to understand. The following rendering is not a translation but a paraphrase aimed at giving the general sense of the combined accounts. The reader who is familiar with the Genesis narrative will be able to take note of the points of similarity and difference, and realise that here, despite the differences, there is independent testimony to the antiquity, and the accuracy, of the Bible story of the Flood.

"I will tell thee, O Gilgash, the story of my preservation, and of the determination of the gods. The city of Shuruppak, the city that thou knowest is beside the Euphrates, was already ancient, but it was a city in which men did not honour the gods. I alone served the gods. Now the gods determined to bring a deluge. They took counsel together; Anu, the chief; Bel, the counsellor; Nebo, the messenger, Nergal and Adar, and Ea, the eternal lord. Now Ea repeated their plans in a dream. 'O thou mortal' he said, 'thou man of Shuruppak, thou son

of Ubara-Tutu, build thou a vessel and finish it speedily, for by a deluge I am going to destroy all things wherein is life. Now of the vessel which thou shalt build, the length shall be six hundred cubits and the breadth and height sixty cubits. Cover it with a roof and then launch it on the deep.'

"Having comprehended this, I said to Ea, the lord 'When I have built this vessel in accordance with thy command, the people of the city, young and old, and the elders will deride me. What shall I say unto them?' Ea answered and said to me 'O mortal, speak to them thus, He that insults me shall surely be punished, for the protection of the gods is upon me, and I will go down into the deep to dwell with Ea, the lord; but upon you will be poured out a copious deluge, from that which is on high and that which is below'".

"So the strong men brought all that was needful and on the fifth day the two sides of the ship were raised. On the sixth day I fitted its beams and its roof. On the seventh day I built its floors. On the eighth day I divided it into rooms. On the ninth day I caulked the chinks and painted the inside and the outside with bitumen. Then men came bringing on their heads chests of provisions. I slew oxen and lambs and provided that there should be rations for each day. Oil and wine I collected as the waters of a river.

"So at the rising of the sun the vessel was completed and I had filled two-thirds of the ship with its lading and goods. All that I possessed of silver and gold I had laded. All that I possessed of the seed of life I had laded. I made all to descend into the vessel, my kindred and family, my servants, both men and women, the cattle of the field and the wild beasts of the plain, and all the mariners.

"Then Shamash (*the sun-god*) declared the time had come. 'This night' said he 'It will rain abundantly from heaven. Enter thou into thy vessel and close the door.' And there came the hour which he had declared, saying 'This night it will rain abundantly from heaven' and I ascended into the vessel and closed the doorway, and having closed the door, I entrusted the vessel and all that it contained to Puzur-Amurri the pilot.

"Then up from the horizon rose a black cloud as from the foundations of heaven. Raman (*the storm-god*) thundered in the midst of it. Nebo and Sharra (*the messengers of the gods*) marched before it, and as they came over the mountains and plains devastation came with them. Nergal the mighty came dragging all behind him and Ninurta advanced, overthrowing all that he met. The Annunaki (*spirits of the earth*) brandished their torches, and shrivelled the land with their fire; the

floods of Raman (*the rain-god*) swelled up to the sky and the earth became without form and void like a desert. They broke up the face of the land and destroyed all living beings from the surface of the earth. So the fearful Deluge reached up to the heavens and all that was light became darkness. Brother saw brother no longer; the gods from heaven above were stricken with terror. To the highest heaven, the heaven of Anu, they fled, and cowered like dogs.

"Then Ishtar, the great goddess (*Venus*) cried like a child, and spoke to the gods. 'Mankind is returned unto clay; this is the evil I declare to the gods. I gave birth to these men and now like fish they float on the waters'. And the gods wept with her and were silent in their assembly.

"For six days and seven nights the deluge continued, the wind and the water sweeping the land in their strength. Then on the seventh day the tempest, which like a besieging army had been raging, was lulled. The deluge assuaged, the sea grew calm, and the rain ceased. I looked closely on the scene; lo, there was no sound, and all mankind had returned to their clay. The bodies floated like river weed. I opened the doorway, and on to my face streamed the sunshine; overcome by sadness, I sat down and wept, and my tears flooded my face. Then, gazing into the distance, I scanned the whole circle of the horizon. There was no land.

"But the vessel drifted to the land of Nisir, and the mountain of Nisir arrested the vessel and did not allow it to pass. One day, two days, the mountain of Nisir held the vessel, and did not allow it to pass. Three days, four days, the mountain of Nisir held the vessel, and did not allow it to pass. Five days, six days, the mountain of Nisir held the vessel, and did not allow it to pass. Then at the dawn of the seventh day I loosed a dove; she went to and fro, and returned, for she found no alighting-place. I sent forth a swallow; she went to and fro, and returned, for she found no alighting-place. I sent forth a raven; she went, and as she went she saw the abating of the waters. She ate as she waded, and splashed, and returned not unto me.

"Then unto the four winds of heaven I loosed all the beasts, and offered a sacrifice. I raised an altar of burnt-offering on the peak of the mountain. Seven vases of wine I devoted, and sweet cane and cedar and myrtle for the fire. And the gods smelt the incense and like flies they assembled around the offering. Then came the great goddess Ishtar, the Queen of the gods, and she raised on high her necklace of jewels, the great zones that Anu made for her glory (*the rainbow*) and thus she spake.

"O ye gods, I will rather forget this my necklace of sapphires, than not keep these days in remem-

brance, nor ever forget them. Though the rest of the gods may come to this my offering, yet Bel, alone of the gods, may not come to the offering, because Bel hath brought on the Deluge and consigned all my people to destruction'.

"From afar off Bel espied the vessel, and in drawing nigh, he stopped, and was filled with anger against the gods. 'Hath any of mortals escaped? Surely never a man could have lived through this deluge!' Then said Ninurta to the warrior Bel, 'Who could have devised such a plan save Ea, the lord, for Ea knoweth all things!' Then spake Ea unto Bel and said 'O thou of the gods, thou warrior, why didst thou without understanding bring on this Deluge? Yea, let the sin of the sinner be visited upon him; let the guilt of the guilty be visited upon him; but have mercy that he be not altogether cut off. Have clemency that he perish not forever. Instead of thy making another deluge, let lions come to afflict men. Instead of thy making another deluge, let hyenas come to afflict men. Instead of thy making another deluge, let famine come, that the land may languish. Instead of thy making another deluge, let plague come and let men be decimated. Lo, I revealed not the determination of the gods; but to Khaxis-atra I gave a dream, and he interpreted the secret'.

"Deliberating on this counsel, Bel came up to the vessel. By the hand he raised me, and by my side caused my wife to stand. Bent-kneed we knelt before him as our foreheads he touched, blessing us. He spake, saying 'Khaxis-atra hitherto hath been mortal. Lo, from henceforth Khaxis-atra and his wife shall be equal to the gods; in the far-away land at the mouth of the rivers Khaxis-atra shall dwell'. So they carried me away and caused me to dwell at the mouth of the rivers."

* * *

There are several notable points in the account. Ea, the sea-god, is pictured as being kindly disposed toward mankind, whilst Bel, the warrior god, is intent on their destruction. Was this an early effort to reconcile the apparent discrepancy between the "goodness and the severity of God"? Ea admits the necessity of retribution for sin, but pleads for mercy that the sinner "be not altogether cut off". The ordinary hazards of nature, wild beasts, famine, pestilence, are to be the Divine scourges rather than universal destruction. The poetic likening of the rainbow to the goddess Ishtar's necklace of jewels "the great zones that Anu (the sky-god) made for her glory" is noteworthy and confirms the Biblical account of the rainbow being set as a token of God's promise not again to destroy the earth by a flood.

A SICK-BED REVERIE

I looked out on the harvest fields abroad,
 And watched the busy reapers to and fro,
 I longed to tread the path the Master trod
 Who said "The fields are white—into them go."
 And yet while longing in that work to share
 And help to gather in the golden grain,
 My portion was to stay at home and bear
 The lot of those who suffer weary pain.
 I mused awhile—and ever and anon
 Sad thoughts came o'er me filling mind and heart
 That I should thus be left at home alone
 While others went to bear a nobler part.
 I felt like one who had, unwittingly
 Committed some great wrong—which unapproved
 Had been detected by the Master's eye—
 And it had grieved Him who I so much loved.
 Then like a naughty school-boy I was sent
 To "toe the line"—apart from all the rest
 Who, busy with their lessons came and went,
 And worked with diligence and happy zest.
 And then the tenor of my thought was changed
 From scenes of school-boys' penalties and pain,
 And harvest fields once more before me ranged
 Where reapers still were binding golden grain.
 The Master of the reapers came to me
 And spake in gentle accents soft and sweet,
 "My child," He said, "I've other work for thee
 Which thou canst do while sitting at My feet.
 Thy strength indeed is small—thy longing great,
 Thou would'st with others in the harvest toil,
 But they can serve who stay at home and wait—
 And share at length with those who bring the
 spoil.
 Remember those of old who bore a part
 In lifting heavy hands—while others fought,
 So now are those who bear the sweat and smart
 Of toil, or are with other burdens fraught."
 I wakened from my dreaming—and I felt
 Like one refreshed and strengthened for my part,
 And in my soul was comfort—while I knelt
 Before Him who had soothed my weary heart.
 I pleaded for His choicest blessing, where
 My brethren toiled and bore the heat of day;
 For others who had burdens hard to bear
 Or "wandered in a solitary way."
 For sick ones—sad ones—those who lonely go
 Upon the wayside, hill, or busy street—
 To scatter gems of bright and varied hue,
 Or crumbs of comfort bringing blessing sweet.
 For all who in the Master's service share
 I prayed—and with Him held communion sweet,
 And many lessons thus—both rich and rare
 I learn—while calmly resting at His feet.
 And when the "spoils" at length are Homeward
 borne,

By those who heard the thrilling battle cry,
 And weary workers, who with toil are worn
 All meet at last—no more they'll wonder why
 The sad had joy, the weary ones found rest—
 The pilgrim lone was cheered upon his way—
 The warrior's faith was strong and stood the test
 Of conflict keen upon the world's highway—
 Because they'll know that when rewards are given,
 And crowns allotted to the victors fair,
 There will be those among them who had striven
 To bear them up in arms of faith and prayer.
 O, Master dear! my willing heart would seek
 To do—or suffer—as Thy choice may be;
 Content to have my portion with the meek
 Who gladly leave themselves—and all to Thee!

The constant unfolding of God's plan has given us who live in this day a deeper understanding of "one-ness with Christ" than Luther or Wesley could ever appreciate—not because of any lack or deficiency in their personal consecration to their God; but because the tide of knowledge has rolled on and we to-day, with open eyes, behold glories in the Divine Plan of which they never dreamed.

* * *

In that higher, holier sphere of life, outside and above the range of our dull human senses, where we contact things, which the eye sees not, and the ear hears not, nor does the heart of man conceive, there the Throne of Grace awaits our coming, by day or night, what time our weaknesses lie heavily upon our chastened souls.

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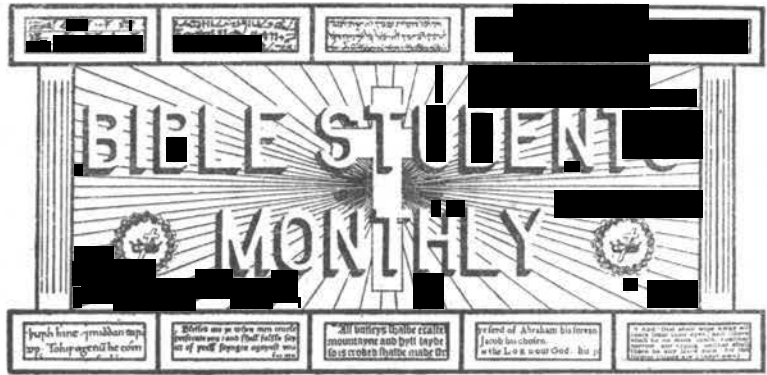
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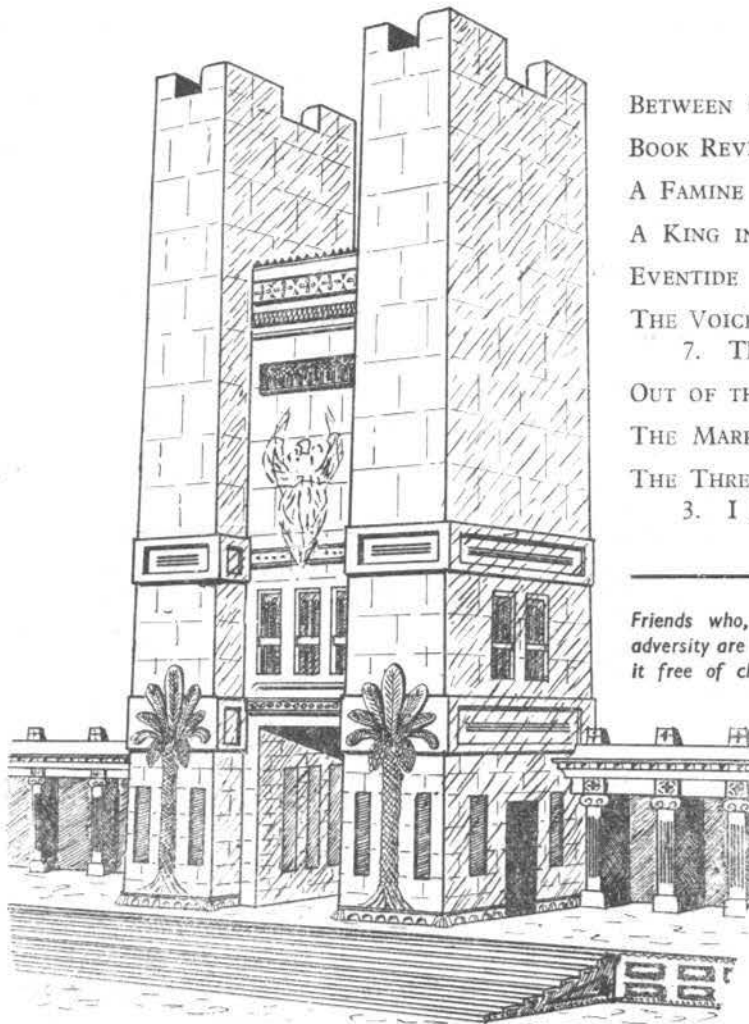


Thou, therefore, endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.



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MARCH, 1950



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

BETWEEN OURSELVES

The date of the Memorial Service this year is Friday, March 31st. On the evening of that day friends will be meeting in many places to remember the great event of nearly two thousand years ago which is the basis of our faith and of the hope of the world.

* * *

Communications in connection with the Benevolent Fund (for relieving needy friends within the confines of Great Britain and Ireland) should be sent to Bro. E. Allbon, 20, Sunnymede Drive, Ilford, Essex.

Communications in connection with the German Relief Fund, and gifts of food or clothing for the same, should go to Bro. H. E. Nadal, 35, Palace Gardens, Buckhurst Hill, Essex.

* * *

The attention of American and Canadian friends is drawn to the revised prices of publications on last page, consequent upon devaluation. Remittances are best sent by dollar notes.

Bible, the appropriate texts relating to that particular point, in the same way as do the marginal references in most Bibles but in much more comprehensive fashion. Thus if any particular passage is being considered in class study or in private study, reference to that passage in this book yields a wealth of references to other texts bearing upon the matter. As a speedy method of finding Scriptures bearing upon any point under discussion the book is very useful, and since the arrangement follows the order of the books of the Bible, reference to any point is very speedy. As an example, the verses of the 13th chapter of Revelation have, in all, 244 text references to other related Scriptures. The one criticism that must be passed is that the print is unusually small and although this clearly is due to the necessity for limiting the size of the book—there are half-a-million text references and that takes up a good deal of space—it is probable that one with eyesight below normal would find the constant use of the book without optical aids somewhat trying.

BOOK REVIEWS

"*The Septuagint*" (Bagster) 1,130 pp. 32/- (\$4.75) post free from Welling.

This is a new edition—for some six or seven years this valuable work has been out of print. It consists of the Greek text of the Septuagint with the English translation printed in parallel columns. The Septuagint was the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible—our Old Testament—made about two hundred and fifty years before Christ, for the benefit of the Greek-speaking world. It was the Bible in common use at the time of the First Advent and many of the New Testament quotations from the Old Testament are from the Septuagint version. It is of interest mainly to students; the rendering is by no means so pleasing as is our familiar Authorised Version and although it has considerable value for comparative purposes and does in many instances render the true sense of the original better than does the A.V., it is much too extravagant to claim, as do some, that it is superior to, or more correct than, the Authorised Version. At the same time every serious student of the Scriptures cannot fail to be helped by having a Septuagint at his side.

"*The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*" (Bagster) 778 pp. 17/- (\$2.50) post free from Welling.

This is a new edition of a book that is of particular value to students. It sets out, under the various significant words of every verse in the

Gone from Us

Sis. F. Easterford (London)

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

LONDON MONTHLY MEETING

Saturday, 18th March, 1950
6.30—8.30 p.m.

In the Tudor Hall
CAXTON HALL

Caxton Street, Westminster, S.W.1
5 mins. St. James Park Station and Victoria Street

*Praise and Worship
Fellowship*

*A talk on the Christian outlook for today
and an opportunity for questions
A Scriptural address by guest speaker*

Chairman: Bro. V. Scott.
Speakers: Bro. S. H. French.
Bro. P. D. Walton.

A FAMINE IN THE LAND

A TALK FOR
THE TIMES

"The days come that I will send a famine in the land: not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the word of the Lord" (Amos 8. 11).

That old Hebrew prophet was a far-sighted man. He knew that the course of history could end only in one way; the continued ignoring of God would at last lead to almost complete ignorance of His Word. The prophets of old had great reverence for such of the written Word as existed in their days; there was not much of it but what there was became the rule of life by which they lived and the infallible authority on which they based their claim to speak. And some of the prophets—perhaps a score or so—added to the words of the Book for the greater benefit of those who were to come after them. Amos, the herdsman, who spoke and probably wrote the words quoted above, was one such and in his burning denunciation of the evils which were rampant in his own lifetime we see a vivid picture of the condition of world society to-day.

"When the Son of Man cometh," asked Jesus of His disciples, *"shall he find faith on the earth?"* His own words upon other occasions leave us in no doubt as to His own answer to His question. He did not expect to find faith on the earth. In the wondrous wisdom of the Divine Plan His return to earth in the power of His second coming was to be deferred until the world in the outworking of its own wilfulness and selfishness had come near to self-destruction. That would imply that the world would by then very largely have rejected God and turned aside from His Word. Jesus might equally truthfully have said that the Son of Man *could* not come until faith would no longer be found in the earth. So it has been in the outcome. Events in the political and commercial and social worlds for nearly a century past have so abundantly fulfilled the Biblical foreviews that there is no doubt the end of the Age is upon us, the time of God's intervention in the affairs of the nations. Concurrently with this the very same period has witnessed a steady decline in religious belief and faith and an increasing ignorance of God's Holy Word.

A strong light was cast upon this fact recently when the *"News Chronicle"* conducted a "Gallup Poll" directed to testing general knowledge of the Bible by finding out how many people could name all or any of the writers of the Four Gospels. One would think those four names are among the most familiar in the English language. At one time they

were, but now—apparently—no! Of all the people questioned—supposed to represent a fair sample of all levels and classes of the population—three out of five could name all four Evangelists; one out of four could not name any. The figures for the younger people are more revealing. Of all questioned under the age of 29, four out of five could not name a single one. Four out of five of the present generation, that will very shortly be expecting to control world affairs, have either never heard of, or at any rate do not know the Biblical connection of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John!

There is nothing really new about this. Similar conditions have been observed and recorded for quite a few years. Despite the optimistic claims of some ecclesiastical dignitaries—quite sincere claims, in most cases at least—and the ponderous utterances of certain politicians clad in the mantles of would-be Christian oracles, the fact does remain that the majority of people to-day are appallingly ignorant of the basic facts of Christianity, the nature of the Christian life, and the contents of the Word of God. Whatever may be the reason, and opinions differ, that is the position.

Now the Hebrew prophets, when they in their own days found themselves faced with a situation such as this—which was, relatively speaking, quite often—never hesitated to draw public attention to the fact and to denounce it; but they also never failed to go on to the remedy. They did not interpret their mission as one of denunciation or condemnation only. They set themselves up as teachers of the Word that had become all but universally despised, and out of that Word they brought all the assurances and the warnings that God had before-time caused to be written concerning the inevitable consequences of continuance in such wrongful course. They declared on the authority of that Word the way to be taken whereby men might change their course and inherit, instead of disorder and unhappiness, the peaceful and prosperous state of order and happiness which awaits any people that attempts to order its life in accordance with, and holding in due recognition, the written Word of God.

The teaching of those prophets was positive, even to the verge of dogmatism. "If ye do this, ye shall If ye do that, ye shall not The Lord God will" and so on. There is no doubt or indecision in what they had to say. They were

men who had already learned well the principles of the Word that was in them and had applied those principles to the practical problems of life and knew how they worked. It was on that account they were able to stand before the people and speak, as did our Lord at a later date, "as one having authority, and not as the scribes".

The reason that we in our day enjoy so clear and detailed a view of the Divine Plan, particularly in its dispensational and prophetic features, and understand so much as we do concerning the details of the Time of Trouble and the Kingdom that is to succeed it, is because these men were so clear in their own understanding and so definite in what they committed to writing. The work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts and minds has given us a sharp, well-defined understanding of the Plan of God that need not admit of uncertainty or doubt. We, in our turn, have succeeded to the inheritance bequeathed by faithful men of God through all preceding generations. "*Other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours*". The question that comes up and requires an answer is—What are we going to do with it?

Here, on the one hand, are the teachers, qualified both by acceptance into the body of disciples and the possession and understanding of the sacred Scriptures to teach the ignorant out of the Word. There can be no reasonable doubt about that. Christians who have made themselves thoroughly familiar with the Word of God and its basic principles, and especially with the philosophy of the Divine Plan, how that God created man for life and happiness and is actively working through the ages to attain that end and will surely achieve His purpose, are the qualified teachers of this generation. Of course there are many, actively identified though they may be with some one or other of the Christian denominations, whose consecration to God and dedication to His service has not been so whole-hearted that they have attained this position; or perhaps they are not consecrated or dedicated at all; in either case they come within the category described by the writer to the Hebrews as those who "*when, for the time, ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat*" (Heb. 5. 12). But we are not concerned with such at the moment; the important thing is that those who are consecrated to God and are diligent students of His Word, and have learned to apply it in their own lives and its principles in their daily conduct, are fitted by virtue of that fact to be teachers of the Divine Word to the generation in which they live.

So much for that side of the picture. On the other hand there is the colossal ignorance to which reference has been made. The word of Micaiah, the prophet of King Ahab, comes to mind. "*I saw all Israel scattered upon the mountains, as sheep having no shepherd. And the Lord said unto me, 'These have no shepherd, let them go every man to his own place.'*" Things are like that to-day. There is a famine in the land, not of bread, nor of water but of the hearing the word of the Lord. What is our mission in the face of this situation?

Quite evidently, to teach! That was the primary commission given to the Church. "*Teach all nations*"! The present ignorance of God and of His Word is a challenge to all who love God and know His Word to plan very deliberately for the extension of knowledge on every aspect of that Word. This at once involves the consideration of the message that is to be proclaimed, and the type of person to whom it is to be proclaimed.

The general answers to these questions are already well known and very generally agreed. Apart from those few who understand the will of God for them to require attention to their own spiritual development to the complete exclusion of any imparting of their faith and knowledge to the "world" around them, it is probably almost universally agreed that our mission is to preach Christ whenever and wherever we can, and to exclude from our evangelistic efforts none who are prepared to listen. That, at any rate, is how it usually works out in practice. At the same time it is almost equally universally recognised amongst us that at this present stage in the world's history—or in the out-working of the Divine Plan, which is much the same thing—during this present "Gospel Age", the fact that God is inviting and selecting the members of the "Church" who are to be His agents of world redemption in the next Age, and that this selection is a work to which our God is devoting His efforts at this present time, means that much greater emphasis should be placed upon Scriptural teaching regarding the "High Calling" than upon other phases of the message; not that they should be ignored or excluded, but the "High Calling" should come first and occupy the foremost place.

Likewise those to whom this message should be preached are those most likely to respond, and these will obviously be men and women who already have a measure of Christian faith and belief and who want to learn more, to progress into something better than they have yet attained. These are obviously more likely to appreciate and perhaps accept the deeper truths of the "High Calling in Christ Jesus", the principles of Divine dealing

which guarantees to every man a full, fair opportunity for life, and the appeal of the death of Jesus on their behalf, than those who have never so much as heard of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. To increase the number of "would-be" disciples who become "all-the-way" disciples is to increase and so help to complete the force that God is preparing for future world conversion and this surely is working on right lines and co-labouring intelligently with God. The detailed substance of our message, therefore, should be such as will appeal to those who already have some faith in God and His Word and want to increase their measure of belief. The message should, then, be built very largely around definite expository teaching of Bible themes and this, strangely enough, is one of the foremost remedies advocated by some leading ministers for the present condition of indifference and frustration.

Another important necessity is to see that the way is not made too easy. The tendency of this modern age is to make all things superlatively easy for everyone. Whether it is in the realm of labour-saving devices in the home, a library service that provides information on every conceivable subject for no conceivable purpose, or a State welfare system that lifts every vestige of personal, parental and filial responsibility from the shoulders of John Citizen and make those interests the responsibility of the State, the universal appeal is "take this, see how easy it is". God's way is not like that, and the Christian way was not intended to be easy, and in fact is not easy, and no good can come by pretending to people that it is. Things may be easier in the Millennial Age but we are not yet in that Age. Our message should stress the fact that its acceptance will cost something. The life into which it leads and the benefits it brings will be found well worthy of the cost; but a price there is and that has to be paid. It is sometimes suggested that those who take their stand on the Lord's side will be preserved from all physical harm in the Armageddon that is to come; a variant of the belief is that the "saints" will be "gathered home" in order to escape the tribulation that is coming upon the earth. Now whatever of truth there may be in that understanding of the Divine intentions it is quite immoral and unscriptural to hold out that kind of inducement for people to accept Christianity, and, with it, Christ. The early Christians certainly had no such bait held out to them. They accepted Christ knowing full well it might very easily mean wild beasts in the arena, the stake, or worse, as in many cases it did.

Our task, then, is to relate the understanding of Scripture and of the Divine Plan that is ours to the state of present day knowledge—particularly general or "orthodox" Christian knowledge—and the

pageant of current events, that those who are already half-way in their progress to God may find in this presentation that for which they are looking. So doing, we shall be using our energies and abilities and resources to the best advantage, like the man in the parable who by the more judicious use of his "pound" eventually gained ten pounds. It would seem, anyway, that his zealous endeavours in the matter had resulted in his attainment of qualifications for future administration to a much higher degree than had the endeavours of his fellows, for he was made ruler over ten cities, and the Lord would not have done that had he not been fitted for the task. The man who hid his talent in the earth did not succeed in obtaining the rulership over even one! The timorous, the cynical—and the condemnatory—man will stand aloof from the activity inseparable from the promulgation of such a message, but will be quite satisfied with the ultimate results. All are acquainted with the weak-in-faith or pessimistic brother who surveys the empty chairs and proclaims aloud his opinion that the meeting will be a fiasco; how pleased he is, as pleased as any of the rest, when the unexpected happens and the hall is full. So it will probably be with those of our brethren who feel that Jezebel has slain all the prophets and pulled down all the altars and only we few are left; the Lord may well bring into His fold some whom we would have considered most unlikely ones, and perform a work, even at this late stage of the Age's history, which we might have deemed most improbable. When all that can be said has been said, it remains true that there is a famine of the Word of the Lord in the earth, and if we are anything like the first disciples whom we claim to take for our teachers and exemplars, "we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

The Christian is a traveller, his life is a journey, heaven is his end, his road lies through a wilderness. How earnestly and devoutly ought he then to pray "O send out thy light and thy truth that they may lead me and bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy dwelling!" For surely "the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the ways of life". The word of God discovers us to our errors; it shows us where we lost our way, and how we may find and recover it again. If we take this "lamp" in our hand, it will not only enable us to perceive the right course, but it will also direct us in every step, and guide our feet aright in the path of holiness and peace. Only let us apply our heart to the word of life and walk with God then we may sing His praises as we pass through every trouble, and we shall sing them for ever.

A King in Righteousness

A study in the Millennial
Visions of Isaiah

(Conclusion)

The latter part of Isaiah's thirty-second chapter seems to be a pen-picture of one aspect of the transition from this age into the next, almost as though the prophet, after describing the general characteristics of the "reign of righteousness" as it is going to affect ordinary men, turns his eyes upon those who in this age have wielded authority and exercised power over those same ordinary folk and tells them in no unmeasured terms that the time of their luxurious indulgence is ended and that conditions will be very different in the Millennial Kingdom. His especial theme is the passing away of the works of man as exemplified in the cities and palaces and fortresses of this present order of things, and the coming into its own of that world of Nature, of mountains and valleys and fields and streams, which has been so cruelly despoiled by heedless and callous men but in that day is to become the environment in which redeemed mankind will live its life. "They shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree, and none shall make them afraid." (Micah 4. 4.)

First of all, then, in this section of his thesis, Isaiah addresses the luxury-loving, indolent, wealthy women of Jerusalem. "Rise up, ye women that are at ease," he commands, and the scorn that is in his voice comes to us even in the printed words. "Hear my voice, ye careless daughters; give ear unto my speech. Many days and years ("days above a year" is the Hebrew, an idiom meaning "soon" "imminent") shall ye be troubled, ye careless women; for the vintage shall fail, the gathering shall not come." (Chap. 32., vs. 9-10.) In every age the "idle rich" have lived upon the industry of the poor; the abundant harvests of the land have yielded their quota to the luxurious living of the propertied classes, many of whom have been content to take, and live on, their gains without contributing any kind of work or labour themselves. These "careless daughters" of Jerusalem were parasites of this kind. There was plenty of refinement and luxury in Jerusalem in Isaiah's day. The continued connection of Judah and Israel with the merchant nation of antiquity, the Phœnicians, whose capital city was Tyre, a connection that commenced in David's day with his friendship with Hiram, king of Tyre (1 Ki. 5. 1) was continued by Solomon (1 Ki. 5. 10-12) and later by Ahab the husband of Jezebel, daughter of the then king of Tyre, brought

all of the world's products into Jewish homes. Dwellers in Jerusalem could obtain for themselves—if they had the money—any and every article of ornament and luxury that the world afforded. The contrast between these plutocrats and the simple hard-working peasantry of the Judean highlands was very great, and Isaiah was not the only prophet who fearlessly denounced the indolence and the profligacy of the rich. That the judgment of God would one day come upon them he had no doubt. "There is a crying for wine in the streets; all joy is darkened, the mirth of the land is gone. In the city is left desolation, and the gate is smitten with destruction." (Isa. 24. 11-12.) Adroitly, he connects Jerusalem, the wicked city, with her daughters and the condemnation he pronounces is equally applicable to both. Jeremiah, too, is equally forthright. "I have likened the daughter of Zion" (Jerusalem), he says, "to a comely and delicate woman. . . . Prepare ye war against her; arise, and let us go up. . . . For thus hath the Lord of hosts said, 'Hew ye down trees, and cast a mount against Jerusalem: this is the city to be visited' (with judgment) 'she is wholly oppression in the midst of her.'" (Jer. 6. 1-6.)

But Isaiah was seeing something more distant than that overthrow of Jerusalem that came in the days of Nebuchadnezzar; and the "idle rich" for whom his burning words of reproof were chiefly intended were those of this twentieth century A.D. rather than these of the eighth century B.C. Isaiah's prophecy here had already passed into the sphere of the Millennial Age and he had already described some of the conditions of that rule of righteousness inaugurated by the king who is to reign in righteousness. So the condemnation of verses 9 to 12 of Chapter 32 is a condemnation of the idle and heedless materialists of this present time, when all their works and all their possessions and all their buildings and cities are crumbling before their eyes. They shall lament, he declares in verse 12, for the cattle-clad hills, for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine. To-day we see that word fulfilled. "They that have" are lamenting as never before over the loss of their possessions and their privileges. Under this figure of a disintegrating city in which the buildings are falling down and Nature is moving in to cover the wreckage with quick growing undergrowth we have a vivid picture of the passing of

twentieth century civilisation, and with that, the passing of the rule of man. "Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briers; yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city; because the palaces shall be forsaken; the multitude of the city shall be left: the forts and towers shall be for dens for ever, a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks." (vs. 12-13.) Those who live in the cities of England have good cause in these days to know how quickly the ragged ruins of man's making become invested with the green of weeds and flowers and shrubs; in a matter of three or four years the derelict sites of bombed buildings in the heart of London have become hidden beneath a tangle of self-sown vegetation and on occasion quite sizeable trees. That is Nature's return to the places from which man has ousted her to put up their own erections, erections which have no life in themselves and as soon as they crumble under the weight of man's own evil forces must give place to the vigorous, irresistible tide of life that sweeps from the places of fields and trees. The thorns and briers come first, yes, but Isaiah goes on to show that after the thorns and briers come the fruitful fields and the quiet arts of agriculture, and then God's earth will be as He intended from the first. But all that comes later on in the chapter.

The judgment that is proclaimed, then, is one that comes upon the world at the time of Christ's taking His kingdom and commencing His reign. In symbolic imagery the cities are destroyed, their buildings broken down, the scenes of gaiety and debauchery in the "houses of joy" brought to an end. The palaces are forsaken—what a toppling of thrones and a losing of crowns there has been in these last days, the "Day of His Preparation!" The forts and towers shall be for dens of wild animals—what revelation of impotency of each military weapon is made almost as soon as it has been invented, counter-weapon matched against each new device of military science. The whole world system is crumbling, and the world is becoming a place where thorns and briers are spreading quickly over the ruins that man has made himself. Even in a literal sense these things are true of the world's cities and areas that men inhabit; how much more true it is in a symbolic or a spiritual sense of the world order that, as Peter says, is to pass away with a great noise! One of the finest passages in the whole of the Bible from a purely literary point of view is the one in which Isaiah's brother-prophet, Jeremiah, saw the same thing. "I beheld the earth, and lo, it was without form, and void; and the heavens, and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled. I

beheld, and lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the Lord, and by his fierce anger." (Jer. 4. 23-26.) "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness" the Apostle tells us, and although this crowning disaster to the work of humankind and this irretrievable ruin of men's systems of life and of government is entirely due to man's fault and altogether to man's adoption of the rule of selfishness it is nevertheless quite correctly described as a manifestation of the wrath of God—that God who loves the sinner while He hates the sin, and is working silently, patiently, and effectively to eliminate the sin so that He can receive the repentant and chastened sinner back into reconciliation with Himself and give to him his eternal inheritance.

This is where Isaiah moves on into that position also. Like the God he served, this far-sighted prophet of good tidings had no mind to proclaim woe and disaster without declaring the sequel. The thorns and briers were to come up, the palaces and fortresses to become ruins, the city to be abandoned and darkness cover the whole scene of desolation, but only for a time—"until"

Until what?

"Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest." (vs. 15.)

This is a "key" Scripture. The pouring out of the Spirit from on high, on all flesh, is pre-eminently a sign of the inauguration of the Kingdom. The ruins of the Time of Trouble are to lie waste only until that glad day has dawned and then a breath of new life will come upon the world. Here is where the natural picture of the exuberant life of the countryside invading the ruined city and clothing its broken brickwork with Nature's endless variety of form and colour has its application. The Millennial Age is essentially an age of verdant fields and fruitful trees and sparkling streams, and so soon as Armageddon is past, the sprawling ruins of man's making will give place to the all-conquering beauties of Divine creation. The wilderness shall become a fruitful field and the old broken-down palaces and fortresses be seen no more. "Is it not yet a very little while," asks Isaiah again (29. 17, 18), "and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest? And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness."

This pouring out of the Spirit from on high, resulting in the vivifying of the very soil so that Nature herself responds, is probably literally as well as spiritually true. The power of the Holy Spirit

will without doubt be exercised creatively as it was at the first in bringing the earth itself to that degree of fruitfulness which will make it a fitting and adequate abode for the millions of redeemed humanity. That the Spirit does exert such power in the material creation is evidenced by the noble words of Psalm 104. 30, where, speaking of the living creatures of the earth, the animals and the birds and the fishes, the Psalmist says "*thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created, and thou renewest the face of the earth*". If that is true in this age of the earth's incompleteness, how much more in the day of its fulness!

Dr. Moffatt, in one of his rare flashes of insight, renders this passage in a very appealing manner. "*Yet one day from the heights of heaven a spirit shall breathe into us, till the downs grow like an orchard, and the orchard like a forest.*" The whole picture is that of fruit-bearing trees rising up to take the places of the thorns and briars which at the first grew up over the ruins of the city, and then those fruitful trees growing so sturdy and luxuriant that they become as it were a veritable forest. This brings us very near to Ezekiel's vision of the trees of life growing on both sides of the river of life, and the constantly ripening fruit and evergreen leaves that are to be for the food and for the healing of the nations.

This is where righteousness is triumphant. "*Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.*" (vs. 16-17.) There is a contrast here. First there is the desolation of briars and thorns, the wreck of the old world, on which Divine judgment has come. Judgment is to remain on that wilderness. But that same wilderness is to give place to an orchard of fruit trees, a "fruitful field", and in that fruit-bearing grove, that is the symbol of the new world, righteousness is to remain. The severity of God's judgment remains on the "wilderness" until that wilderness is wholly swallowed up by the "fruitful field" which is to replace it. So, quite rapidly, the wreckage of the old world will be cleared up and the institutions of the Millennial Age take its place, institutions that are built on equity and inspired by righteousness. Here it is that Millennial blessings begin to come to mankind in consequence of the work of the glorified Church. This is the point at which the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of the Father, and the beneficent influence of the reign of Christ begins to make itself felt in the earth. "The work of righteousness shall be peace." This word "work" is "*maaseh*," meaning the act of doing something. The ministra-

tions of the "kings and priests" are here referred to; all that they do and all their activities are directed to the teaching and the education and the conversion to Christ of all mankind. "*They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.*" (Dan. 12. 3.) The effect of their endeavours will be peace—peace on earth and peace in the hearts of men, a complete fulfilment of the angels' Bethlehem song. That is stressed in the rest of the verse. "The effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever." Peace and security! They are the two great blessings for which mankind is constantly yearning. The avowed object of the "Welfare State" is to secure these two things for all its citizens but it does not succeed in producing either. Only the kingdom of Christ can do that. And, once secured, it will be for all eternity. "*There shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away.*" (Rev. 21. 4.)

And now Isaiah looks out across the sunlit Millennial landscape and he sees a people, dwelling safely, and happy at last. The city has gone, utterly destroyed in that last time of human madness and Divine retribution, but "*my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings and in quiet resting-places.*" (vs. 18.) Says Moffatt again "my people shall have homes of peace, and rest in houses undisturbed." The promise elsewhere is that "*they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree*" (of the tree of life—Septuagint) "*are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands*" (Isa. 65. 21-22.) The picture is one of complete and unalloyed contentment.

It does seem as if the prophet is at pains to indicate the forsaking of city life for something far more closely in tune with Nature as the normal way of life in the Millennial Age. Here in this thirty-second chapter he sees the city destroyed and no indication of its resurrection; the redeemed multitudes are cultivating the arts of husbandry in a purely rural and agricultural setting. Somehow that seems appropriate; God surely never meant men to live crowded together in massed blocks of dwellings far from the fields and streams and flowers and trees. This Millennial Age that we preach must surely include among its many benefits a mighty "back to the land" movement. Instead of less than ten per cent of the world's population working the land and growing the food that every man must

eat, as at present, all earth's citizens will most probably take their share in co-operating with Nature for the provision of all that is needful. The promise that every man will plant his own vine and fig-tree, and sit under them and himself eat the fruit of them, is most likely to have a truly literal fulfilment. The evils of modern industrial and commercial life have created the world's great cities; the end of that kind of life might well sound the death-knell of such creations and all the earth be made, as it was at the first, a garden.

Isaiah's story is nearly told. The Holy Spirit has but one further scene to show him, a scene that seems to be intended more particularly for those who, as faithful and devoted footstep followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, follow these visions with an eager desire to find their own position and duty clearly indicated. The prophet now sees a fierce storm of destroying hail coming down upon the earth, pattering upon the trees of the forest with a great noise, and finally crushing the ruined city, and such of its inhabitants as still remain, to the ground. At the same time—or, is it immediately the hailstorm has done its work, and ceased, and the sun is shining again—he beholds sowers, industriously scattering their seed in the water-sodden ground that has been softened by the storm waters, their oxen and asses treading the ground into soft mud in which the seed may quickly take root and germinate. *“When it shall hail, coming down on the forest, and the city shall be utterly abased (margin) blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass.”* (vs. 19-20.)

That was a familiar sight in Israel. So soon as the winter storms of hail and rain had temporarily water-logged and softened the ground the oxen and asses were quickly sent out to trample the soil, and the seed was quickly sown. What did the picture mean to Isaiah? It could only mean that the crushing hail of Divine judgment upon the city was in God's economy a means of preparing the soil for a new sowing, and that the sowers would be ready. In his zeal and joy at the prospect Isaiah pronounced a blessing upon the sowers. But what does it mean in the reality? Nothing less than that in the outworking of the Divine plans, this tremendous judgment upon the nations which forms the prelude to the Millennial kingdom will itself be a means of preparing men's hearts for the ministry of the Word in the next Age, for that Millennial sowing that is to yield so glorious a harvest. And the sowers will be ready. They are waiting, even now, but the time for sowing is not yet. The ground has yet to be softened by the downrushing hail, but so soon as that has been

accomplished the word will go forth “blessed are ye that sow beside all waters”.

The sowers will go forth. They will by then have been gathered to be with their Lord and Head and be made like Him, to see Him as He is. They will have been presented faultless before the presence of the Father with exceeding joy. They will have participated in the marriage supper of the Lamb. Armed then with abundant power, enriched and fortified by their lives' experiences, by virtue of patient endurance having been made merciful and faithful and sympathetic “priests”, they will come forth to commence the work of writing God's laws in the hearts of men, and converting them to turn from sin to serve the living God. That is the great object of the Millennial reign, to reconcile to God as many as will be reconciled, to save for His eternal kingdom on earth so many as will be saved, to fulfil, at last, the plan that started its slow but sure development so many thousands of years ago in Eden. Isaiah saw, plainly, the end of the story; he saw the “afterward of peace” which God has known all along He would achieve at last; it is a source of rare inspiration to us that he also was led to declare the blessedness of those who in this day and Age have been privileged beyond all measure in receiving the call to be transformed by the renewing of their minds. Having been thus called, justified, sanctified, glorified, they will come forth in the end of days to sow beside all waters, and long enjoy the ultimate fruitage of their works in the sight of God's human sons dwelling in quietness and assurance for ever.

THE END

One, in writing of the members of God's family, says, “They walk by faith; thus they begun and thus they are to end. We walk by faith and not by sight. Their whole life is a life of faith, their daily actings are all of faith; this forms one of the main elements of their character. It marks them out as a peculiar people. None live as they do, their faith is to them the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. It is a sort of substitute for sight and possession. It so brings them into contact with the unseen world that they feel as if they were already conversant with and living amongst the things unseen. The power of faith throws back into the far distance the things of earth, the things that men call near and real and it brings forward into vital contact with the soul the things men call invisible and distant.”

Eventide

"So he bringeth them unto their desired haven"



What a strong enigmatical world this is unless you have received Divine illumination concerning it! Itself a tiny molecule rotating in an uncharted ocean of space, subject to some mighty Force which imposes law, regularity and cohesion upon its multifarious parts, yet bearing on its bosom a reign of chaos, illegality and disintegration. Seated at its telescope the scientific mind will bow in awe before some mysterious unknown ordaining Cause, and confess vague belief in the intuitive wisdom and omnipotence of the creative God. Turning from his telescope our scientist will deplore the lack of step between the sidereal and the moral worlds. Does the same God rule here as there? Does the same Authority stretch its empire to this chaos as to that ordered regularity?

Men have parcelled out the bosom of this sad old earth, saying for a moment "this is mine", "that is thine", and the other part belongs to number three. In some mad moment he will jump the fence, smite his fellow to the ground, appropriate his land and wealth, exalt his throne, and strut in regal colours through the earth. Of such has been the ". . . zars", the "Shahs", the "Caesars", the "Tsars", and "Kaisers" since the unlawful riot began. Each in its turn, or in its sphere, has claimed some sacrosanct but undefinable prerogative known as "Sovereignty", to tread on which has been tantamount to treading on most royal "corns". Co-incident therewith the orb, the sceptre, and the purple caused the notion to be spread around that the non-royal was subject to its power and must obey its imperial behest. "Knowest thou not that I have power . . ." was the condescending query of the representative of one such Imperatorship to the mute and holy lips that stood before it unabashed and unshamed! Greater mistake was never made, for though in some secondary sense, there is no power but derives from God, absolute and primary power they surely have not! God has foreseen and foretold the rise and fall of empires over long centuries, but their coming and going are but *pro-tem* arrangements until He shall come whose right it is.

The absolute and unforfeitable is still in God's hands, and here, sometimes, among the chaos and the change those hands reach down to make a place of shelter above one of His own. Unmindful

though He was to defend His own good Name, the rejected Man of Sorrows was instant and alert to defend Divine prerogative. "Thou couldst have no power against me, except it were given thee"—from whom, Caesar?—No! "from above"! The seat of all authority is still "above", and Omnipotence can still reach down when time and circumstance require, and make the ". . . zar" eat grass till its lesson has been learned.

In quiet and measured tones that truth profound was reiterated again to the disdainful prefect's ear, and changed the situation out of recognition. Was Jesus standing at Pilate's bar? Yes, in a way—but more immediately Pilate was standing at Heaven's bar, of which situation he was duly informed, by the despised and rejected prisoner there.

To Jesus this was the Cup which His Father had given Him—nothing more, nothing less. He overlooked the Roman, and the Jew, and saw Himself beneath His Father's Hand! Second causes may be in other hands; primary objectives were in His Father's Care. All the steps of a good man were being ordered of the Lord . . . His times were in God's hands!

That was enough to keep that settled heart at peace and rest, even though Satanic malice fanned Pharisaic passion to cyclonic force. "Thou canst have no power over me, except . . ." is still a truth to be warmly embraced by all who have made terms of full surrender to the Most High! Irrespective of what the outcome might be, the truth still stands four-square and unmoved. Jesus went to death, but it was His Father's choice, not Pilate's, nor the Pharisees! The reason for that sacrifice was in the Great Supervisor's keeping—He knew and understood what that fateful hour would yield.

So again, when strange and evil forces converge upon our little lives, the Divine Supervisor can see and understand the outcome of every buffeting experience, and when the second causes are allowed to operate, the primary objective is still in His own care, and the issue will be directed to His praise and to our good. There is *some* ordering and directiveness in this chaotic world—there is indeed a Divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them though we may.

Child of the Most High, will you not learn to say with every passing day—

*“My times are in Thy hand
My God, I wish them there,
My life, my friends, my all I leave
Entirely to Thy care.*

*“My times are in Thy hands
Whatever that may be,
Pleasing or painful, dark or bright,
As best may seem to Thee.*

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

Will you not learn to believe and then to give daily thanks that even now the steps of good men are ordered of the Lord—when guided by His eye? This is still a truth most profound and still a source of peace and rest. How sweetly the poet expresses it!

*God holds the key of all unknown, and I am glad,
If other hands should hold the key,
Or if He trusted it to me, I might be sad.*

*What if to-morrow's cares were here, without its
rest!*

*I'd rather He unlocked the day,
And, as the hours swing open say, “My will is
best”.*

*The very dimness of my sight, makes me secure;
For, groping in my misty way,
I feel His hand, I hear Him say, “My help is
sure”.*

*I cannot read His future plans, but this I know,
I have the smiling of His face
And all the refuge of His grace, While here below.*

*Enough! this covers all my wants, and so I rest.
For what I cannot, He can see,
And in His care I safe shall be, Forever blest.*

The Voice of the Monuments

7. The Ras Shamra Tablets

During the year 1929, very nearly an exact century since Henry Rawlinson started the fascinating series of discoveries which have continuously added to Biblical understanding, two French archaeologists, Professors Schaeffer and Chenet, were carrying out investigations at a place on the coast of Syria called Ras Shamra, near Cape Fennel and a few miles north of the modern sea-port of Latakia. They had found the buried remains of an ancient temple; upon uncovering the room which had evidently been the temple library, there was revealed a considerable number of baked clay tablets inscribed in what afterwards proved to be eight different languages of antiquity. Even after so many “finds” extending over the past hundred years and spread over all the lands of the Middle East, it was speedily recognised that this was one of supreme importance, and when scholars had given these first tablets some examination a more thoroughgoing expedition was arranged. Throughout the period between 1930 and 1932 a considerable amount of work was done at Ras Shamra and in addition to many more tablets there were brought to light weapons and implements of bronze, jewel-

lery, pottery and other articles in great abundance. Satisfactory evidence in the form of seals and other emblems bearing the names of certain Egyptian Pharaohs established the date when these relics were buried beneath the ruins of the temple, not to see the light of day again until discovered in our own century, as about 1400 to 1350 B.C., just after the time when Joshua and the Israelites entered Canaan and were engaged in gaining possession of the land. It was therefore seen at once that these written tablets would most likely prove to be of considerable interest to Bible scholars and probably throw some light on certain Bible narratives, particularly those relating to the time of the Exodus.

Three of the languages in which these tablets are written are still undeciphered. The remainder include Egyptian, Cretan, Babylonian and, most interesting of all, archaic Hebrew written in Babylonian cuneiform characters. The nature of the tablets shows the temple to have been the centre of a kind of theological college and many of them record various kinds of ritual observances and instructions which bear a striking resemblance to much of the Tabernacle ceremonial given to Moses

at Sinai and which became the worship of Israel for many centuries thereafter. Now this is a most important as well as most interesting discovery. For two generations prior to 1930 the "modern scholarship" school of Biblical thought had assiduously promulgated conclusions to the effect that much of the ceremonial in Exodus and Leviticus was invented by priests at much later times—in the days of the Kings—and accredited to Moses to give it authority in the eyes of the people. The general position of Old Testament "criticism" was that the books of Moses were not to be taken as strictly historical and that even if Moses had in fact lived, much of what is credited to him in the books bearing his name must be assigned to a considerably later date. These discoveries at Ras Shamra therefore have come as a most welcome independent testimony to the strictly historical character of the books of Moses, for they show that sacrificial rituals very much like those described in the Book of Leviticus were evidently quite well known in Canaan at the very time that Moses was alive.

The type of religious faith that is revealed by the tablets is polytheistic—it has to do with the worship of many gods and goddesses. At the same time there is frequent mention of the god *Elyon*, which is the Hebrew name for the "Most High God". Those who are familiar with the book of Genesis will recall the fact that the first name by which God was known—or at least the earliest name which is recorded—before He was known as *Jahweh*, the Eternal (to Moses), or *El Shaddai*, the Almighty (to Abraham), is this very name—*El Elyon*, the Most High God. Genesis 14 tells of Melchisedek the Priest-king of Jerusalem in the days of Abraham, that he was "the priest of the Most High God". Abraham paid him tribute, thereby acknowledging his recognition that Melchisedek's God was the same as his own. There are other indications in Scripture to the effect that God was known by this name in the earliest ages of earth's history. It seems probable that those in Canaan who, though not of the line of Jacob, which for several centuries had been absent in Egypt, had nevertheless continued worshippers of the God of Abraham and Jacob, knew Him still by this name. The worship of the "Most High God" which Scripture indicates prevailed in Canaan in Abraham's time, is shown by the evidence of the Ras Shamra tablets to have survived, probably in an increasingly corrupted form, until Joshua arrived from Egypt six centuries later.

These tablets betray some acquaintance, on the part of the writers, with the ceremonial of the Tabernacle in the wilderness, or else with some common source which forms the basis of both.

Much the same terms are used to describe much the same things. Thus there are references to the peace offering, the trespass offering, the tribute offering, the wave offering, the burnt offering, the first fruits, beside allusions to sacred furniture such as that in use in the Tabernacle, and to the Most Holy, the Court, and so on. Now we do not, of course, know just what inspired the detail of the elaborate Tabernacle design and its attendant ceremonies. The entire pattern was shown to Moses by God, we are told, in the Mount. (Exod. 25. 40.) It would seem that the venerable leader of Israel saw these things, this Tabernacle and all its ceremonies, as in a kind of vision, during the time he was alone on Sinai as recorded in Exod. 24. It is a fact that much of the physical structure of the Tabernacle bore a distinct resemblance to Egyptian temple architecture and some of the furniture can be shown to have had likenesses in common with Babylonian temple furniture of many centuries previously. On this account it has been suggested that Moses adapted ideas from older faiths to build a religious ceremonial of his own. What is more in keeping with the Scripture record is to accept the account in Exodus to mean exactly what it says, that Moses was caused by the power of the Holy Spirit to see in vision an exact replica of the Tabernacle as God required it to be made. If, in designing that pattern, the Most High made use of ideas that men had already developed in their past attempts to worship Him, that is entirely within the exercise of His discretion as the Lord of all created things. We do not know in fact just what origin, in the mists of antediluvian time, some of these emblems of worship may have had when men did worship God in the measurable purity of the days immediately after the Fall.

It is probably reasonable therefore to conclude that the ceremonials described in the Ras Shamra tablets have some connection with, or were in part derived from, the instructions which God gave to Moses in the wilderness. Their existence in these tablets does at least prove quite definitely that such ideas were abroad at that time, and to that extent gives evidence of the historical accuracy of Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy.

One other point of interest remains to touch upon. Who were these people who administered this temple and lived in the surrounding country-side?

The remains at Ras Shamra show that the city and its people existed there from at least two centuries before Abraham entered Canaan, until about two hundred years after the Exodus—say about the middle of the time of the Judges, some little while before Samuel came to Eli at Shiloh. During this

long period of about a thousand years all kinds of races and types made their homes in that district. Some of the later tablets have to do with sea-faring expeditions; there are registers of ocean-going ships using the port. Remembering that in after days this very country became the home of the Phœnicians, that renowned seagoing merchant people of old time, it may well be that their progenitors were here taking root in the soil. Another class of tablets incorporates legends regarding Terah, a military conqueror under the protection of the Moon-god, who invaded the country with his hosts. One is reminded immediately of Terah, the father of Abraham, who left his native city Ur of the Chaldees, the holy city of the Moon-god, to come to Canaan, and how at a later date Abraham with all his "trained servants" (mercenary or "hired" soldiers) defeated and put to flight the Babylonian and Elamite armies in this very land.

(See Gen. 14.) It would not be profitable to dwell upon or spend time examining the mass of such legend that appears in the tablets but allusions such as these do go to show that what we now read as history in the early chapters of Genesis was so well known in the days of these tablets that much of it, distorted and intermixed, had already passed into the realm of popular legend.

The true value of Ras Shamra, therefore, is its testimony to the facts that, first, the Bible is true history of the periods with which it deals, and, second, that this Bible history is still the fullest and most complete account of those times, revealing a more detailed and accurate picture of the progress of events in the world's oldest civilisation than any tablets or other records which the researches of men in these last days have brought to light.

Out of the Ivory Palaces

*"Blow upon my garden
that the spices thereof
may flow out"*

The Secret Place

There's a shelter, safe and precious,
Where God's children may abide.
There's a refuge from the tempest
Where in safety they may hide.
There's a place where all life's trials
Seem to fade like mists away
Where Peace broods with spreading pinions
And night seems as bright as day.
There's a place where all the weary
Lay their burdens down and rest;
Where the sorrowful and lonely
May find comfort and be blest;
Where the sin-sick may find healing,
Hungry souls be satisfied;
The repentant find new courage
And the homeless may reside.
There's a refuge for the sinner
When remorse has done its part;
There is hope e'en for the dying,
Solace for the broken heart.
Would you know this blessed refuge
That's provided by God's grace?
Know that Christ Himself invites you
To that sacred "Secret Place".
Underneath His wings abiding,
There no storms can e'er molest.
Safe in Christ—our blessed refuge—
Every weary soul finds rest.
Oh what joy and peace awaits you

Oh the fullness of His grace!
Oh the bliss of simply resting,
Hiding in that "Secret Place"!

(L.K.P.)

Bringing Home the Flock

Through pastures fair,
And sea-girt paths all wild with rock and foam,
O'er velvet sward, and desert stern and bare,
The flock comes home.
A weary way
Now smooth, then rugged with a thousand snares;
Now dim with rain, then sweet with blossoms gay.
And summer airs.
Yet safe at last,
Within the folds they gather, and are still
Sheltered from the driving shower and stormy blast,
They fear no ill.
Through life's dark ways,
Through flowery paths where evil angels roam,
Through restless nights, and long, heart-wresting
days,
Christ's flock comes home.
Safe to the fold,
The blessed fold where fears are never known,
Love-guarded, fenced about with walls of gold,
He leads his own.
O Shepherd King,
With loving hands, whose lightest touch is blest!
Thine is the Kingdom, thine the power to bring
Thy flock to rest!

The Marriage of the Lamb

An
exhortation

From "Peoples Paper"

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

The Bible uses many similes, and as we search it from day to day, we are struck by that fact. Pictures are given of hills and mountains, illustrating to us types of governments; then seas, rivers, trees and men and women are used to picture other things, likewise sowing and reaping, the harvest time, feasts and so on; all these things are used to picture certain great things.

Our text draws attention to the beautiful picture of the marriage of the Lamb. The Lamb, of course, is another picture within this one, with which we are well acquainted—"the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." There are very interesting aspects to this picture. If we think of the beginning of our association with the Lamb of God, we look back to the time when we were without God and having no hope in the world. Then we realised the wonderful love that the Saviour has exercised toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. We wish to draw attention particularly to that love. It was while we were yet at enmity with God that the redemption was made, and at what cost! The Bible tells us that He loved His own right unto the end, and that is the extremity of the test of love. Surely we realise when we look at the position, that it was indeed a very great love that was shown toward those who were born in sin and shapen in iniquity.

When we consider the life of our Lord, the ministry that took up three and a half years, we see the love that was shown towards those with whom He came in contact; the miracles He performed in relieving the suffering and comforting the sorrowing, even raising the dead. These things showed forth the glory of His kingdom to be set up at a future time. They were just miniature pictures of the great love that He would show to all mankind at a later date.

Surely a responsive chord was struck in the hearts of those who saw our Lord's love during His ministry. So it is with those who are touched by that love now; they want to respond and have a similar love dwelling in their own hearts and minds. The question they ask is that which was asked in the days of old—"Lord, what wilt thou have me to

do?" So we begin to feel after God and He draws us near to that wonderful Son of His, as we view the light that shone from Him at that time.

But that is not the full extent of the love shown by Christ. There was opened the great opportunity of being associated with our Lord in His coming Kingdom, the miracles He performed being but a small indication of what He would do in the future. God knew that much assistance would be required for the uplifting and blessing of mankind, and He set aside a long period of time, now nearly two thousand years past, in which to prepare and separate a class of people to be associated with Christ in the work of that glorious Kingdom. Seeing it is such a great exaltation to be with the Lord in that Kingdom and share His honour and glory, no wonder a long period was required. We cannot but be interested and inspired as we see the evidence about us of that day being now near at hand when the marriage of the Lamb will take place—when the Bride has made herself ready to meet her beloved Lord. Soon the remaining experiences associated with the preparation of the Bride will be fully accomplished.

There is a great love shown between the Lord and the Bride class from the time when we are engaged to our Lord; that is, we have fully given up our own wills to have the will of God done in us; we have consecrated our all, that we may follow in the steps of our Master. The more we keep in touch with our Lord and Head the greater will that love grow, because "*Looking unto Jesus, like Him we would be.*" If we keep close to the Master, He will be with us in every trial and temptation and provide a way of escape, as He said to the Apostle Paul, "*My grace is sufficient for thee, My strength is made perfect in weakness.*" Our part is to rely entirely upon Him, having a love for Him greater than for anyone else, or even our own life; because of the love He has shown to us, our confidence in our Lord will naturally increase as the days go by.

It is necessary for us as Christians to make preparations for the time when the marriage of the Lamb will take place. There is much work to be done, because we do not want to have the "filthy rags" that we had while we were yet estranged from God. We want to have His spirit; we could not expect to be with the Heavenly Father in realms of glory unless we had the Father's spirit, the spirit of

our Lord, and in that respect our Father and our Lord are one. We remember the prayer that He made on our behalf, that we should also be one with them; that is, that we would have the same spirit governing our every action that governs the actions of the great Creator and His great Son.

We learn as we walk in His steps that—

*“Love is the filling from one’s own
Another’s cup;
A daily laying down and taking up—
A choosing of the stony path through each new day,
That other feet may tread with ease
A smoother way.”*

We want, as is pictured to us in the Psalms, to commence that work of fine needlework, the putting on of those fruits and graces of the Holy Spirit pleasing to our Lord. We see this exemplified in Him, and we want to have the same character and disposition as He had, doing the same things and having His likeness implanted in our hearts.

There is a great work to be done in this respect. It is not done just by reading the Bible from day to day. We must act upon our knowledge, and there is comforting assurance given us in the Scriptures, that if we do these things we shall never fail, but an abundant entrance shall be given to us in that great kingdom of our Lord and Saviour. Because of the promises and hope set before us, we are looking forward to the great day, and endeavour to do our best in putting the fine needlework on the robe that has been given us, to the end that we may have the same disposition as our Lord and be meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

The Church experiences great jubilation because we are living in the days of the Lord’s presence now. We see the work that He is doing. Troublous times were foretold for the world preparatory to the complete overthrow of the kingdoms of this world and the power of Satan; and seeing these things being accomplished, we know that our Lord is at work. Soon we will undoubtedly see other great events taking place that will indicate we are drawing near to the end of the Narrow Way. No doubt we will rejoice even in the tribulation of those days, for we are assured that it will be through much tribulation that we shall enter the kingdom. Why should we be downcast, disheartened, because of these things? The thought before us, that the consummation of our hope, the great marriage feast, is very near, will be a sustaining portion to all those who cast their care upon Him. It will not be long before all difficulties and trials will be past, and the world itself will have the benefits of the tribulation that the Church, the Bride, has been going through. That tribulation will have a refining effect upon

them, just as, when gold and silver is refined in the fire, the dross is all burned away.

It is rather wonderful, when we come to think of it, that in the little time of our span of life we can be made ready for that great day. It is not that we will be made perfect in that time, but that our intentions will always be to be like our Lord. Our love for Him will be such that we can trust Him, no matter where we may be.

While the Bride is performing this necessary work, the Bridegroom has a work of which He had told us. He said that in His Father’s house are many mansions, and that He was going to prepare a place for us. The Bible assures us that we will be well looked after, because our Lord has been making the necessary preparations and He will have everything ready for us, even to the spreading of the feast and the drinking of the new wine in the Kingdom, as He promised to the disciples.

How diligent and earnest we should be in our walk in life as we have these things before our minds. There is not too much time to complete our preparation—we feel that way at all events. It is many years since we first entered into this way, and even now there seem to be many things we would rather not see in our life, the weaknesses of the flesh that still crop up and are manifest possibly to other people much more than to us, because they see things from a different angle. Nevertheless, because of the opportunity of exercising unlimited faith and trust in God, we are counted as being righteous in His eyes, even as was Abraham. That is a wonderful thought, and helps us to overcome that down-hearted feeling when we so often fall. As the Scriptures tell us, *“A just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again.”* It is only because of the promises and assurances given us that we are encouraged to press on and to walk more closely in the footsteps of our Lord and Head.

So, let us look forward to that time now near at hand, when this marriage of the Lamb will take place. Let us use every opportunity we have of making ourselves ready, and we are sure we will find it will be well worth while, because as the Apostle says, *“Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things God has in reservation for those who love Him”* supremely.

*“We see the marriage splendour
Within the open door;
We know that those who enter
Are blest forevermore.
We see our King, more lovely
Than all the sons of men—
We haste, because that door, once shut
Will never open again.”*

The Three Epistles of John

Comments on the writings
of the "Beloved Apostle"

Part III.

I John 2. 1-2.

"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (ch. 2 vs. 1).

For the first time in his epistles John uses a personal mode of address. "Little children"; it is a tender and appealing word, one that must have been specially close to the heart of the beloved disciple, for he adopts it more than any other. He calls his readers "young men" and "fathers" once each, he calls them "brethren" twice, he calls them "beloved" four times, but this term "little children" is used no less than nine times. No matter how far advanced in the worldly tale of years, no matter how mature and advanced in the Truth, to him they were all "little children". He had known them from their early days in the faith, had ministered to them, taught them and watched over them; many of them he had watched grow up from childhood into youth and from youth into middle age. Dark hair turned to grey and fair hair to snowy white, the fresh bloom of maidenhood and early manhood became faded and the smooth skins wrinkled and old, but still they were to him what they had been at the beginning—little children—and he loved them. So now, when the light was beginning to fade out in his own sky and the end seemed very near, he summoned his remaining strength to set down on paper the exhortation he had given so persistently in past years "these things I write unto you that ye sin not".

Perhaps he felt as Paul had done thirty or forty years earlier. "As my beloved sons," Paul had written, "I warn you. For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel" (1 Cor. 4. 14). There were so many who would gladly assume the duty and privilege of instructors and teachers, discoursing, expounding, lecturing to the flock upon the various features of the Divine Plan and holding their hearers' interest by the eloquence or force of their utterances. There was apparently no lack of that kind of ministry in Paul's day even as there is no lack of it to-day. What was more sorely needed for these immature babes in Christ—and for all the community of believers whether babes or mature—was the loving care of a father in the faith, one who

could discern with unerring eye the varying needs of each member of the family and see that the need was met. That was John's pre-occupation too. He had stood by on one memorable occasion and heard the Lord give his fellow-disciple Peter a commission; "feed my lambs": but he had never interpreted that injunction as being obligatory upon Peter alone, and now, sixty years after the words had been spoken, and all his companions in the joys and sorrows of those early days were quietly lying in the grave, he was still continuing in the spirit of those words: "My little children".

"*That ye sin not*"! It seems a strange injunction to lay upon a community of Christians. Evidently there was the possibility of their sinning; otherwise the words would have no meaning. It is clear that John was fully conscious of the likelihood of some of them being so overtaken, if he uttered no warning. The whole of this second chapter is written under the burden of a great urgency; there is an intense awareness of the necessity of a plain statement of the position, and an impassioned appeal for the viewing of the matter from John's own standpoint and to hear his advice. The closing words of the chapter breathe his confidence that those to whom he writes will profit by his words and not fail him, but in the meantime he spares no pains to make plain to these his "little children" the ever-present menace of sin and the many unsuspected forms in which it makes its insidious approach to the believer.

John could not but have felt something like Ezekiel of old. "*Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel—if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned*" (Ezek. 3. 17-21). It was the mission and the responsibility of John to watch for the lives and the souls of these his "little children", as "one that must give account" (Heb. 13. 17) and he was by no means unmindful of his responsibility. Just as Ezekiel of old spoke the message that was in him without fear or favour, crying the word of the Lord to all who would listen, so did John seek with entreaties and persuasion to exhort his flock to that constant vigilance which alone would ensure their freedom from the delusions and the subtleties of the Adversary.

Here is a theme that it is well should be laid on the hearts and minds of everyone who is privileged to be a servant of the believers in spiritual ministry. How often do the Scriptures exhort all such to feed the flock of God with all that is pure and holy! How often, too, is this fact, of the ever-present danger of falling away from the faith, stressed as being an important aspect of such acceptable ministry. The work of the Christian elder to-day must needs include the uncompromising warnings so characteristic of the Hebrew prophets of old, for the same sins are with us in our world and human nature is still the same and ever prone to fail. Is that why Paul, writing to his son-in-the-faith Titus, defined in unusually clear and definite terms just what are the duties of an elder in this connection? "These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke, with all authority. Let no man despise thee," he said, and went on to list out those things in detail. They are:

Denying ungodly and worldly lusts,

We should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world,

Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ,

Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity,

And purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. (Titus 3. 15).

A brief epitome of the Divine Plan as it affects the Church; an abstract of all that the Apostles have said in all their epistles to guide that Church in its progress through this world and to the end of its course. In all of this, even although sin is not so much as mentioned, the thought of the constant conflict against the evil forces that would rob the Christian of his inheritance is implied, and the implication heavily underlined.

But suppose, despite all the fatherly care and all the instruction and all the warning, someone *does* sin! Whether the "sin" that the Apostle has in mind is one of deliberate, flagrant defiance of God, one of outrageous and blatant immorality, or, to go to the other end of the scale, some petty failure to live up to the standard of Christianity or a temporary indulgence in some weakness of the flesh—and John does not define what he means by sin—suppose one does give way before the machinations of the Evil One, or perhaps, is "drawn away of his own desires, and enticed" (Jas. 1. 14)? The possibility of disregarding the Apostle's advice and falling into the snares from which he would save his readers is clearly implied in these verses; but if so, is the case then hopeless? Does the faithful father

in God wash his hands of the erring one and does God reject him for ever? This is a question of doctrine and the answer is important!

It is because the answer is so important that the Apostle is so definite in his ruling. "If any man sin," he says, "we have an advocate with the Father . . ."

For the moment we will go no further than that statement. What merit or potency is there in this office of advocate with the Father that it should be invoked here in the case of the disciple who has sinned? Remember at this point that at our consecration the Adamic condemnation was removed. There is no question of the previous sinful condition being imputed to the repentant believer. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit" (Rom. 8. 1). No advocacy with the Father is needed for those things, for they have already been done away in Christ. This Advocate stands ready for the aid of the believer who, despite his consecration to God and his acceptance into the High Calling and his possession of the indwelling Holy Spirit, has nevertheless come short of the standard, has sinned. John tells us in chapter 1 that not one of us can claim to be free from that handicap and that if we do so claim we deceive ourselves. Not one of us can say we are without sin. For all of us, therefore, the Advocate must stand ready, for every time of need, throughout the span of our life in the flesh.

The word that is here translated "advocate" is the same one that is rendered "comforter" in John 14, and 15. Jesus foretold the coming of the Holy Spirit to the help of His disciples in the words "the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name . . ." and so on.

The Greek word is wellknown to most of us; it is *parakletos*, and it means, literally, one called or sent to stand beside a man in his time of need. It was the word used to describe the pleader or "defending counsel" in the Greek courts of law and its application here is very obvious. When the Lord was about to leave His disciples He promised them that He would not leave them helpless; He would send a *parakletos*, one to stand alongside and be their ever-present help in time of need. We all bear witness to the fulfilment of that promise. We all testify to the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives, guiding, guarding, illuminating, instructing, and at the end making us spiritually fitted for the inheritance of the saints in light. That is the office of the Holy Spirit during this Age, and this work of the Spirit has been accomplished in full degree.

The word "comforter" in the Authorised Version does not adequately express the meaning of the term. The Holy Spirit is a guardian, a defender, an instructor, a counsellor, a source of power and a vital force that makes the weak strong and the timorous courageous. Even the more modern version of "Helper" does not express all the meaning; in fact no one English word can possibly define the many-sided work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, and perhaps we do well to think of all the terms which express the full manifestation of this wonderful influence by which we live and by which we will, one day, gain the victory.

Now the use of the same word "*parakletos*" in its application to our Lord, Jesus Christ the righteous, has a rather more restricted meaning. John is here talking of one aspect only of the Christian life, albeit a most important aspect.

He is telling us of the Christian who has stumbled or turned from the way and has committed sin, and he says that such an one has a "*parakletos*", an Advocate, with the Father, Who is the Supreme Judge. Now here the term is used obviously in the strict legal sense which it bore in everyday life in John's time. If any man sins, he has a "defending counsel" in Jesus, One to stand alongside and plead his cause. The basis of the defence, of course, is that the offender has already been justified by faith in Christ and has not renounced that justification, or, if he had in fact renounced it in the committing of the sin in question, has now sincerely repented and seeks to claim again that justification by a renewal of faith. By no stretch of the imagination can we picture the Advocate taking up the case of one who is unrepentant. (It must be remembered that this whole passage concerns only the Church, the believers in Christ Jesus, and not the world nor that provision for humanity which is the purpose of the Millennial Age). Justification, and the subsequent consecration of the believer, has placed him in a position where the Father accepts his sincerity of heart and his purity of purpose and intention instead of demanding perfection of conduct, and ceases to hold against him that error and sin which is attributable to the weakness of the flesh, to "Adamic" sin. The Advocate urges the principle enunciated by Paul in Romans 7, that sin, dwelling in the flesh, leads the believer to do those things that of his own will and desire he would not do, and precludes his doing fully the good that he would do, and that this is evidence of the believers' desire and intention to do good and his capability of doing good when at the end the hindrance of the weakened Adamic flesh has been removed. The Father, Who has already said that He has no pleasure in the

death of him that dieth, but would that he turn from his wickedness and live, assents to the rightness of the Advocate's presentation of the matter, and counts the sin that has been committed as those that had already been blotted from the record at the time of justification. So, continually, the Advocate stands beside every member of His Church, claiming each as one for whom He died and who has accepted that death for himself and in the power of that acceptance has become one of Christ's own.

The Apostle proceeds in his exposition of this great truth by going on to say "*and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world*" (vs. 2).

John is not particularly talking about the world in this chapter—in fact he is not talking about the world at all—but lest any should think from his main theme that Jesus is the propitiation only for those who are His now, the members of His Church, John hastens to add that He is in fact such for the sins of the entire race of mankind. The death of Jesus is equally applicable to all, whether or no they come to God during this Age; all will receive its benefits, either now, or in the future Age.

This word "propitiation" is capable of misunderstanding. The modern meaning of the word is, to conciliate an offended or angry person by means of offerings or bribes, to placate. That has arisen from the use of the Greek word (*hilasmos*) in the early centuries to denote the giving of offerings and sacrifices to the pagan gods in order to "propitiate" them, to turn away their anger, to cause them to look with favour upon their devotees. From this the idea has grown up quite naturally that Christ was a propitiation for our sins in that He gave Himself as a blood-sacrifice to an angry God who thereby appeased His wrath and turned to look with favour and graciousness upon the former objects of His displeasure. Now that may be all right with pagan gods, but it is certainly quite out of accord with the known character of our God. Mediæval theology made much of this idea in its conception of the doctrine of the Atonement, and much of it has survived into our own day, but the appeasement of Divine wrath by the offering of a blood-sacrifice has nothing in common either with justice or morality, and the Divine Plan is solidly founded on both. And it was a far seeing man of God who declared, long before these times of John, "*thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it; thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise*" (Psa. 51. 16-17). So that the particular meaning of propitiation

tion for which we are indebted to the Pagan worship of Rome and Greece is one that we must definitely reject, hallowed though it be by long usage.

In these latter days we who have clearer knowledge of the Divine Plan can see that our Lord Jesus gave His humanity, not as such a sacrifice, but as an "anti-lutron", a "corresponding price" wherewith to redeem man out of the bondage of sin and death, and make fallen man His own property, as it were, that He might enjoy the legal as well as the moral right to raise all men from the dead, teach them of His ways in His own way and time, and present them at the last before the Father's holiness, perfect and sinless. Paul's allusion in 1 Tim. 2. 5-6 is taken from the Roman custom of manumission, the system by which slaves could be freed. The ransom money for the slave was paid into the temple treasury and from thence to the owner of the slave, who in this manner, by means of a kind of legal fiction, sold the slave to the god. The slave thus regained his freedom by becoming the property of the god. So, says Paul, "Christ died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living". The price He paid in the giving of His human life was the price whereby Adam and all his posterity condemned in him are redeemed from the power of sin and become the subjects of Christ.

A much more accurate understanding is ours if we keep to Bible usage and compare the equivalent meaning of the word in the Old Testament. The act of "making reconciliation" upon the Brazen Altar (Lev. 18. 15) or of sprinkling the blood of the sin-offering "to reconcile" in the Most Holy (Lev. 6. 30) or to "make an atonement for sin" (Lev. 16. 6., etc.) is denoted by the Hebrew word *kaphar*. Now *kaphar* means, primarily, "to cover," and its derivative words are used in the sense of covering over the Ark of Noah with pitch (Gen. 6. 14) or of obliterating the writing on written documents. From this comes the thought of atonement being a covering of the sin so that it is no longer seen or recognised by God. The place in the Most Holy where the High Priest sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice was called the *kaphoroth* or "place of covering" for this reason (translated "mercy seat" in Exodus and Leviticus in the Authorised Version).

When the translators of the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament, came to this word "*kaphar*" they used the Greek "*hilasmos*" and its allied words as its equivalent and so convey the same meaning, and this is why the "*kaphorah*" or "mercy seat" of Exodus is called the "*hilasterion*" or "propitiatory" in Hebrew 9. 5. From all of

this it is plain that the real thought behind the word propitiation as used in the New Testament is that of a *covering for sin* and a *means of reconciliation with God* rather than that of a bribe intended to allay Divine wrath. And this makes John's words here so much more luminous, and connects the two verses together. If any man sin, we have an Advocate, one to stand beside us to help us before the Father—and that Advocate is the One who both covers that sin and is the means of the reconciliation of the sinner with God. It is not the Ransom that is in view here so much as the office of Jesus on our behalf in His resurrection life after the Ransom has been given. The Ransom was efficacious to us when we accepted Jesus at the time of our justification and our consecration; John is now talking of things that happen subsequent to that time, during the period of our Christian walk and life, and it is during that period that we need His office of Advocate.

The position of the world generally is not quite the same. Whereas we, the Church, are reconciled to God at the time of our consecration, our coming into Christ and our acceptance into the High Calling, and therefore are honoured with the title of sons of God (1 John 3. 1. Gal. 4. 5) and have no need, as did the house of servants, of a Mediator to stand between ourselves and God, mankind are not reconciled until they attain actual perfection at the end of the Millennial Age. They are therefore in the same position as was Israel in the wilderness. They will have a covenant which will promise them life but will not be able, at first, to keep that covenant. Just as Israel on that account needed a Mediator to make the covenant with God for them on their behalf and thereafter to stand in God's presence in their stead, and transmit God's commands and laws to them because in their imperfection they were unable to receive them directly from that Holy God, so it will be with man in the Millennium. They will have the Lord Jesus Christ to be their Mediator, the "one Mediator between God and man" of 1 Tim. 2. 5 to stand as it were before God in their stead and transmit to them God's commands and laws. Israel never did progress to the point where their Mediator could step aside and leave them standing before God in their own righteousness. Man in the next Age will achieve that standard; the day is to come when the great Mediator will cease His Mediatorial office and leave all of mankind, "whosoever will", standing in the full power of earthly perfection before God, keeping His laws in their own righteousness, and so, at last and in their turn, becoming Sons of God.

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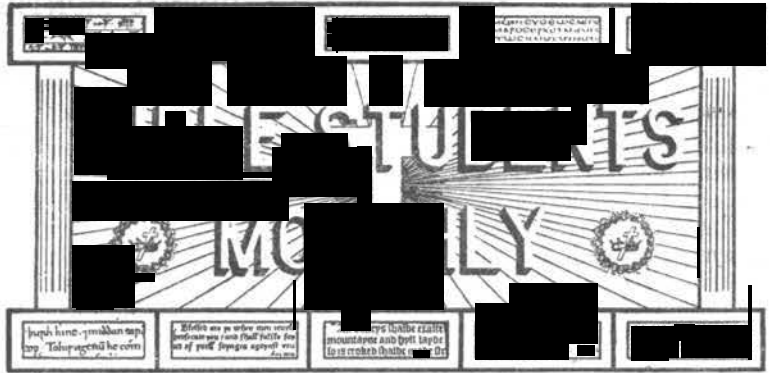
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Thou, therefore, endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.



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APRIL, 1950

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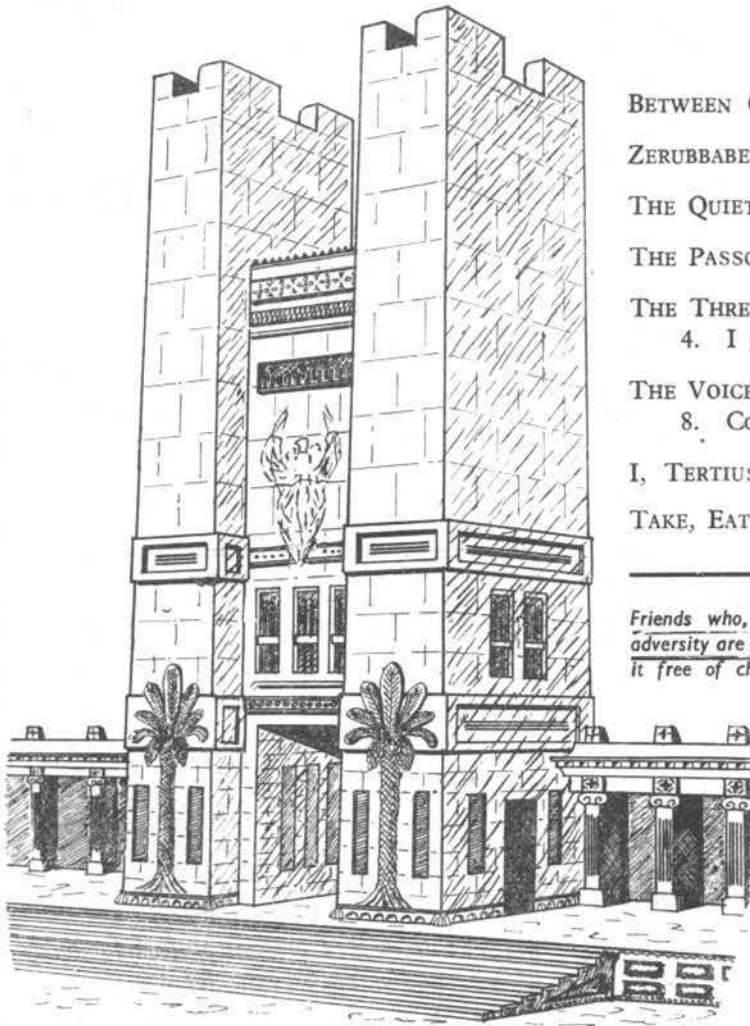
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Lift up your heads, O ye gates
 And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
 And the King of glory shall come in.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

Very occasionally friends enquire if the name "Bible Fellowship Union" may be used on printed matter published by themselves, usually to advertise local witness efforts and the like. Such requests are invariably declined, not on account of any lack of sympathy with the zeal and sincerity of the brethren concerned, but purely because the Bible Fellowship Union cannot allow its name to appear on literature for which it is not responsible and which it may never even see. We would like the friends clearly to appreciate that the name is used only on literature published by ourselves at Well-ington, and may not be used at all on any other printed matter or announcements. Neither may meetings, lectures or speakers be announced verbally or in any way as being under the auspices or responsibility of the B.F.U., unless our consent has previously been obtained. We feel sure that all our friends will assent to the wisdom and desirability of this position and agree that any other course can upon occasion lead to confusion and misunderstanding.

Of course nothing in this precludes the friends from rubber stamping their own local address or notices on B.F.U. literature, tracts, etc., which they obtain from us. Likewise we are always pleased to have our literature printed (at time of printing) with such local addresses when this is a convenience to the brethren concerned. This latter, of course, can only be done when we are printing a new edition of tracts and we need to have the requirements stated in advance in readiness for the next time of printing.

The year just past, 1949, has been a particularly encouraging one for tract distribution. A goodly number of friends have taken advantage of the opportunities that have been made available by reason of some brethren's loving zeal and the notices that have appeared in the "Monthly". Literature sent out from this office for free distribution as a witness to the heart-cheering message of Truth during 1949 was as follows:—

Tracts (mainly "Millennial Message") ... 52,760
12 and 16 page booklets (chiefly
"Glimpse of God's Plan") ... 9,420.

An encouraging number of enquiries has resulted from the distribution and there will be quite a few readers of these lines to recall that their first introduction to the "Monthly" and the understanding of Scripture which it expounds was by means of a copy of "Millennial Message." Nearly three-quarters of the tracts sent out went in small quantities of two or three hundred down to thirty or fifty; in this way a large number of brethren shared in the privilege and almost every part of the country has been represented in the distribution.

Many Christian groups are engaged in similar work and usually on a much more extensive scale, and we would not suggest for one moment that our own privileges in this connection constitute the only witness to Christian truth that is being given. But this is a witness that expresses the "truth as it is in Jesus" as we understand it, a hope for sin-stricken mankind that is characteristic of our God, a God of Love and of Wisdom. The fact that the work is limited and insignificant compared with some works that are carried on in the world is of no account to us, for it is "not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts" that the work is done. We each do our part and leave the results with Him.

A full report and financial statement relating to the Free Tract Fund will shortly be sent to all who have made donations to the Fund during 1949 and a copy will be sent to anyone else interested upon request. And in the meantime—we shall still count it a privilege to send supplies of tracts to those who will make use of them.

Gone From Us

Bro. Morton Edgar (*Glasgow*)
Bro. E. B. James (*Brentwood*)
Bro. E. Berry (*Southampton*)

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

LONDON MONTHLY MEETING

Saturday, 15th April, 1950

6.30—8.30 p.m.

In the Tudor Hall
CAXTON HALL

Caxton Street, Westminster, S.W.1
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Praise and Worship
Fellowship

A talk on the Christian outlook for today
and an opportunity for questions
A Scriptural address by guest speaker

Speakers: Bro. R. G. Barrett.
Bro. H. Lauster
(*Stuttgart, Germany*).

ZERUBBABEL'S PASSOVER

A story of a stirring awakening

Somewhere in the Book of Isaiah there is a passage that describes the spirit in which the Jewish exiles, returning from Babylon to rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem, in the days of Cyrus king of Persia, journeyed across the desert and climbed the steep, ragged Judean hills to their ruined city. *"Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion. . . . Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem. . . . The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations: and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. . . . Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence . . . ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the Lord will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your reward."* (Isa. 52. 8-12.) That deliverance from the Babylonian captivity was a very different thing from the Exodus out of Egypt. Under Moses the earlier Israelites had gone out in haste and by flight, first eating the Passover girded as for a journey and with every evidence of urgency. They had gone out without the consent and against the wishes of the Egypt that had held them captive for four generations. But this time things were different. *"Ye shall not go out with haste, nor yet by flight."* Cyrus king of Persia had issued a decree encouraging them to go, and had given them necessities for the journey and the wherewithal to commence a new life in an empty and desolate land. He had restored to them the holy treasures that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the Temple and brought to Babylon fifty years previously, and had commanded them to build again the magnificent building that his predecessor had destroyed. No wonder they rejoiced! No wonder that, in the words of the Psalmist, singing of this very event, *"When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing; then said they among the nations, The Lord hath done great things for them. The Lord hath done great things for us; we are glad."* (Psa. 126. 1-3.)

It was in this spirit that fifty thousand immigrants came into the land and immediately set about raising the walls of the Temple. The enthusiasm was

great at first, for the influence of Daniel, the saintly man who had once been Nebuchadnezzar's Prime Minister, and a tower of strength to the captive exiles, was still strong upon them. Daniel, too old now to come back to Judea, had blessed their going and told them of the opportunity that was theirs. Now in the seventh month, the time of the Feast of Tabernacles, the feast that commemorated their journeying in the wilderness for forty years after their departure from Egypt, they were gathered together in Jerusalem. From all the villages and hamlets of Judea they had come to worship before God at the first ceremonial to be conducted on the sacred site since Nebuzar-Adan the commander-in-chief of Nebuchadnezzar's army had set fire to the Temple, and burned it to the ground, at the time of the Captivity. That had been a time of disaster and sorrow; this was one of hope and expectation. The house of the Lord was to be rebuilt and the ancient ceremonies restored, and Israel would once more bear a name among the nations. That was the faith that burned brightly in every breast.

The little community had two leaders of sterling worth, Zerubbabel the prince and Joshua the High Priest. Zerubbabel was of the kingly line; he traced his natural descent from Nathan the son of David. The royal pedigree from Solomon had become extinct in Jehoiachin and Zedekiah, and the humbler line of Nathan took its place after the Captivity; thus Zerubbabel was its present representative. Through him, though he knew it not, the line of Christ was to be carried on until of his descendants, one day, Jesus would be born in Bethlehem. Joshua the son of Jehozadek was a High Priest for the times. Nothing is known of his father, who was Israel's High Priest during the Babylonian captivity. His grandfather, Seraiah, High Priest in the days of Zedekiah, was executed by the victorious Babylonians at the capture of the city. Jeremiah's picture of the political intrigues of that period indicate that the priests were hand in glove with the king and very possibly Seraiah was entangled with politics more than he should have been and suffered a fate he might have avoided had he been more devoted to his own commission before God. Nebuchadnezzar had a shrewd insight into the honesty or otherwise of men and it is impossible not to notice the difference between the respective treatments he meted out to Seraiah and to Jeremiah,

who had kept out of politics and maintained, very faithfully, his witness to God. (Jer. 39. 11-14 and 52. 24-27.) But it is evident that Joshua was of sterling worth. The approving tone of Zechariah's third chapter shows that he was a man the Lord could use. Under these two men, Zerubbabel and Joshua, Israel could have risen very quickly to a place of honour and power among the nations.

The people failed them. The people, who had come back from Babylon with songs of praise on their lips for so great deliverance, in exultation at the fall of "that great city", in joy that the Lord had turned again their captivity and done great things for them, began to lose their first fine enthusiasm, began to care more for their own farms and gardens and houses than for the house of the Lord. The affairs of daily life loomed as of greater moment than the service of God, and when the adversaries of Judah began to put obstacles in the way of the restoration work it is plain that Israel in the mass were not at all averse to letting the case go by default.

While Cyrus lived, the work went on, but not at the pace originally planned. The Samaritans, even then bitter enemies of Judah, hindered and frustrated the work. It was not entirely stopped, but *neither was it pressed ahead with zeal and expedition.* And they made one great and grievous mistake.

If the Samaritan complaint to Canyses, the successor of Cyrus, as recorded in Ezra 4, was true, and not a malicious misrepresentation on their part, then the Jews were at that time engaged in building, not only the Temple, but also the walls and foundations of the city. Now it is an important thing to notice that the decree of Cyrus gave no mandate to build the city; it was to build the Temple only. There was a deep truth here for Israel to learn. Their Temple was to rise, undefended, in the midst of a hostile population. The Lord himself would defend both His Temple and his people—but they would not. They fell after the same example of unbelief that has been seen so often in world history—resource to material means of defence, to carnal weapons, to defend Divine interests. They would not understand that God is able to defend His own.

So the work was stopped. The successors of Cyrus had no such interest in this despised and hated people and its Temple as had Cyrus. The new king withdrew the Decree and commanded work to cease.

That was a test on the people. Now, at all events, they could have said, as did some of their descendants on a certain memorable occasion "*Whether it be right to hearken unto men rather than unto God, judge ye; but as for us . . .*" They could have defied both the Samaritans and

the king's edict, and taken themselves in prayer to God for His leading and His protection, and gone forward in faith that His purposes would be accomplished. But they did not. Therefore in consequence "*then ceased the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem. So it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.*" (Ezra 4. 24.)

So the whole glorious dream faded and the golden hopes with which the exiles had set out to return to their own land were in less than a decade dashed to the ground. At the first breath of opposition the people had wilted and laid down their tools, and turned themselves to the secular pursuits of every day, the tilling of the land and the gaining of livelihoods, the building of houses and organising of communal life, the buying and selling, marrying and giving in marriage, the while the deserted, half-finished house of God stood on Mount Moriah, a crumbling monument to the fickleness of man and the weakness of his faith.

But in the second year of Darius, nineteen years after the exiles had returned from Babylon and ten years after work on the Temple had been completely stopped, something momentous happened.

Two young men, Haggai and Zechariah, suddenly came into the public eye and commenced preaching in Jerusalem and Judea. Haggai started first; two months later he was joined by his fellow-prophet Zechariah. These two young men, without any material resources, accomplished in the short space of four years what twenty years of time backed by all the material wealth of the thousands of Israel, the influence of Zerubbabel and Joshua, the authority of the decree of Cyrus, had failed to do. They achieved the rebuilding and the dedication of the Temple!

If the Zechariah and Iddo of Neh. 12 are the same as the prophet and his forebear of those names mentioned in Zech. 1. 1, which is a very probable thing, then Zechariah must have been a very young man, certainly at most in his early twenties, for Iddo his grandfather would then have returned to Judea in the first year of Cyrus, probably an old man. On this assumption, it is likely that Haggai, about whose antecedents we know nothing, was a young man also. There is a freshness and vigour about both their prophecies that seems to suggest as much. Zerubbabel the prince and Joshua the High Priest would by this time, twenty years after the Return, be getting on in years, at the very least in late middle-age; Neh. 12. 16 indicates that later on Zechariah held office in the priesthood under Joiakim, the High Priest who succeeded Joshua. The two older men would probably be to some extent dispirited and discouraged at the failure of all their high hopes, the adverse decision of Artaxerxes and the apathy of the people of Israel

combining to dissuade them from any considerable activity in the direction of restoring the Temple of God. Then like a thunder-bolt came the message declaimed in the streets and squares of the city, told in the ears of shepherds and peasants in the countryside, brought to the notice of the prince and the High Priest, word that prophets were arisen again in Israel. A message for the times, a message that told with decision and conviction to what cause was due their unhappy condition and the failure of their one-time high ideals and hopes. "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?" demanded Haggai. "Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways!" Scarcely had the tones of his accusation died upon the air than the equally penetrating voice of his brother-prophet Zechariah commanded attention. "The Lord hath been sore displeased with your fathers. Therefore . . . thus saith the Lord of hosts 'Turn ye unto me . . . and I will turn unto you.'" Then Haggai again "Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord." To Joshua, the people's High Priest, Zechariah addressed himself deliberately "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; if thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts"; with Haggai rejoicing "Be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord, and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedeck, the High Priest, and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work; for I am with you."

Haggai and Zechariah had put their fingers upon the source of the trouble. Faith and zeal had sunk to a low ebb; there was no longer that heavenly vision which had inspired the first emigrants to wend their way across the desert with songs and thanksgiving on their lips, and their faces turned toward Zion. Because faith and zeal had waned, the enemies of Israel and of God had loomed nearer and more menacing, and in fear and doubt the work of God had been stopped.

Behold now the difference! The prohibition of the Persian king was still in force. "Cause these men to cease, and that this city be not builded, until commandment shall be given from me." (Ezra 4. 21.) The wrath of the king could still be backed by the military might of Persia if this handful of Jews dared to rebel against his express decree. The Samaritans, the ancient enemies at whose instigation the work had been stopped ten years previously, were still there, malignantly watchful, and would not hesitate to report any new activity to the king without delay. There was no change in the circumstances; no reason from the outward and material

point of view why any fresh endeavour would not meet the same fate as past ones. And yet, most remarkable of happenings, the fervent preaching of these two youngsters so wrought upon the minds and hearts of the people that they forgot all their fears and apathy, regained their faith, and without so much as giving a thought to the king of Persia, rose up as one man to resume the building of their Temple. "Then the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel . . . then rose up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jozadak, and began to build the house of God which is at Jerusalem, and with them were the prophets of God helping them." (Ezra 5. 1.) That is only the bald historical notice of the happening; let the books of Haggai and Zechariah tell the splendid story in their own way, how that the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, and Joshua, the high priest, and all the people, so that they came and did work in the house of the Lord (Hag. 1. 14) how the Lord promised "the glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former" (Hag. 2. 9) and that wonderful award, set as a gem in this inspiring prophecy "from the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid . . . FROM THIS DAY WILL I BLESS YOU." (Hag. 2. 18-19.) Let the splendid imagery of Zechariah's visions illuminate those joyful days, the view of Jerusalem inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein, of Joshua rescued from the accusers, of the prosperity of Judah and ultimately the defeat of all her enemies, and the kingship of the Lord established over all the earth. "At evening time it shall be light." The wonderful inspiration that we ourselves draw from this thrilling book we owe to the days when those two young men stood in the markets of Jerusalem and bade the people forget their fears, pay no heed to the mandates of that heathen king, and enter the service of the Lord their God in the building of His sanctuary.

Of course it was not long before the Samaritans were there again, taking particulars from the leaders, and sitting down to write another report to the Persian king—Darius this time—at Babylon. Note the difference in the spirit with which their questioning was met on this occasion. "We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and build the house that was builded these many years ago. . . ." (Ezra 5. 11.) There was no fear and hesitation now; the same Zerubbabel and Joshua, the same builders and labourers, the same citizens, who ten years ago had laid down their tools at the king's behest now proudly declared their determination to continue. Last time they ran away from the

lion; this time they faced the lion and defied him, in the strength of the Lord their God.

And the sequel? Let Darius answer for himself, in his reply to the complainants "Let the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in his place. Moreover I make a decree . . ." and Darius went on to command that assistance be given to these Jews in their work, with materials and money, and offerings to be made to God on the king's behalf; that any who hindered the work or violated the king's word should himself be put to death. The king personally invoked the wrath of the God of Israel upon all who would harm this house of God at Jerusalem. "I Darius have made a decree; let it be done with speed." (Ezra 6.)

How often do we repeat to each other the old saying "Fear knocked at the door; faith opened it; and no one was there!" Here is an instance where that principle was put into practice and a whole people reaped the reward of faith. But there was much more involved than the building of a house of prayer for that generation. It was from this day, when the Temple began to be built, that there commenced the development of that Jewish people, with its distinctive worship, to which Jesus came nearly five centuries later. It was at this time that the Old Testament as we know it was completed, in the sayings and writings of Haggai and Zechariah and Malachi, to be welded into an authoritative canon of Scripture by Ezra the pious priest fifty years later. Those enthusiastic and zealous Jews under Zerubbabel and Joshua, Haggai and Zechariah, builded better than they knew when they defied the powers of this world and laid their hands to the Lord's work. They brought the work and the story of the Old Testament to its consummation and prepared the way for the New.

"And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king" (Ezra 6. 15). Four short years! In that brief space of time they had built the sanctuary, erected the great altar, set the golden vessels of Solomon's Temple, brought back from Babylon, in place, and were ready to reinstate the ceremonial and offerings that were commanded by Moses. It was nearly the season of the Passover. Nisan followed Adar, and from the third day of Adar there would only be some six weeks to the fourteenth day of Nisan and the celebration of Israel's most solemn feast.

It was in the spirit of this great awakening of faith and zeal that they kept the Passover—perhaps one of the most memorable that Israel had ever known. It was memorable because it made so deep an impression upon the minds of all who participated. It made that impression because it meant so

much more to them than did an ordinary Passover. The usual year-by-year celebration reminded them in a perfunctory sort of way of their ancestors' deliverance from Egypt, but it had grown to be a custom having some historical interest but that did not touch daily life very closely. This Passover was different. It denoted something more than their nation's deliverance from Egypt. It denoted something more than their own more recent deliverance from Babylon. It denoted each one's individual deliverance from the bonds of apathy and indifference which had wellnigh cost them the loss of their favoured standing before God. It marked their entrance into a new life, a life in which God and His holiness was to be placed first and become the centre around which all of life's actions and activities were to circle. The glowing words of Zechariah had taken firm root in their hearts, and they could not wait for the then far-distant Millennial Age to realise their fulfilment, even although the real application of those words is to that Age. They must apply them to themselves at once, and they did. "In that day" he had said "shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar." Everything in life, whether normally finding its place in secular or sacred use, is to be holy to God. "Whatsoever ye do" said the inspired Apostle at a later date "do all to the glory of God." So that Passover became a time of renewed dedication of life, consecration of heart, to the service of the Lord of Hosts.

There is a great lesson for us in all of this, great doctrinal truth that we must needs take to ourselves. It is that cleansing must precede consecration, faith and zeal precede entrance into Divine favour and a place in Divine purposes. Not for nothing did the Apostles exhort the generation that witnessed Pentecost to repent and be converted so that times of refreshing might come from the presence of the Lord. (Acts 3. 19.) There is a great work of Temple building going on during this Age but God cannot use any in this work except they first be cleansed from all contact with the people of the land, separated completely to His service, and then be animated by that spirit of faith and belief, zeal and enthusiasm, which alone can make them mighty through God in the doing of His work. The powers of this world may threaten and forbid; it is the spirit that trusts in the over-abounding power of God Most High, that will defy the forces of unrighteousness and lay hands to God's work, in full confidence that He will defend and prosper, that is triumphant at last. Once let us be fully persuaded, as Israel was persuaded by Haggai and Zechariah, that God's righteousness must assuredly

prevail at the end and all the forces of evil be vanquished and flee away, and the battle, so far as we are concerned, is won. We shall stand and see the Temple completed, and know that in that Sanctuary the Lord of all will find a dwelling-place and a place of meeting with all nations.

Zerubbabel, and Joshua, and Haggai, and Zechariah, and all the people with them "*kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy; for the Lord had made them joyful . . . to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.*" So the story ends, at the last verse of that eventful sixth chapter of the Book of Ezra. "The joy of the Lord shall be your strength" said another upon another occasion. How true it is! The joy that comes from a full and sincere consecration of heart and life to the Lord, and a clear and definite separation from the interests and distractions of earth, the "people of the land", and a firm, unyielding resistance to every opposing and seductive influence, the enemies of our faith, this joy it is that will give us the strength to overcome. Like Elijah, who partook of the heaven-provided sustenance in his time of extremity, and in the strength of that meat went forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God, we, reaching

out to take to ourselves every spiritual provision that is made for our needs, and maintaining faith, zeal and determination, will remain unshaken by all those things wherewith the earth to-day is being shaken. We shall perceive, at the last, the fruits of our faith in the coming to earth of that heavenly Jerusalem under the beneficent rule of which death is to cease and all sorrow and sighing is to flee away.

The feast of joy in accomplishment, therefore, follows faith and zeal, never doubt and unbelief. We who have been set free from a great bondage are given the privilege of becoming Temple-builders. It is in the strength of God that we play our part in that work of building the Temple which is to be a house of prayer for all nations; as we share together in Passover let us remember that there was a time when the powers of this Age, the powers of evil, had to be defied before God's protection could be manifested and his work go forward. It may be so again. God grant that in such case we are found, not like those who weakly acquiesced in the command to stop work, but those who joyfully and zealously went forward to the execution of their Divine commission, trusting their God for defence while they laboured in the interests of His work in the earth.

A SERIOUS QUESTION

Seeing then that these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness. (2 Pet. 3. 11.) If this was a serious consideration in the Apostle's day, how much more weighty does it seem to-day, when we stand at the threshold of the new dispensation, in the very midst of all the disintegrating influences of the old. A few more years will wind up the present order, and then the chastened world will stand face to face with the actual conditions of the established kingdom of God; yet the course of the Church is to be finished within the brief space of time that intervenes. Seeing, then, that all these things—present political, social, religious and financial arrangements are to be dissolved, and that so soon, and how apart from these things are the real interests of the saints, how comparatively unimportant should the things of this present order seem to us: they are not worthy of our time or words, which should go to the things which alone will survive. And, having such hopes as are set before us and so clear a knowledge of the grand outcome, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness? And with what carefulness we need to guard against being

over charged with the petty cares of this present time, and against imbibing the spirit of the world. Only by constant watchfulness and prayer can we keep ourselves unspotted from the world. We need to keep a vigilant watch over our general character to see that it bears the Divine likeness; that meekness, sincerity, moderation, temperance and truth are always manifest in us. And then we should see that all our conversation is such as becometh saints.

The chief lesson and study in divinity is well and rightly to learn to know Christ . . . and Christ Himself also teacheth that we should learn to know Him only out of the Scriptures where He saith, "Search the Scriptures, for they do testify of me."

Luther.

* * *

Study will not suffice for the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. We must entreat God day and night, that the Lion of the tribe of Judah may come to us and deign to open the seal of the Book.

Origen.

THE QUIET TIME

"My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places."

FAITH

*I know not the way that's before me,
The joys or the griefs it may bring;
What clouds are o'erhanging the future,
What flowers by the wayside may spring.
But there's One who will journey beside me,
Nor in weal nor in woe will forsake;
And this is my solace and comfort,
"He knoweth the way that I take."*

HAPPINESS

The early Franciscans were so happy that they laughed aloud in Church. They were called God's glee men. The early Methodists stole some of their best hymn tunes from the opera, and set the songs of Zion to dance music.

My God, I am Thine,
What a comfort Divine! . . .

And my soul it doth dance at the sound of Thy Name.

A man who met the Cliff College evangelists on the beach at Clacton-on-Sea, and who was converted through their ministry, said that their holiness was of the "radiant, rollicking" type. The early-day Salvationists danced for joy. William Booth said that if the Spirit moved them they could leap for joy in hymn or prayer. And they did.

FAMILY LOVE

It is in his Church that God's heart may be said specially to be, there it unfolds itself in a way such as it can do amid no other order of His creatures. There it shows itself in all its manifold fulness such as it has no scope for elsewhere. It is in the family alone that the one thing we call affection or love is divided and spread out like a sunbeam into the rainbow's sevenfold hues, there to display itself in all the rich tints of hidden beauty. So it is in the church alone that the love of God is fully seen, not merely in all its intensity, but in all its varied riches. All kinds of love are unfolded there, there is room for such wide variety of affection both between the Head and the members and between the members one with the other that it seems as if there had been given new powers of loving as well as new objects to love.

SELF-CONTROL

Who, of experience, does not know how great a matter a little fire may kindle; how much evil may be started by the fire of the tongue; how many unkind thoughts, evil suspicions, surmises, how much envy, malice, hatred and strife may be started by a mere insinuation? Since the Lord declares, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," it follows that the hearts and lips, from which emanate these evil influences, are not controlled by the wisdom that cometh from above, though they be in some measure consecrated to the Lord.

SPIRITUAL VISION

We have to-day in the advancement of art, in the increase of wealth, in better homes and better furnishings, in improved roads and landscapes and more artistic clothing, in pictures and music and conveniences and wider business prospects and opportunities, in the conveniences of mail, telegraph and telephone—in all these things we have a hundred-fold more to attract our minds and ambitions and desires to the earth and earthly things than had our forefathers of even a century ago. How needful it was that the Lord should open simultaneously to his faithful a clearer understanding of his Word and plan—of the riches of his grace and his loving kindness toward us, his wonderful provisions which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of the natural man, but which God hath revealed unto us by his Spirit.

SPIRIT-FILLED

The Greeks used the word *euphoria* to express an immense sense of well being. The true *euphoria* is seen in a puppy which rolls over on the ground for the very joy of being alive; in the lambs gambolling in the fields; in a colt galloping along beside its mother; and in children who skip, dance and run because they cannot keep still. This is the true *euphoria*; and, we believe, should be the portion of those filled with all the fulness of God. Old age comes on far too speedily. The radiant morn of life is the continuous possession of those who are Spirit-filled.

The Passover Must Be Killed

"Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." 1. Cor. 5:7.

The term Passover amongst the Jews was frequently applied as the name of a festival week, otherwise called the Feast of Passover, beginning on the fifteenth day of Nisan. But we must not confound this with the frequent references to the Passover found in the Scriptures when the word feast is not used, which generally referred to the lamb that was killed, the Passover. For instance, we read, "Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the Passover must be killed". Again, our Lord sent disciples to enquire of a friend, "Where is the guest-chamber, where I may eat the Passover with My disciples?" Again we read, "And they made ready the Passover." When our Lord sat down with the disciples to eat of the lamb He said, "With desire I desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I say unto you I will no more eat thereof until it be fulfilled in the Kingdom of God."

While the Jews still apparently think more of the Passover week than of the Passover lamb, we, on the contrary, and in harmony with the example of our Lord and the apostles, have special respect for the lamb, which typified the "Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world," and under whose blood of sprinkling we who now believe—namely, the "Church of the First-Born"—are "passed over" or spared in advance of the world.

God's arrangements for the Jews were typical and full of valuable lessons for us, who belong to anti-typical or Spiritual Israel. In the type the Lord provided for two great religious occasions amongst his people, the one at the beginning of the secular year and the other at the beginning of the religious year. The religious year began in the spring, counting from the first new moon after the vernal equinox, approximately April 1st, but varying because of the difference between lunar and solar time. It was in connection with this, the beginning of their religious year, that the Lord appointed the Passover—the killing and eating of the Passover lamb on the fourteenth day, to be followed by a Passover week of unleavened bread. The civil year with the Jews began six months later, in the seventh month, approximately October 1st; and it was in connection with this civil year that the Atonement Day sacrifices were appointed in connection with the "Feast of Tabernacles" or "Booths", in which the Israelites called to mind their wilderness journey on leaving Egypt *en route* for Canaan.

These two great religious celebrations pictured the same lesson from different standpoints: the

first emphasised more particularly the passing over of the first-born, who subsequently were represented in the tribe of Levi, at whose head stood the priesthood. Although the type seems to carry forward and to picture the deliverance of all Israel through this priestly tribe, to which Moses belonged, yet specifically, particularly, in detail, it dealt merely with the deliverance, the blessing, of the priestly tribe, the first-born. The other type, in the seventh month, more particularly pictures the atonement for the sins of the whole world, the forgiveness and reconciliation of all mankind.

There is a force and meaning in the Apostle's expression, "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us", which is not generally appreciated. (1 Cor. 5. 7.) Our Lord is not the world's passover, but the Church's Passover. All Israel prefigured or represented the world of mankind, and the bondage of the whole people represented all mankind under the bondage of sin and death, the great taskmaster in the type being Pharaoh, in the antitype being Satan. Deliverance is desired for all, and the Lord's arrangement is ultimately to deliver all. The Apostle so explains when he writes, "The creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God".

But the Apostle divides the groaning ones into two classes, saying, "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now"—"waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God". (Rom. 8. 19, 21, 22.) His reference here is to the world of mankind whose deliverance from the bondage of Satan and the power of sin and death will only come through the manifestation of the glorified Church, the Christ in glory and power, as God's Kingdom ruling the world. The Apostle also mentions the Church of the First-Born in her present condition, saying, "But ourselves also, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, do groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the deliverance of our body". Both classes have an experience of groaning, both classes have an experience of waiting, but they wait for different things. The latter, the Church of the First-Born, waits for her deliverance as the Body of Christ through a share in the First Resurrection. According to the Divine promise the former, the world, waits until the Church class shall have been perfected, glorified, empowered, and shine forth as the

sun in the Kingdom of their Father for the blessing of all the families of the earth, for the uplifting of all who desire Divine favour on Divine terms.

Look now at the type: notice that it is not all Israel that is in danger from the destroying angel, but only the first-born. Only the first-born of the Egyptians were slain. Hence it was only the first-born of the Israelites that were spared or passed over. These first-born ones, protected by the blood of the lamb, the Lord declared to be specially His; and, with a view to marking them out and keeping them as a special, peculiar people, an exchange was made whereby the first-born of all the tribes were exchanged by the Lord for the one tribe of Levi, which He accepted as specially His and which in the type represents the household of faith. Out of this household of faith, in turn, a priestly family was selected, which typified Christ our High Priest and the Church His Body, the under priesthood, the Royal Priesthood. So, then, those who perceive the matter clearly see that the Passover has to do only with the household of faith. *It is in full accord with this that the Lord's Supper, which antitypes the eating of the lamb, is not offered to the world, but is strictly and exclusively an institution for the household of faith.*

Seeing in the type the slain lamb, its blood sprinkled upon the posts and lintels of the home and its flesh eaten with bitter herbs, we apply this in the antitype and see Christ the antitypical Lamb, see that His blood sprinkled upon our hearts cleanses them from a consciousness of evil and gives us an assurance of our being *passed over*, of our being spared, of our being granted life through His blood. This sprinkling represents our justification by faith; and the subsequent eating of the lamb with bitter herbs is represented in the antitype by our consecration, our partaking of Christ, our participation with Him in His sufferings and self-denials—also represented by the bitter herbs, which give zest to our appetite and encourage us to partake more and more abundantly of the Lamb. All who believe the testimony, all who trust in the precious blood, are passed over, and, more than this, are expecting a general deliverance of the whole people, of all who love God, who desire to do Him reverence and service. So many as thus believe realise themselves pilgrims and strangers under present conditions, looking for a better country, even the heavenly Canaan. All this was represented in typical Israel, for while eating the lamb on that night of Passover they stood staff in hand, girded for a journey. Likewise the Lord's faithful to-day should realise themselves pilgrims and strangers, having no continuing city, but setting their affections on things above.

We meet not as Jews to remember the deliverance from Pharaoh and Egyptian bondage, but as antitypical Israelites seeking to escape the power of Satan and the dominion of sin. We meet not to eat literal lamb and bitter herbs and to commemorate the passing over in Egypt, but as Spiritual Israelites to recognise and commemorate the death of the Lamb of God as our Passover—to feast upon Him, upon the truths which He gave us.

More than this, as explained by our Lord, we not only will use the unleavened bread to represent the purity of His flesh broken for us, and the fruit of the vine to represent His blood shed for us, but also in the light of the Apostle's explanation we perceive that it is a part of our privilege to be broken with Christ as a part of the same larger loaf, and to have fellowship in His cup of suffering and death as a part of the larger cup. From this double standpoint we view our relationship to the Lord, first as those whom He passes over, and secondly as those who share also with Him by and by in the great work of leading forth from bondage to sin and Satan all who will accept of the Divine favour and liberty as the sons of God! How wonderfully grand is the privilege thus accorded us! No wonder the Apostle said, "*Let us keep the Feast*"!

Our feasting upon this bread which came down from heaven and which was broken for us is not merely for the special occasion of our assembling annually. Rather that annual assembling which our Lord enjoins represents our experiences throughout the entire night of His absence, until He shall establish His Kingdom in the morning. It is for us to keep the feast, not merely in this special and commemorative manner, once a year, but day by day, hour by hour, to feed upon the Lamb of God, by faith to realise and appropriate to ourselves His virtues and merits, and to grow in grace and knowledge and love and all the fruits and graces of the Spirit. Indeed, we remember the Master's words to be in the nature of a command, "*As often as ye do this, do it in remembrance of Me*". There is no doubt in our minds now as to what we do in this annual celebration of our Lord's death—we are keeping the feast because we have come to realise that Christ was slain for us as our Passover Lamb. Evidently no other time would be so appropriate as the anniversary. Whether that be reckoned by sun time or moon time, according to the days of the week or according to the days of the month, it is unquestionably an annual celebration; and as oft as we do it, every year as we do it, every year as the anniversary occurs, we do it not in remembrance of the type, but in remembrance of the grand antitype, Jesus our Redeemer.

The Three Epistles of John

Comments on the writings
of the "Beloved Apostle"

Part IV. · I John 2. 3-6.

"And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep His commandments" (vs. 3).

John has a great deal to say about this relationship between our knowledge of God and our faithfulness in keeping His Word. In another place and at another time the Apostle Paul spoke of our having the "witness" of the Spirit, the inner consciousness that our acceptance by the Father is a very real thing, a consciousness that can only be ours if we truly are led by the Spirit of God. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God" he says, "they are the Sons of God . . . FOR . . . ye have received the Spirit of adoption" and it is that Spirit that bears witness with our own Spirit that we are the children of God and therefore joint heirs with Jesus Christ (Rom. 8. 14-17). John's mind here in this chapter is running along similar lines. If we have truly entered into covenant relationship with God and have genuinely come "into" Christ, seeking more and more to give His Word full scope and full play in our lives, then we shall have the witness within ourselves that we are His in truth, that we "know" God. It may not be a thing we can define in so many words; we may not be able to express or explain the philosophic or intellectual basis of our acceptance with Him to others or even to ourselves, yet nevertheless we shall *know* that we know God. This is not a matter of mere blind credulity, or even wishful thinking; those who have truly entered into the secret place of the Most High and now abide under the shadow of the Almighty have a perception and knowledge of spiritual things which gives them a realisation of the presence of God that cannot be the portion of one who has never passed through that experience. Where there is positive knowledge the mind no longer needs the benefit of argument or debate, the appeal to logic or to reason; these things are the steps by which knowledge is—in this material world—normally attained but with the achievement the means becomes superfluous. Our knowledge of God is the result of experience, our experience of Him after the entry into the consecrated life, and when once we know Him there can no longer be any question about the matter—we *know* that we know Him.

Perhaps John had another thought also in his mind at this point. Perhaps he wanted to stress the fact that our confidence in this respect must

rest upon our keeping of God's commandments as distinct from any other code or rule of life. The greater liberty accorded to Christian believers as compared with that allowed their Jewish brethren in the previous Age, and their freedom from the Law of Moses, which had always been obligatory upon the latter, might very well induce the thought that notwithstanding our covenant with God and our acceptance of the consecrated life we are left to formulate our own code of conduct and our own laws of right and wrong. In fact that kind of heresy did make its appearance among the early Christians after the passing of the Apostles and wrought much harm. The fact is that despite our having been given a considerable measure of self-determination in many aspects of the Christian life, we are morally bound to keep a Divine law which is really far more stringent and soul searching than was the Mosaic law. After all, that was a fairly simple system of prohibitions and injunctions. It was either "Thou shalt not do this" or "Thou shalt do that". The law of the New Creation, although not defined in words as was the Law of Moses, is really more strict. It demands a far higher standard of conduct than did its predecessor, and a far more wholehearted life of consecration and devotion to God. It demands all that the Christian has to give, and it is only when we have given our all, and, receiving it back at the Father's hands, proceed to use it in the furtherance of His interests, that we really do begin to "keep His commandments".

There was a time in the history of Israel when the people rejected the idea of responsibility to a central authority and a common law. The chronicler said of that time "In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes". (Jud. 21. 15.) It was a time of unprecedented disaster for Israel, a period of anarchy and lawlessness, of apostasy and consequent captivity, repeated time and time again, and only relieved by occasional terms during which the people repented of their excesses, and cried unto the Lord, and were heard, and delivered, and restored to their own land. Sickened at last by their own weakness they petitioned for kings to rule over them that they might have an ultimate standard of conduct to which all must conform. Men are making the same mistake to-day. The old accept-

ance of Divine authority and Divine law as the standard for men, no matter how imperfectly understood and insufficiently kept, has been repudiated, and now every man is a law unto himself; and the world is lapsing into anarchy in consequence. We who look for a day of world conversion in the Age to come, the Millennial Age, know full well that such conversion will be effected, not by leaving each man to the unrestrained exercise of his own fancies and desires, however well-intentioned or even well-informed, but by bringing everyone under the jurisdiction of a perfectly incorruptible and all-embracing educational system that, for the time being at any rate, will not brook disobedience. The salvation of men will depend, not on their keeping commandments of their own devising, but on keeping God's commandments. Only when by reason of suitable and adequate discipline they have arrived at a complete and understanding knowledge of those commandments will they be free to accept or reject, by the exercise of their own wills, the alternatives of life and death, good and evil, which will then stand placed before them.

So then with us in this Age. The wonderful freedom which is ours in Christ does not include freedom to frame our own code of laws, our own set of commandments. If we know God, then we realise full well that there is no alternative to the laws that He has set before us for our own well being. It is in the sincere and unreserved acceptance of those laws into our hearts, and the application of them in our lives, that we shall find the realisation that we know God and are known of Him. The witness of the Spirit, speaking as it were with our spirit, will assure us of that.

But of course, there are so many who claim to "know Him" and oft-times deceive themselves as well as others, but because they have not really entered into this relationship to God and are not doers of His will cannot claim to be keepers of His commandments. John has no shadow of doubt about the position of such and he has no intention of there being any misapprehension in the minds of his readers either. "*He that saith 'I know Him' and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him*" (vs. 4). In considering the forthrightness of a statement such as this we do well to remember that these men of the East were—and still are—accustomed to frame their sentiments in much more expressive and forceful words than we of the West might consider necessary or even proper. A good example of this is found in the Scriptural use of the word "hate", a word which will fall to be considered later on in this same chapter. Now here it is quite possible that John is not using the word "liar" in the bald, extreme sense which the same word normally bears

among us to-day. His point rather is, surely, that the man who claims to know God but who is not doing the will of God simply is not speaking the truth. He may be quite unaware of the fact; in his own self-opinionated condition, his own egotism, or his own mere confident ignorance, he might be quite sure that he *does* know God, but in fact he does not. In consequence, says John, the truth is not in him. We are very accustomed to speak of one believer or another as being "in the Truth" by which we mean that such an one has come to a knowledge of God's Plan and understands His purpose with the Church in this Age and the world in the next, and on that basis has become a consecrated "footstep follower" of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is one thing though to be "in the Truth" and quite another for the Truth to be "in" us; this latter demands a great deal more than an appreciation and understanding of the Divine Plan and acceptance of the call to consecration. It requires the devoted painstaking following of Christ in all things throughout life, a giving full reign to the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in our lives and some continuous manifestation of the results of that work as the years pass. Later on in the chapter John will be talking about the Word of God abiding in us; perhaps it is something like that he has in mind here where he speaks of the truth not being "in" those who, despite their protestations, really do not know God.

"*But whosoever keepeth his Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected; hereby know we that we are in Him*" (vs. 5). This is the other side of the picture. The outward evidence that a man is keeping the commandments, "his Word" is that in him the love of God is visibly manifest, quite apparently in process of being made perfect. This connection of love with the commandment is worthy of notice. The great aim and object of our lives is that we be made perfect in love. Love it was that caused the coming to earth of Jesus for man's salvation, the love of the Father and the love of the Son. Love it is that leads us to give ourselves to God, after having realised His own great love toward us. Now we are to be made perfect in love so that we in our turn may be used to bring the blessings of salvation to those who, in the next Age, will need them so much. Paul, writing to Timothy, warned him against giving attention to fables and endless genealogies which give birth to unprofitable questionings and debates rather than "godly edifying which is in faith", and told him that "the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned" (I Tim. 1. 5.) The result of our keeping the commandment of God is that we are made perfect in love, made pure in heart, made sound

in conscience, and genuine in faith. These are the characteristics of the disciple who "keepeth His Word". In such an one verily is the love of God perfected.

Thus do we come to the climax of this lesson. Verses 3, 4 and 5 lay down the Divine principles regarding knowing God and show how easily we may be deceived if we are not perfectly sincere in our profession. John explains the difference between the one who knows God and keeps His commandments and the one who does not keep the commandments and therefore does not know God. Now comes the practical exhortation, the logical consequence of what has gone before. "*He that saith he abideth in him ought himself so to walk even as he walked*" (vs. 6). The outward evidence that we are indeed abiding in Christ is to be found in the outwardly manifest fact that we are walking as Jesus walked. Now that does not mean that we must display before men and our brethren on all occasions, without ever failing, the same serene, unruffled composure, the same complete freedom from hasty word and act, the same purity and nobility and majesty which Jesus Himself displayed to men during His earthly life. Not one of us can ever measure up to the fulness of that wonderful life or approach anywhere near it. But we can walk in the manner that He walked, so that men

may take note that we have been with Jesus, and have, however imperfectly, learned of Him. We can so yield our lives and all our possessions and our talents and our influence to Him in glad consecration that it may truly be said we are "abiding" in Him. Let it never be forgotten also that this abiding in Him brings the corresponding great joy of the knowledge that He is abiding in us. The visions of Revelation include the picture of One who stands at the door, and knocks. If any man will open the door, the Lord will come in and sup with him, and he with his Lord. This is an abiding together, we in Him and He in us. "Abide in Me" he says "and I in you. . . . He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without me ye can do nothing." (John 15. 4-5.)

Our claim to know Him, and to be abiding in Him, then, will be evidenced by our keeping His commandments. The result of that will be our perfecting in love and in every good grace. The perfecting of ourselves in love will in turn be the evidence that we are members of Christ's body, of His Church. "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love . . . this is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you." (John 15. 10-12.)

To be continued

The Voice of the Monuments

8. Conclusion

The story is not complete; it will never be completed. The earth is continually yielding fresh treasures to the excavator and the investigator and with every such discovery the Bible stands illumined in brighter hue. The days are long since past when the rash allegation that the Bible had no independent testimony to support its claim to be true history must needs be endured in dignified silence. To-day there is a host of witnesses; solid evidences of the handiwork of men living in Bible times, testifying to the accuracy of that which had already been recorded in Holy Writ. And if the preservation of these clay tablets and rocks and stones through the centuries and the millenniums, and their subsequent discovery long after the very nations in whose languages they were inscribed had passed away, is a matter of astonishment and wonder, what must be said of the Bible itself? That record has been preserved, not on enduring stone hidden away in the depths of the ground, safe from

interfering and malicious hands, until its secrets could be revealed to the sober inquiry of this latter age, but in the world of men and among men. The precious manuscripts have at all times since their writing circulated in the world, read and re-read, copied and re-copied, the while great established powers among men have sought by every means at their disposal to root them out and exterminate them. No other book ever written has had such a chequered and hazardous career as has the Bible. No other book has been the object of such determined and relentless efforts to suppress and exterminate it. And no other book has survived so long and so triumphantly. Neither the burning fires of persecution nor the chilling winds of indifference have prevailed to wither and destroy its message and its influence in the world. Even to-day, when the religious apathy of the Western nations has become a byword and a proverb, the Bible remains a "best-seller". Not for nothing is

it described by the Apostle Peter as the "word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever". In all this world of change and decay, of tumult and unrest, of indifference and hostility, the Bible stands, serene, dignified, confident, an inflexible witness to God and to His concern and care for mankind.

That is its central truth. The historical features of the Bible are not there as an end in themselves; they are a means to an end. Its history is not myth. Men and women did live and work and write as the Bible says they did. Their hopes and fears, loves and hates, strength and weakness, were all as the Bible relates of them. Even its greatest heroes have their faults and failings, their mistakes and their sins, recorded as faithfully as their triumphs of faith and the things wherein they pleased God. But all of this is but to point to one great truth—that man, created perfect and sinless at the first, fell from that high estate into sin, and so death passed upon all men; that God is working ceaselessly to recover man from the effects of that sin and to achieve His final goal of a sinless creation in which "all that hath breath shall praise the Lord"; that to achieve that end—by the only way in which that end can be achieved—the Lord Jesus Christ came from above and moved among men, teaching the true principles by which men must live, suffering Himself to be put to death rather than betray those principles; that eventually all men must be brought face to face with the alternative of accepting Christ and His ways and so inheriting eternal life, or rejecting them and suffering eternal death.

That is the message and the power of the Bible. It will by no means renounce or whittle down its claim to be the authoritative expression of God's Will and exposition of God's Plan in respect to man, his origin, his present state, and his destiny. It takes us back to earliest times and shows us man as he was—pure, upright, sinless, perfectly adapted to his environment, and capable of everlasting life whilst remaining in harmony with Divine Law. It passes on into history and leads us up to the present, showing us the dark and terrible results of human selfishness, depravity and sin, in a world that has largely rejected God and is increasingly so doing. It takes us forward into the future and shows us a world at peace, sin banished, war a thing of the past, love and good fellowship replacing hate and rancour and jealousy. It shows us the will of God done on earth as it is done in heaven, and God dwelling as it were with men and all creation at peace with Him. Then it comes back into the present, the time of this world, and shows us the means by which that glorious consummation is to be brought about, in the person and work of Christ, and tells us in unmistakable terms that only by full

acceptance of Christ and consecration of life to Him can men and women be recovered from their state of imperfection and weakness and sin, and be translated into the glorious liberty of the children of God. The Bible has a lot to say about the philosophy of the Atonement; it does not demand that all its readers understand that philosophy in detail; what it does demand, and demands because compliance with the demand is the only possible way of escape from sin and death, is "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved".

"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life!"

That verse is the crowning glory of the Bible and the expression of its deepest truth. All else leads up to it. The object of the Bible in this world is to lead men to Christ and to instruct them in His ways after they have accepted Him. Its history, its poetry, its visions, its ethics, all converge irresistibly upon one transcendent Figure, the One Who is rightful King of the earth and King of all men, the One Who, in the power and glory of His Second Advent, will reign as Prince of Peace over a transformed and transfigured world of men, teaching them to pursue the arts of peace and eschew the evils of war, until in enlightenment and true reverence they come before Him in voluntary yielding of all life's powers in a dedication of heart and mind that will endure to all eternity.

In their own humble way, the tablets and the inscriptions on the rocks are agents in the execution of the Divine Plan. They have played, and still play, their part in establishing faith in God. It is said of Him that He hath "left not himself without witness" and this at least is one respect in which the statement is true. Jesus spoke of the very stones crying out to testify to His Messiahship; the voice of the monuments has made itself heard to declare, indirectly, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

ANNOUNCEMENT

The London General Convention sponsored by the Central London, Forest Gate, Putney, Welling and Windsor classes will, D.V., be held again this year during the August Bank Holiday week-end—August 5th, 6th and 7th. It is anticipated that an Immersion service will be arranged. For further information write the Convention Secretary, Bro. G. H. Jennings, Grove House, Roding Lane South, Ilford, Essex.

* * *

True service for Christ is not productivity, but conductivity; not what we do for Him, but what He does through us.

I, TERTIUS

*A little-known disciple
who wrought a great work*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We may take it, then, that Tertius was zealous, sincere, full of faith and anxious to serve in whatever way he could be of service. There were others, of course, in the fellowship, of whom Paul speaks approvingly and who sent their greetings also to the brethren at Rome. "Timotheus my workfellow" he says—we all know Timothy and the sterling service he rendered in after days as elder of the Church at Ephesus—" . . . and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you. Gaius mine host, Erastus the treasurer of the city, and Quartus a brother". Erastus must have been an important man in Corinth; he was the city treasurer and Corinth was one of the wealthiest cities of the Empire. But he was a Christian. Quartus was, maybe, a brother in a much *more humble and obscure walk of life*; he might even have been a slave; but he also was a Christian. And they were all one in Jesus Christ, these men who with the womenfolk met for praise and worship and fellowship in the house of Justus. It is a picture quite at variance with that of the Church of Corinth drawn in other parts of the New Testament, where that church is pictured as being in many respects anything but a model of Christian behaviour and conduct and witness. Perhaps how-

ever, the Apostle's oft reproofs had had their effect and there had been, by the time of this his last visit, some repentance and reformation. We do not know; in any case the Church at Corinth never became noted for Christian fervour and example as did, for example, those at Ephesus and Colosse and Berea.

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

What happened to Tertius after the Epistle had been dispatched and Paul had left Corinth for Jerusalem, never to return? We do not know. He is unknown to history. Perhaps in after years he left Corinth on some kind of missionary work, emulating in some small degree the Apostle he had once served in so signal a fashion. Perhaps he remained at Corinth, serving as a faithful minister, through all the vicissitudes of a life spent in a fellowship that was both light and dark, that savoured much of this world even although it professed much of the next. We like to think that he did remain faithful, that the vessel chosen to do Paul's work in the days of his presence remained a chosen vessel to the end of the way. If such was indeed the case, we can picture him growing older with the passing of the years, ministering faithfully and consistently, never weary of reminding the brethren of the exhortations left by the founder of their church, Paul the minister of God to the Gentiles. He would have heard, in time, of Paul's death in far away Rome, and with that news would have felt suddenly older. There would be the parting with Timothy, gone to assist the failing John in the administration of the Church at Ephesus and all the communities in Western Asia who looked to Ephesus as a centre. Then perhaps the slow lapse of twenty or thirty years; news comes to Corinth of the death of John, the last of the Apostles. No one is left now who saw the Lord in the flesh; very few remember anything of the early struggles of the infant Church and the herculean labours of its founders. A new generation had grown up around Tertius, and—who can doubt it—he saw, rapidly increasing and flourishing unchecked, more of those evils against which his beloved mentor Paul had spoken and written so many years ago. But now there was no Paul with his forthrightness and fiery eloquence, to bring into the

assembly that sense of shame that in times past had brought godly repentance and a great cleansing. Perhaps in the interim Tertius himself had acquired something of Paul's ability and could himself induce a reformation in the Church; perhaps not. Perhaps he could only pray and intercede for the erring ones in the solitude of his own home, or endeavour by quiet word and remonstrance to turn this one or that one from the error of his ways. Perhaps, at the end, and in spite of all his faithful service, he was ignominiously turned out from the apostate assembly and his name branded as one to be avoided and spurned.

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

But we also know something else. We know that to every sincere disciple of Christ who has been true to His Master and true to himself, and has not denied his Master's Name, there comes at the end a reflection that must have come at the end to Tertius too, in whatever state he encountered that end. It is the reflection that came to Paul

himself and which he expressed in fervent words, confident words, immortal words, saying them on our behalf as well as his own, that we may take fresh courage in anticipation of the coming of such a time. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." (2 Tim. 4. 18.)

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

TAKE, EAT.

A retrospect to the
First Memorial

Every year this celebration of our Redeemer's death seems more full of meaning and more impressive. The very fact that the date changes, and must be reckoned after the Jewish method of calculation, adds to the impressiveness, and brings afresh to our minds the various details of the Passover type and their fulfilment in the death of the Lamb of God.

The Scripture which refers to our Lord as the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world indicates to us that all the details of this Passover were clearly in the mind and plan of God, not only since the Fall of Adam under the death sentence, but from long before Adam's creation. It thus assures us that although the Justice of God only was manifested for centuries, although Divine Love was not "*manifested*" until the first advent of Jesus, nevertheless Love was in God's heart toward His creatures—from the beginning.

As the Passover *deliverance* represented the Millennial blessing, so the *Passover night* represented this Gospel Age, in which all who trust in God wait for His salvation—in which the entire "household of faith" feeds on the unleavened bread of Truth, mingled with the bitter herbs of trial and testing, waiting for the Morning—in which the Church "of the first-born", under the protection of "the blood of the Lamb" is *passed over* from condemnation to justification, from death to life. For that reason we keep a continual feast of rejoicing in the Lord, feeding on our Lamb and unleavened bread and herbs. For this reason, also, we keep the annual Memorial of all this, "for even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us, therefore let us keep the feast."—I Cor. 5. 7.

It was *this* that our Master enjoined upon all His disciples, saying, "As often as ye do *this* [as year by year, ye shall frequently *do this*] do it in remembrance of the typical lamb and the typical

passing over of the typical first-born of typical Israel.

We will no longer be defrauded of the blessing our Lord designed for us. We will "keep the feast". And so surely as the consecrated believers of this age are the "Church of the first-born," so surely will there be a deliverance later of all of the household under the lead of the first-born (Christ), even as the type showed. And that the after-born delivered by Moses will ultimately consist only of the obedient the Apostle clearly shows.—Acts 3. 23.

How much more impressive and inspiring it is to celebrate an important matter on its anniversary—to recall the deeds and words and looks, and place ourselves with the chief actors of that greatest of all dramas which over eighteen centuries ago ended of Calvary. It even strengthens our general faith in Divine providence to note that the very day, the very hour, as well as the very year of this tragedy God had predetermined, so that although previously the Jews sought to take Him to put Him to death, no man laid hands on Him, because "*His hour was not yet come*". The precise time of this great event had not only been typified for centuries with careful precision as to the very day, but our Lord with equal exactness declared "Mine hour is come," and when instituting the bread and wine Memorial of His own death as the anti-typical lamb He waited, "and when *the hour was come* He sat down" with His disciples to eat the Passover Supper, saying, "With desire have I desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer."—Luke 22. 15.

With equal carefulness to that shown by our Lord and His apostles, let us keep the feast, the Memorial of His death, as He directed—not at any time, morning, noon or night, but only as a Supper—not any day, but only on its anniversary—if we would "*do this*," rather than commemorate something else, on some other date.

Our Lord instituted the Memorial Supper, which He requested His followers to celebrate, after six o'clock on the evening before He was crucified, "in the same night in which He was betrayed". This, however, as we have previously shown, was on the 14th of Nisan, the very same day on which He died—God having provided the Jews a custom for counting their days from 6 p.m. to 6 p.m., from sundown to sundown.

Apparently it was just when the regular Jewish Passover Supper was ended that our Lord took some of the left-over unleavened bread, blessed it, broke it into pieces, and gave them to His disciples saying, "Take, eat; this is my body given for you; this do in remembrance of me."—Matt. 26. 26; Mark 14. 22; Luke 22. 19.

Taking our Lord's words in their simple obvious sense, how beautiful is their lesson. Unleavened (pure) bread henceforth would at this Memorial represent our Lord, the bread from heaven, of which we may eat and have everlasting life. The next thought is that this heaven-supplied "bread" must be "broken" in order to be appropriated. And so we see that it was necessary not only for our Lord to come from heaven as the "bread"; but necessary also that He be broken in death—sacrificed for our sins—ere we could appropriate His merit and enjoy everlasting life.

The "fruit of the vine" was next introduced as a part of this Memorial of our Lord's loving sacrifice. He explained that it represented His blood—"The blood of the New Covenant, shed for many for the remission of sins." (Matt. 26. 28.) What a reminder this is of the *ransom price* necessary and paid on behalf of the sins of the world. The broken bread taught a part of the lesson, the "cup" taught the remainder of it. We not only need nourishment, strength, assistance to come back to God and His favour, but we need the precious blood—the life of our Lord as our redemption price to release us from the condemnation of Justice.

Ah, yes! How deep are the Lord's lessons! and the deeper we look the more beauty we see, the eyes of our understanding opening more and more as we appreciate and heartily obey. "Let us keep the feast" in both senses, then: (1) appropriating and feasting on the great work done for us by our Redeemer and the riches of grace granted us through Him; and (2) appreciating our privilege of joint sacrifice with our Redeemer—laying down our lives in His service, for the brethren, and thus "filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ."—Cor. 1, 24.

Left behind, not because our Lord could not suffer enough for all, nor because His sufferings were not sufficient for all, but because He wished to have us with Him to share His nature and His glory, and only by suffering with Him and as His *members* could we be allowed to share in His glory, honour and immortality.

How sacred the memories which gather around the anniversary of our Lord's death. It calls to mind the Father's love as exhibited in the entire Plan of salvation, the centre of which was the gift of His Son as our Redeemer. It calls specially to our thoughts Him who gave Himself a *ransom*—a corresponding price—for all. Then faith comes still nearer to Him who "suffered, the just for the unjust," and with grateful, overflowing hearts and with tear-dimmed eyes we whisper, *My Saviour!* *My Redeemer!* *My Lord and Master!* "He

loved me, and gave Himself for me." Ah, yes!—

*"Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,
Which before the cross I spend:
Life and joy and peace possessing
From my best and truest Friend."*

How blessed the thought that He cares to have us think of Him and call Him *ours*—He so great—"far above angels" and every title that is named, next to the Father Himself, and we so insignificant, so imperfect, so unworthy of such a friendship. And yet, to think that "He is not ashamed to call us brethren"; and that He is pleased to have us memorialise His death; and that He gave us the bread to emblemise His broken flesh, and wine to emblemise His shed blood—the one to represent the human rights and privileges purchased for all, and of which all may partake, the other to represent the life He gave which secured everlasting life for all who will accept it!

How delightful, too, to count, as He and the Jews did, the days and the hours, even until finally, "the hour being come," He sat down with His disciples to celebrate the death of the typical Paschal lamb, and to consider the deliverance of Israel's first-born from the great destruction which came upon Egypt, and the subsequent deliverance accomplished through those first-born ones for all the typical Israel of God.

How precious to look beyond the type which was commemorated, and to hear the Master, as He took new emblems say, "*This* [celebrating of the Pass-over] do [henceforth] in remembrance of me!" Ah, yes! in the crucified One we can now see "The Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." "Christ our passover [Lamb] is sacrificed for us therefore let us keep the feast;" for as oft as we do *this* we do show forth our Lord's death until He come again—until, His kingdom having come, we shall be permitted to drink with Him the new wine [the new life and joy] in the kingdom.

But we are not only privileged to enjoy the favours of our Lord's sacrifice but more than this: we are invited to share with our Master in the sacrifice and in its glorious reward. He says to us, Whoever is in sympathy with my work and its results—whoever would share my kingdom and join in its work of blessing the world—let him also be broken with me, and let him join me in drinking the cup of self-denial, unto death. To all such He says, "Drink ye all of it." The Apostle confirms *this thought*, saying: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion [fellowship] in the blood [death] of Christ? The bread [loaf] which we break is it not the communion [common-union] in the body of Christ? For we being many [members of Christ's body] are *one loaf* and one body; for we are all partakers of that *one loaf*." —I Cor. 10. 16, 17.

Gladly, dear Lord, we "eat" (appropriate to our necessities) the merit of thy pure human nature sacrificed for us—for our justification. Gladly, too, we will partake of the cup of suffering with thee, realizing it to be a blessed privilege to suffer with thee, that in due time we may also reign with thee—to be dead with thee, that in the everlasting future we may live *with* thee and be like thee and share thy love and thy glory as thy Bride. Oh! that we may be faithful, not only in the performance of the symbol, but also of the reality. Blessed Lord, we hear thy word saying, "*Ye shall indeed drink of my cup and be baptized with my baptism.*" Lord we are not of ourselves able thus to sacrifice; but thy grace is sufficient for us, for we are wholly thine, now and forever.

Oh! what a thought; that if faithful in the present privilege of drinking of His cup and being broken with our Lord as His body, we with Him will soon be that "church of the first-born ones whose names are written in Heaven", and as such shall constitute the royal priesthood, which, under our great High Priest, will lead out of Egyptian bondage and slavery all those slaves of sin whose groanings and prayers for deliverance have entered the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

Let us eat and drink reverently, devotedly, thoughtfully, prayerfully, tearfully perhaps, as we each think of our Redeemer's love and sacrifice, and pledge ourselves afresh to be dead with Him.

ENDURANCE

Ah, beloved in the Lord, when the wicked systems have perished from the earth, when all the clouds of sorrow and weeping have flown away, when the Sun of Righteousness shines forth in resplendent glory upon mankind, then we shall have a keener appreciation of the wisdom and love of God in permitting us to suffer even as malefactors for a little while. And, thanks be to God, that glad day of rejoicing is about at hand. "*For yet a little, and he that shall come will come and will not tarry.*" But doubts will arise in the minds of some as to whether or not these things at present experienced are evidence of the nearness of the kingdom. Some will be inclined to murmur against, find fault with and judge their brothers. Some will be inclined, because of fear of men, to take a more moderate and compromising course, and will become impatient. But to all such we say, Take heed to the words of the Master and his inspired servants: "*In patience possess ye your souls*"; "*he that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved*" (Luke 21. 29; Matt. 24. 13); and "*Remember we call those blessed who endure.*" James 5. 11, Weymouth.

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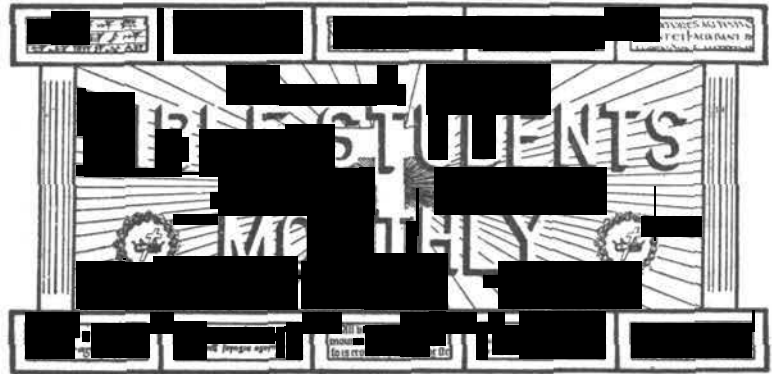
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Thou, therefore, endure
hardness as a good
soldier of Jesus Christ.



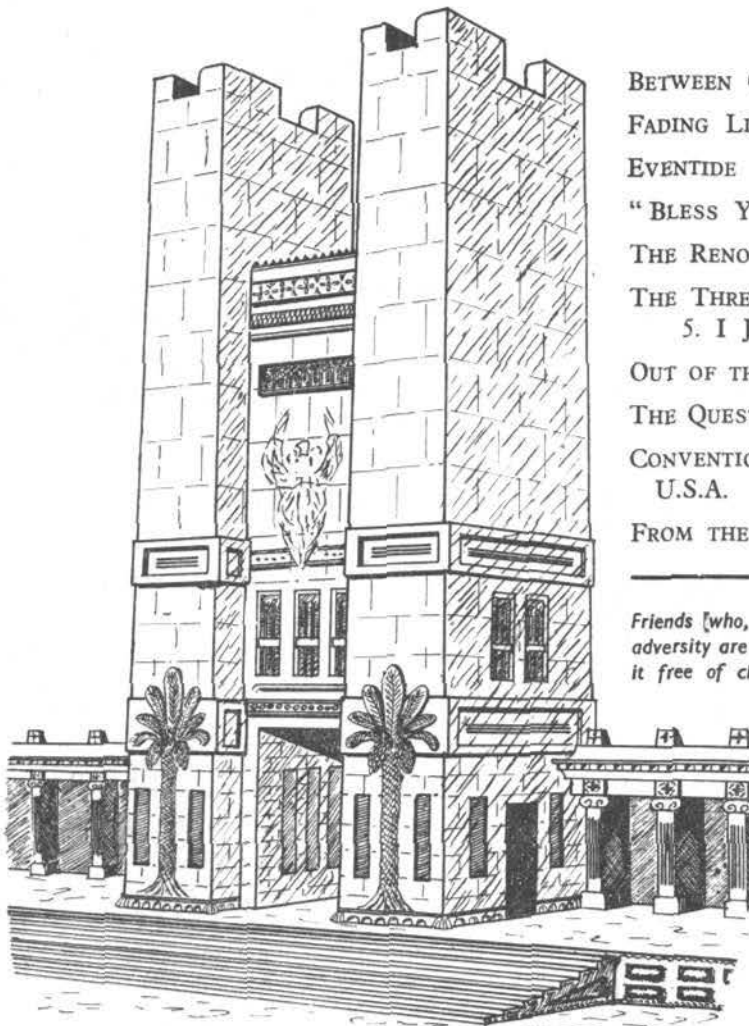
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And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.

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BETWEEN OURSELVES

The Benevolent Fund is in the care of Bro. E. Allbon, 20, Sunnymede Drive, Ilford, Essex. Donations intended for the Fund, and all other correspondence in connection with the same, should be sent to Bro. Allbon.

* * *

The London General Convention sponsored by the Central London, Forest Gate, Putney, Welling and Windsor classes will, D.V., be held again this year during the August Bank Holiday week-end—August 5th, 6th and 7th. It is anticipated that an Immersion service will be arranged. For further information write the Convention Secretary, Bro. G. H. Jennings, Grove House, Roding Lane South, Ilford, Essex. For accommodation requirements address Bro. H. Charlton, Ryvers Farm, London Road, Langley, Bucks.

* * *

The Manchester Council, in co-operation with various classes in the North-west, has prepared a programme of public meetings which will be noted with interest by many who cannot hope to be present or have any share in the actual arrangements. Nevertheless there is a part which all who wish these endeavours well can share; they may bear up the efforts of our brethren in prayer, prayer for the Divine blessing upon all such attempts to make known the glorious gospel of Christ and to "tell the whole world these blessed tidings" even as did the apostles and the first believers nearly two thousand years ago. Our brethren have arranged for meetings at Heywood on 6th May (speaker Bro. G. H. Jennings), Marple on 24th June and 1st July (Bro. Pollock of U.S.A. on 24th June), Farnworth on 15th and 22nd July, Accrington on 19th and 26th August (Bros. F. Linter and E. G. Roberts), and 16th and 23rd September (Bros. A. J. Lodge and F. Barber). An "Assembly" along the lines of those held in previous years will be arranged at Manchester for the week-end 16th-17th September. Further information regarding any of these plans may be obtained from Bro. F. Musk, 14, South Street, Newchurch, Rossendale, Lancs.

* * *

The little booklet, "A Glimpse of God's Plans" has been used very extensively in some parts of the country and apparently has been found to serve a useful purpose. In one Midlands city the brethren sent a copy to each of the 200 ministers and church officials of all denominations in the city and its neighbourhood. One immediate response to this effort was an order from the Superintendent of a Methodist Sunday School for one hundred copies for his own use. Needless to say, the additional

hundred copies were quickly supplied and all concerned trust that they have been the means of imparting some knowledge of the Divine Plan to the recipients. The little booklet is still available in stock at 1/6 doz. or 11/- per 100 and it will be a pleasure to send copies upon request.

* * *

We are still supplying "Millennial Message No. 3" in quantities for free distribution and the brethren may continue to request such quantities as they can use. It will be a pleasure to despatch them to all such. Here are a few samples of enquiries recently received in consequence of distribution of these tracts in various parts.

"Please will you forward a sample copy of 'Bible Students Monthly'. I am greatly interested."

"I have read a recent copy of 'Millennial Message' and found it very interesting. I would like you to send me a sample copy of the 'Bible Students Monthly' please."

"I received some time ago a 'Millennial Message'. . . . I should be very pleased to receive further numbers, also the 'Bible Students Monthly'. . . . If you have one or two of the 'Millennial Message' to spare I should be glad to have them to pass on to one or two other folk I know who would be interested."

Gone From Us

—*—
Sis. Minna Edgar (Glasgow)

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

LONDON MONTHLY MEETING

Saturday, 20th May, 1950
6.30—8.30 p.m.

In the Tudor Hall
CAXTON HALL
Caxton Street, Westminster, S.W.1
5 mins. St. James Park Station and Victoria Street

Speaker: Bro. H. C. Thackway.
Subject: "Behold I come quickly."
Rev. 22. 7.

FADING LIGHT

A Talk for
the Month

"And he lighted the lamps before the Lord, as the Lord commanded Moses." (Exod. 40. 35.)

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

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

Evening by evening, throughout all Israel's generations, that light in the Holy was to be renewed and kept alive through all the hours of darkness. Although the Scriptures do not definitely say so, some think that it burned day and night and was indeed the only source of light in the Holy. Unless daylight filtered through the linen veil that closed the entrance, there could have been no other source of light; but in the intense sunlight of Sinai and Palestine it is quite conceivable that sufficient of daylight did pass through the veil to lighten the interior. That fact need not alter the typical picture. Day by day continually the priests performed their duty of cleaning the lamps, refilling them with oil, renewing the wicks, and seeing to it that never for a moment was the Holy in darkness. Those lamps were to burn before the Lord continuously.

That was the ideal. It was hardly ever realised in practice. Time and time again did Israel

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

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

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

The word of the Lord, it is said, was "precious"—rare—in those days. There was no open vision.

That word "open" is significant. It has the meaning of bursting open or breaking forth. The vision of the prophets was always a breaking forth, the release of an irrepressible inward urge that could not be satisfied until it had leaped out and spent all its impetus on the deliverance of its message. Jeremiah felt like that. "*His word*" he says "*was as a burning fire shut up within my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay*" (Jer. 20. 9). Israel had known that kind of thing in past days but there was nothing of it in the days of Eli. The impetus of past faith and enthusiasm had spent itself, and now the priesthood, the leaders and teachers of the people, had become an established institution, performing routine duties in a purely mechanical manner, and with none of that spontaneity which is the hallmark of the work of the Spirit. The loss of their first fiery zeal, their evangelistic fervour, their whole-hearted and confident reliance upon the Lord, had left them a purely human organisation, having its basis and interest in material things, but bereft of any ability to transmit the light and power that comes from God.

Now this fading light within the priesthood had its repercussions on the people of Israel—the peasants, the farmers, the vine-dressers, the keepers of sheep, the craftsmen and house builders in the cities, those who built aqueducts and reservoirs for water and those who felled trees and dressed timber for palaces and temples. All in Israel were profoundly affected and influenced by this drift into apathy on the part of those who should have been their spiritual instructors. For they followed after the same example of unbelief. Blind guides led the blind, and in consequence both fell into the ditch. The light faded out for the people as a whole, and to such an extent that they became at length manifestly unworthy of any longer being called God's representatives, and their national polity God's kingdom, even in name, and so they lost both their place and nation and went into captivity to Assyria and Babylonia for their sins. Their national attitude at that time was well expressed in the plaint of the people in the days of Ezekiel. "*The days are prolonged and every vision faileth*" to which the Spirit-inspired preacher made reply "*the days are at hand, and the effect of every vision*" (Ezek. 12. 21-28). Ezekiel's day, the time of the Babylonian captivity, was a day of fulfilling prophecy, a day when mighty works were being wrought and mighty signs seen by the saintly Daniel, a time when the deeper thinkers in Israel might have been expected to discern the significance of the times in which they lived, and to look for early deliverance. But the fading of the light had in its turn induced a fading of hope and

expectation, and now the people in the main no longer really expected deliverance, or believed in the word of promise at all. They gave themselves up instead to the interests and pursuits of the present, and recked little or nothing of the future.

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

That is where the typical teaching of the lighted lamps has its value to us to-day. We, no less than Israel of old, are prone to let our light go out through indolence, apathy and satisfaction with the condition of things as they are. And the result to us is the same as to them. Of us also will it be said in such case "*The Kingdom of heaven is taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof*". For the Lord's arm is not shortened, and He can well find other instruments for His work should those He has chosen prove unfitted to His use.

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

"*If we walk in the light, as he is in the light*" come the words of the beloved disciple, "*we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanseth us from all sin*". Here is the guidance for which our souls are seeking. To walk in the light guarantees to us an entrance into the fellowship of the brethren and a standing in justification. To walk in the light means a making use of the talents and the pounds with which our Lord has entrusted us, instead of burying them in a napkin and hiding them in the earth. To walk in the light means to view the world around us, its condition and its needs, from the same standpoint as did Jesus, and proceed to lay down our lives on behalf of the world's need

just as did Jesus during the three and a half years of His ministry. We cannot be practical Christians without walking in the light and we cannot walk in the light without being practical Christians. The surest corrective for fading light, therefore, is to make of our faith a practical thing and to work out in the opportunities of daily life the principles of the belief that is in us.

In His message to the Laodicean Church our Lord spoke of the eye-salve of His providing, the acceptance of which would enable the disciple to see, not only clearly, but into another world. The light of this world cannot shine into spiritual things. The light that is of God can illuminate spiritual things but even then the natural man cannot see them. It is only by the power of the Spirit that the glories of the spiritual can be made known to us. So then the one who would guard himself against the effects of fading light must needs take to himself the eye-salve of the Lord's providing and so behold, no longer dimly as in a vision, but clearly and distinctly, the conditions of his calling and the truths by which his faith is defined and the principles by which his faith is regulated. "Open my eyes, Lord, that I may see" must

needs be the continual prayer of every consecrated follower of the Lord Jesus, for only by such a continual straining to see more and more clearly may we have our spiritual vision exercised so that it may, at last, take in the whole vast landscape of that celestial realm which is to be the eternal inheritance of the faithful. Like Job of old, we may say "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee" but that can only be if, again like Job, we have retained our integrity and firm confidence in God from the beginning even unto the end. The duty of the priests of old was to keep the lamps burning throughout the hours of darkness; they were never to be suffered to go out. We, each one of us, have our own little lamp to guard and keep. An abundant supply of oil—God's Holy Spirit—is always at our service. It is our part to keep the vessel clean and ready, the wick trimmed, and the flame burning clear and steady. Thus we shall both be lights in the world and have light within ourselves, a light that will never fade, but will at the end expand into a radiance that is to lighten all the world, in that day when the righteous shall shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father.

Eventide

"So he bringeth them unto their desired haven"



How dispiritingly few were the interludes of satisfaction and delight during the Saviour's last year on earth. Throughout this whole period He was increasingly becoming a "Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief". A deepening consciousness that the "end" for which He had come down to earth was already looming darkly ahead drove Him repeatedly to the mountain-top or the desert solitude for private prayer. Right onwards from the time of His transfiguration in the holy mount this consciousness of approaching death prompted Him repeatedly to make reference to the "decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem". (Luke 9. 31.)

Additionally the outward circumstances of life changed greatly at this point. The period of successful work in Galilee had drawn to its end, mainly because of His refusal to be made a bread-and-fish-providing king. Jerusalem had not, from the start, opened either hand or heart to Him, deeming Him of too lowly birth, and of too inadequate education

to satisfy her needs. But Galilee, exalted to heaven itself with opportunity, had drunk deeply of blessing from His hands and had heard from His gracious lips what even angels desired to hear.

And now even Galilee had "hid as it were its face from Him", no longer finding beauty in Him that it should desire His company Despised and now rejected of men, and knowing that the door in Galilee was closed, the Man of Sorrows set His face like a flint to go up to Jerusalem, knowing throughout that she who slew the prophets would have no compunction about slaying Him.

Scripture does not indicate His precise route to us, but it does reveal Him making His fated way, slowly, over several months, thitherwards, preaching Kingdom tidings as opportunity served, to such as lent a listening ear.

A state of internal strain had gripped Him, mind and body alike, revealing itself in those tense words of censure upon Capernaum and the cities by the sea. It also shows itself in the more intense

exacting terms put upon discipleship—such terms as “let him take up his cross”, “can ye drink of the Cup that I shall drink”, issuing from His suffering lips. Additionally, it was revealed in His gait, when pensive, mute, and lonely, He stepped on ahead—His disciples following Him—strangely amazed and half-afraid. (Mark 10. 32.)

Arriving in Jerusalem the web of malice and intrigue began to weave its strands about His Person. First the cold and calculating Pharisees came, asking by what authority He drove the money-changers from His Father's House. Then the Scribes and chief Priests sought to enmesh Him in their tribute-money trap; and after them the unbelieving Sadducees, hoping to succeed where others failed, propounded before Him a long-debated petty quibble—each and all a token of the icy atmosphere into which He had dared to thrust Himself. In response, His own attitude to them became more stern and condemnatory, and in consequence that string of unprecedented woes issued from the lips of Him that hitherto had spoken as none else could speak. (Matt. 23.)

Everything denoted that the end was drawing near—the snarling pack of hungry wolves were closing in upon their prey! And He, the worthy Lamb of God, had presented Himself at Jerusalem as a sheep for the impending slaughter!

Seated on one of those closing days over against the Treasury Jesus watched the string of well-to-do home and foreign-born visitors place their costly gifts in the great chest, in open view of all who might care to see. Was there any attempt to prevent the left hand seeing what the right hand did? Not a little bit of it!

Edging her way into that ostentatious file a widow, poorly-clad and meanly-fed, cast into the spacious coffer her trivial gift—two mites! in value less than one half of the English farthing; not even the price of a single sparrow (Matt. 10. 29)—but, it was “all her living”! What a grim contrast to behold. Immediately one watchful “eye” observed—and approved; and with a throb of pleasure and appreciation the near-to-breaking tension was released as the beholder made comparison. More than they all!—two mites . . . more than they all! The austere sternness of the Voice was gone, and for one brief moment in those crucial days, pleasure and satisfaction filled His soul. After all, mammon-ridden though the nation might be, there were still those in Israel who would consecrate their all. One little ray of sunshine, cleaving the ever-darkening sky; one tiny gush of joy to lighten sorrow's burdening load!

Dear little-statured Brother and Sister in the Lord, thou that art least in the thousands of Israel, this is a word for thee! Not thine with eloquence

to sway the responsive audience, nor even to enthruse them with ready pen! Not thine to bring the gift like to the costly gold or flashing gem! Only thy two mites, so small in value, so unassuming in appearance! but the watching Eye will see, and assess it at heavenly valuation. Only let it be thine “all”—then, much or little by earthly computation it will win its reward!

The smile of Heaven rests on the little things—the one hair requiring a Father's permit to fall; the one sparrow which the Father deigns to know; the one cup of cold water offered in His Name, and . . . the two mites which constitute one's all!

But what can such a “two-miter” do? Perhaps speak only a little word.

Only a little word, softly and kindly,

Breathed in the ear of the sad and opprest,

Oh how it tenderly steals like a melody

Over life's billows, and lulls them to rest.

Only a little word, softly and kindly

Dropped in a heart that is blighted and chilled,

Oh how its gentle strain tunes every chord again

Waking the echoes that sorrow has stilled.”

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

If now thy bigger brother or sister might wish to share, here is the word for both him and thee.

*“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.*

*Let my hands perform His bidding. Let my
feet run in His ways.*

*Let my eyes see Jesus only. Let my lips speak
forth His Praise.”*

Thy five words spoken with the understanding may be more than all of ten thousand from the lips alone.

Believers, like the clouds, contain what comes from a source other than themselves, and, filled to overflowing, bring refreshment to others.

* * *

Blood is thicker than water, says our familiar adage. Surely grace should be stronger than nature and should lead us to love our brethren in Christ, not in word or in tongue but in deed and in truth.

* * *

The cure for worry is to make our trust in God more real; to bring our faith in God into the dust and fret of life, into the problems, domestic, business, and personal that confront us day by day.

"Bless Ye the Lord"

A CALL TO
TRUE WORSHIP

"Bless ye the Lord" (Psalm 134)

Alone of all the living creatures on the face of the earth man is gifted with the faculty of veneration. Grouped along with this faculty are others—conscientiousness, hope, spirituality, and benevolence—from the exercise of which spring the qualities of godly reverence and worshipful respect. The exercise of these faculties in co-ordination with those of the intellect enables man to understand and appreciate his relationship to the Higher Powers. Though linked at many points to the lower orders of creation—in the processes of nutrition, recuperation, reproduction, etc.—he yet enjoys a place apart in what is known as the realm of mental and moral values. On these higher planes he shares mutual kinship with the angelic and spirit worlds—worlds in which thought and conduct is regulated and conditioned by righteousness, truth, and purity.

Not only does the co-operation of these faculties enable him to understand these moral values, they also predispose him to show deferential respect toward such values, and to accept them more or less as a rule of life, and at the same time yield an appropriate reverence to the Higher Power, which, in its government and control, can superimpose these values upon its vast domain.

In this appreciation of moral values lies man's likeness to his God, and even now, after these thousands of years of decay and degradation, they who respond most readily to the claims of such values are esteemed to be the most like God.

Many noble minds can render deferential respect to God, by reviewing Nature's laws and ordinances. Here, Paul says, they can find the evidences of His eternal power and Deity (Rom. 1. 20.) But Scripture brings to view another field beyond the range of reason and creation, a field of revelation and providential oversight. Within this further field God claims from men a reverential response as His unchallenged right. Herein, it is His undoubted prerogative to command silence in His holy Presence as when, by inspiration, the Psalmist says, "Be still and know that I am God" (Psa. 46. 10.) or again, through Habakkuk, "The Lord is in His holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before Him", but, not only that, when breaking through into the range of man's consciousness, He can command the beholder to unshoe himself, and stand thus reverently demeaned before His heavenly

majesty. The very ground in close proximity to His Presence is holy ground, and as such should be most reverently trodden upon. Even His very deputies, charged with His omnipotent commission, can, with sword unsheathed, command the same respect. "Put off thy shoe from off thy foot," was the imperative command to Joshua from the heavenly visitor, "for the place whereon thou standest is holy". (Josh. 5. 13-15.)

Space and time forbid further reference to Jacob and his dream (Gen. 28. 10-18), to Isaiah and his vision (Isa. 6. 1-7), to Daniel and his varied experiences (Dan. 10. 7-10), but each and all teach the same facts that God and His messengers can command respect and awe from humankind.

For our example, *par excellence*, of this reverential respect we must betake ourselves to God's picture gallery, the place whence so many valuable lessons can be learned. This illustration is to be found in an act of ceremonial worship within the precincts of the Holy Place of the ancient Tabernacle. Without, on the Brasen Altar, the tokens of the people's worship were consumed by fire, at break of day and at eventide. But within that Holy Place an exclusive act of reverential devotion for the priestly house was undertaken by a white-robed Priest. There, the hour of incense being come, the Priest appointed, brought his censer filled with holy fire, and depositing it upon the golden surface of the Altar of the Presence, crumbled small the finely powdered incense in his hands, and let it gently fall upon the glowing flame, from whence, in rising wreaths of scented smoke, a cloud of fragrance ascended up into the Presence of the Holiest of all.

Day by day this procedure was carried through, an act of ceremonial observance oft repeated! Is it then possible that in this simple act, the illustration of devotion—*par excellence*—lies enshrined? It is even so, for here, more than at any other sphere of Israelitish worship or experience, man drew nearer to his God, and pledged Him more in service than in any other place.

In its relation to the Holy Place, this item of its furnishings stood nearer to the inner sanctum than any other article within its curtained walls, so near indeed, that in the explanation of these furnishings, the writer to the Hebrews places the Altar as though it actually stood in the Most Holy Place.

It is not intended now to discuss that highly controversial point, for even were we at this time to devote attention thereto, we could not carry the discussion to any conclusive end. We would still have to determine, as so many others have tried to do, whether "location" or "relationship" was the specific point the said writer sought to set forth.

Undoubtedly its location was in the Holy Place, and had that writer been describing only the fixation of the furnishings he would most likely have located it there. But though its location was in the Holy Place (as many Scriptures indicate) its relationship to the specific service for which it was used undoubtedly connects it to the furnishings of the Most Holy Place. It stood at the point of nearest proximity to the Most Holy Place to which the Priest had access, without actually entering within the Vail. Furthermore the object of his presence at that nearest point, was to cause the cloud of fragrance emitted by the Altar-fire to penetrate and enter that Most Holy Place. Thus, for this act of worshipful devotion, the Incense Altar was coupled with the Ark, the Mercy-Seat and the Cherubim within that Most Holy Place. From the standpoint of location it stood within the Holy Place, but from the standpoint of its service relationship, it most surely pertained to the Most Holy Place.

In agreement with this thought is the fact that of all the Holy Place's furniture, this Altar alone is the only thing by means of which the most distinctive and important feature of all priestly service could be performed. When God instructed Moses concerning the service of the Priests, He had said "thou . . . shalt anoint them, and consecrate them, and sanctify them that they may minister unto Me in the Priest's office". (Ex. 28. 41.) Both the other items of furniture in the Holy Place were intended for the Priests own needs, the Candlestick for his illumination; the Table for his sustenance. Only the Altar was installed and fixed with a Godward intent; only by this could the Priest perform his ministry towards his God. That this service at the Altar was the most distinctive and important of the Priestly duties (the Atonement Day excepted) may be deduced from a comparison of the two episodes in the varied experiences of Israel's kings. The first relates to David, who, as a fugitive, arrived with his little company, famished and weary, at Nob, to ask for bread. Other supplies being unavailable, neither Ahimelech the High Priest, nor David, as God's King-elect, entertained the least scruple at their partaking of the Presence Bread, though as Jesus said, it was lawful only for Priests to eat. No dire consequences followed this irregular act, nor was the least displeasure of Heaven in-

dedicated against the course pursued. (1 Sam. 21. 1-6.)

The other episode is that of King Uzziah, who, flushed with pride in an hour of victory presumptuously forced his way into the Holy Place intending to burn incense there. Thereupon Azariah the High Priest, and fourscore Priests that were valiant men withstood him to the face reminding him that "*It pertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense to the Lord, but to the priests the sons of Aaron that are consecrated to burn incense; go out of the Sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed, neither shall it be for thine honour from the Lord God.*" (2 Chron. 26. 17-18.) Hereupon Uzziah became exceeding wroth against the priests, then, as he proposed in utter disregard of their reproof and warning, to continue with his presumptuous act, the anger of the Lord fell heavily upon him. Then and there, in the presence of the priests, and still within the sacred precincts of the Holy Place, the terrible scourge of leprosy smote him—a visitation so unmistakably from the Lord that he hastened himself to go out of the Holy Place, to bear that stigma for the rest of his days.

Because it was a time of dire necessity the unlawful irregularity of eating Presence Bread could be condoned, but the presumptuous act of taking censer and incense, unwarrantably, could be redressed by a punishment so severe, that only an immediate death could have been more condign.

That the presentation of incense was an act of service watched over by the Lord with intensely jealous care is demonstrated, too, by the tragic end befalling Nadab and Abihu. So superlatively important was this phase of Priestly ministration that no man, even though of Aaronic line, could be permitted to trifle with his duties carelessly or presumptuously. (Lev. 10. 1-7.)

In further proof of Heaven's estimation of this Altar-service brief reference may be made to Ezek. 44. 10-16. This Scripture indicates that God reserves to Himself the right to withdraw the privilege of service in the Holy Place, with its special ministry "unto Me," from any former consecrated priest for participating with the people in idolatry. We cannot here attempt to explain this Scripture in its setting in Ezekiel's prophecy; it is enough that we note the principle of God's inflexible requirements from His priests. Only such as had faithfully kept the charge of His Sanctuary in evil days, could be allowed "to come near to Me to minister unto me."

What then have we ascertained thus far? What is there specially important about the presentation of the incense to the Most High God? Summing up in brief, we have found:—

- (a) None but Aaron and his sons had been accorded the privilege, and to these, it was given equally to all to share.
- (b) That of all the service peculiar to the Holy Place, this was the only part of it with a Godward service and intent.
- (c) That in this service the presentation of the incense was unto God, "unto Me".

Now it is fully conceded that all these things to which reference has been made were merely typical, "shadows" only of "good things to come", imposed upon and observed by Israel until a time of reformation should come. But even so, every shadow pre-supposes its corresponding reality, to which, in some sense, it bears resemblance. Thus Heaven itself is the counterpart of the Most Holy Place; our heavenly place and standing in Christ, of the Holy Place; a better Priesthood with Jesus as its great High Priest, of the Aaronic House, and our "better sacrifices", of the blood of bulls and goats.

That broader survey, however, is far too vast a field for our present consideration, and must be left unexplored. It is enough for our present purpose to survey in particular the priestly service 'unto God as the Altar fires release the fragrance of the incense beaten small.

In order that we may give more semblance of reality to these particular services, the symbol of the Shekinah glory will henceforth be carried up to its great reality and it will be of Jehovah the actual God in Israel to whom we shall refer.

Imagine then the situation in the Holy Place, the hour of incense being come. Here at the Altar stands the Priest, silent and alone. Here on the Altar stands the brazier filled with glowing coals. Noiselessly and carefully he begins to crush and drop the finely powdered incense into the living flame, from which arises clouds of fragrant smoke which fills the Holy where he stands, and penetrates also into the still holier Sanctuary beyond! In this he has performed the most distinctive and important service to which he and his companions were called. And this solemn service was repeated every day save one! Just fire, and incense and fragrant smoke—a white robed priest, and God!

What did Jehovah, the Everlasting God, the God of Israel think of all this ceremonial particularity? Why must it be done "just so"? Why must that fragrant incense be reserved for Him alone? Had He not caused that white-robed ministrant to know that in the strict observance of all this meticulous ceremonialism he was ministering to his God; that truly, really and actually it was a service "unto

Me"? Was it really true that the fragrant smoke was a pleasant odour unto Him? Most surely He had taught that son of Aaron to believe it so—but why?

Behind that son of Aaron, but on a higher plane, stands a Spirit-anointed son of God, a member of a better Priesthood, a unit of the great reality—the better Priesthood of which Jesus is the great High Priest! Can it be that something of that special privilege was intended to be carried up from that lowlier to that higher plane, and thus to cause the spiritually-minded son of God to know that something in his private approaches to these holy things would be as fragrant and acceptable to Almighty God as that incense-smoke had been to Israel's God? Can it also be that in these prayerful worshipful approaches there is again (but on this higher plane) a ministry "unto Me"? Does the New Testament have any word to say of "odours of sweet smell" unto God? Doubtless there is a counterpart to that holy fragrance from the Holy Place! And in that fragrance is a ministry "unto Me".

Now let us view the situation from the other side, and ask "what did that Altar ministry mean to the Priest"? With that tragic lesson of Nadab and Abihu ever before him, reminding him at all times of the dangers arising out of presumption, or of the risks attached to carelessness, it is possible to determine what thoughts would be likely to run through his mind? How would he tend to react to the awe-inspiring solemnity of the Holy Place? Humanity confronting Deity—a man alone with his God; a man ministering to his God, with but a hanging veil between! Surely a becoming reverence would actuate him—and a confidential boldness too would be necessary at such a time, and in such a place!

Does the New Testament have any word to say about "drawing near" to the highest and the holiest things, on the higher plane? Has it any word to say about a reverential "boldness to enter the Holy Place", there to stand before a Throne of Grace?

No doubt the white-robed Priest in Israel knew that the ground of his security was already manifest in the Most Holy Place in the Atonement blood sprinkled there—hence had sufficient foundation for his reverential boldness in handling the holy things. There is a similar but higher ground beneath the Christian's boldness as he too draws near to the Holiest.

Now while the right of entry to the Holy Place was a privilege common to all the Priesthood at any time, yet, when the hour of incense was come the Priest appointed must approach alone, and remain alone at the Altar till the presentation was complete. We see an instance of this in the case

of Zacharias, into whose presence came the Angel Gabriel to announce to him the birth of a son. (Luke 1. 8-11.)

Enjoyment of spiritual privileges in the "heavenlies" is the common experience of all spirit-begotten children of God, but there are times and seasons when we have need to be alone with God. Light from the spiritual Candlestick may illuminate our way, Bread from the Table may satisfy our needs, but no child of God can fulfil his course without the God-ward look and the close approach of private adoration.

At such a time one dominating thought must have possessed the priestly mind—that was the thing in hand! While face to face with God he must relegate all other claims pertaining to the Camp to the sub-conscious stratum of his mind. His time and service must now be devoted exclusively to God. Woe betide him if at such a time the sorrows of the people should take first place! A rebellious and stiff-necked people may be dwelling in the Camp, but what of that? Here at this Altar he must constrain himself to quietness and attentiveness to the higher claims of his God!

Is there anything like this in the Christian's way of life? Is there a rebellious world surrounding him on every hand, pressing by its groans, its needs upon his sensitive and compassionate heart? Even so, he cannot give primary attention to that—his first response must be to the claims of God. It must be God first—other things will be righted in due time.

The need and value of the private approach to the Holiest is beyond appraisal. What would we not give to have more detail of the solitary hours of our Lord away there on the mountain top? What would He have to say to fill the long night hours with prayer so frequently? If we must take our cue from the few snatches of submissive and thanksgiving prayer put on record for us by His hearers, we can be sure His hours of isolation also were filled with prayers of the utmost worship and devotion. If that intercessory prayer in the Upper Room be our guide, what sincere devotion, coupled with filial boldness was ever the keynote of His Life. "Holy Father"—"Righteous Father" were the terms which sprang spontaneous to His lips—and then those deeper grievous prayers in Gethsemane and on the Cross! If from His hours of anguish these prayers must be our guide what would we not give to have had attending Angels' ears, and have listened to His quieter calmer prayer. Perhaps some day, when angelic tongues are unloosed, we may come to know and understand how Jesus dropped His incense into the consuming fires and how His attestations to full devotion to the Father's Will rose up to God as incense sweet.

What then is true devotion to God? Is it to be found in the isolation of the monastic cell, or the Cathedral's cloistered chambers? Is it to be found in entire separation from the company of men? By no means! Jesus lived no monastic or separated life away from men, yet, in the midst of men He was separated unto God. Perhaps the old-time Quaker came near to understanding this, when seated along with men, he could yet commune with God, without ceremony or words. "Retire thou to the Light that is within thee" was his guiding thought. Does devotion not express itself in singing hymns, in making public prayer, in the delivery of expositions, or exhortations by lecture or address? No, not necessarily so! It may, but just as surely it may not! Devotion must abound ere yet the hymn is sung, the prayer framed, or the address constructed! Each and all may be the expression of a devoted life, exactly as mental effort or muscular movement may be the expression of a life-power within our bodies, but the life-power and these are not the same thing.

True devotion, veneration, reverence, is the sequel to a life lived unto God, a life that takes delight in ministering pleasure unto Him, a life that brings its choicest things, its priest-like fragrances to be absorbed, as incense sweet, in the accepting fire of His Love.

Devotion of this kind does not express itself, first and foremost in activities towards the Camp—it knows that the world's day is yet to come; nor does it expend itself primarily in service to the Court—it knows that the unconsecrated Christian's fuller opportunity will come by-and-bye. Instead devotion of this deeper kind pays its main attention to the claims of God and to the needs of the deeper hidden life within—to the life that is "hid with Christ in God"! Its motto first and foremost is "God first"—it says "I delight to do Thy Will, O my God"; its purpose is "this one thing I do"; its realisation is "I am crucified with Christ, yet I live, and yet it is no longer I that live, but Christ who liveth in me".

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

But after all, circumstances in the life and composition of the Church being what they are, devotion of this deeper kind may have to be looked

on more as an ideal than a reality; as something to be striven for even if not often attained.

The great desideratum is that it should be realised in the life of the individual; for as Paul reminds us, our bodies, individually are as temples of the Lord our God. We each carry within us the structure and the contacts of the Tabernacle brought down to an immensely fine focus. We have our point of contact with the Camp—our wider work-a-day world; our contact with the "Court"—with those of religious mind, yet not spirit-begotten; our contacts with the Holy Place—with those who walk with spiritual illumination and feed on the more deeply spiritual food; and

that deeper inner Sanctum of the soul in which we feel the promise of the Saviour come true "*We will come unto him and make our abode with him*" (John 14. 23). Hence every true child of God should be a copy of the Tabernacle in miniature, in the very heart of which dwells the token of a Shekinah Presence, and in which is located also, as it were, an Incense Altar, to which as opportunity serves, he inwardly retires, there to crumble and present the loving fragrance of an obedient life. In the words of the old Quaker dictum, it is well to "*retire to that which is within thee and there commune with Him that dwelleth in thy soul*".

May the Lord help us so to do.

The Renovated Earth

*A voice from the
nineteenth century*

The following exposition of Millennial doctrine was written by Dr. J. A. Seiss nearly a century ago.

* * *

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews introduces three points in which the super-angelic dignity is shown. The first is that Christ is assigned a higher name than the angels. The second is that he is clothed with a sublimer honour than the angels, and the third is that Christ is invested with a sublimer office than the angels, they being only ministering spirits, while He is spoken of as a Divine King, whose throne is forever and ever, and the sceptre of whose Kingdom is a sceptre of righteousness. The princely investiture and reign of the Messiah is thus distinctly deduced from the Old Testament, and used by the Apostle as the sublimest demonstration of the Saviour's personal dignity. And this Messianic dominion he applies particularly to what is hereafter to grow out of the Gospel economy. He tells us that it is peculiarly "the world to come" over which the Messiah's reign is to be exercised. "*For unto the angels hath he not put into subjection the world to come, whereof we speak*", thus proceeding upon the implied assumption that it has been by promise put into subjection to Christ, and that all those allusions to the Saviour as a King have their chief application and ultimate fulfilment in that "world to come". The Messiah's reign and this "world to come" accordingly belong together and coexist in the same period and locality. By determining, then, what is meant by this "world to come", we may form an idea of what is included in the Messianic Kingdom; or, if we already know what the

consummated Messianic reign is, and where it is to be, we have it already decided what we are to understand by this "world to come".

If any stress is, therefore, to be laid upon this conclusion, there is no alternative left but to understand this "world to come" as the Millennial World, or the world as it shall be when Christ shall have restored the throne of David and entered upon his glorious dominion as the Sovereign of the nations and Lord of the whole earth. And to this agrees exactly the original word, *oikoumene*, which means the habitable earth—the domiciliated globe on which we dwell—and not some remote supernal region, as we sometimes imagine. The world to come, then, is nothing more nor less than this self-same world of ours in its final or Millennial condition. The earth is not to be annihilated. God never obliterates His own creations. The dissolving fires of which Peter speaks are for "the perdition of ungodly men", and not for the utter depopulation and destruction of the whole world. They may consume cities, destroy armies and effect some important meteorological and geological changes; but men and nations will survive them and still continue to live in the flesh. The earth is to be renovated and restored from its present depression and dilapidation, and thus become "the new earth" of which the Bible speaks. It is to pass through a "regeneration" analogous to that through which a man must pass to see the Kingdom of God; but there will be a continuity of its elements and existence, just as a regenerated man is constitutionally the same being that he was before his renewal. It will not be another earth, but the same earth under another

condition of things. It is now labouring under the curse ; but then the curse will have been lifted off and all its wounds healed. At present, it is hardly habitable—no one being able to live in it longer than a few brief years ; but then men shall dwell in it forever without knowing what death is. It is now the home of rebellion, injustice and guilt ; it will then be the home of righteousness. It is now under the domination of Satan ; it will then come under the blessed rule of the Prince of Peace. Such, at any rate, is the hope set before us in the Word of God, and this I hold to be "the world to come", of which the text speaks. It cannot be anything else. It cannot be what is commonly called heaven, for the word *oikoumene* cannot apply to heaven. It is everywhere else used exclusively with reference to our world. Neither can it be the present Gospel dispensation, as some have thought, for that began long before this epistle was written and could not, therefore, have been spoken of by Paul as yet "to come". We are consequently compelled to understand it to mean our own habitable world in its Millennial glory. And as the prophecies concerning the Messiah's eternal kingship are here referred to as having their fulfilment in the subjection of the Millennial world to his dominion, we are furnished with another powerful argument of Scripture in favour of the doctrine of Christ's personal reign as a great Prince in this world. Indeed, the Bible is so full of this subject, and its inspired writers are so constantly and enthusiastically alluding to it that I am amazed to find so many pious and Bible-loving people entirely losing sight of it. Ever and anon the Scriptures return to it as the great and animating hope of the Church in all her adversities and depressions, and it does seem to me that we are depriving ourselves of much true Christian comfort by the manner in which we have been neglecting and thrusting aside that glorious doctrine. My present object is to show, from the Scriptures, and by just inferences from them, what sort of a world this "world to come" is, and to describe, as far as I can, what we are to look for when once this earth has been fully subjected to that Divine King whose throne is forever and ever, and the sceptre of whose Kingdom is a sceptre of righteousness.

That "the world to come" is a highly blessed world, and a vast improvement upon the present scene of things, will be inferred on all hands without argument. It could not be a subject of hope if it were not. The Saviour Himself exhibited a model of it when in the Mount of Transfiguration—from which, perhaps, we may obtain as deep an insight of its glories as from any other portion of Scripture. That He designed that scene as a

miniature model of what His future coming and Kingdom is to be, is obvious. A week before it occurred he told His disciples that "the Son of man shall come in the glory of the Father, with His angels or messengers with Him"; and that there were some standing there when He made the declaration who should not taste of death till they saw the Son of man coming in His Kingdom. This coming in His Kingdom, which some of the disciples were to live to see, is not the final Advent, for the disciples are all dead, and the final Advent is still future. Neither is it the destruction of Jerusalem, for but one of the apostles lived to see that catastrophe, and the Son of man did not then come in His Kingdom. And yet some of the apostles were to have ocular demonstration of the Son of man's coming in His Kingdom before tasting of death. Search through apostolic history as we will we shall find nothing but the transfiguration to which the Saviour's words will apply. That, then, was in some sense the coming of the Son of man in His Kingdom. It was not, indeed, the coming itself, but it was an earnest and picture of it. It was the coming of the Son of man in His Kingdom, as the bread and wine in the eucharist are Christ's body and blood. Peter says: "The power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" are not "cunningly devised fables". He declares that he was certified of their reality by the testimony of his own senses. We were "eye-witnesses", says he, "when we were with him in the holy mount". We thus have clear, inspired testimony that the scene of the transfiguration was a demonstrative exhibition of the coming of Jesus in His Kingdom. Hence, whatever we find in the descriptions of that scene, we may confidently expect to be realised in that "world to come whereof we speak". As He was then personally present as the Son of man, so He will be personally present in the Millennial Kingdom. And as He was there attended by different classes of persons, so will His glorious Kingdom consist of similar classes.

If I am asked why I receive the Scripture as the Word of God and the only perfect rule of faith and life, I answer with all the Fathers of the Protestant Church, because the Bible is the only record of the redeeming love of God, because in the Bible I find God drawing near to man in Christ Jesus, and declaring to us, in Him, His will for our salvation. And this record I know to be true by the witness of the Holy Spirit in my heart whereby I am assured that none other than God Himself is able to speak such words to my soul.

Robertson Smith.

The Three Epistles of John

Comments on the writings
of the "Beloved Apostle"

Part V. I John 2. 7-8.

The beloved disciple seems to have entered much more fully than any other of the Twelve into the depths of Jesus' teaching. Here and there in this epistle there are allusions and remarks which seem clearly to have their basis in some vital thing which Jesus said at some time during His ministry. Such a word comes before us now in this 7th verse. "Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning." Now this "old commandment" can hardly be anything else than the Law and the Prophets, the Old Testament and all that it had to say about Christ. In the next verse John goes on to talk about a "new" commandment which he does write to the brethren; it must of necessity be that the new commandment is something that he received from his Lord, for John would not arrogate to himself the prerogative of laying down even newer commandments after his Lord had ascended on high. The "old" commandment therefore must be that which Jesus had in mind when he said "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law and the Prophets. I am not come to destroy but to fulfil". (Matt. 5. 17.) One of the greatest truths of the New Testament is this that John is here endeavouring to impress upon his readers, that Christianity did not spring as it were fully fledged into the world without any previous preparation, but came as the logical sequel to a long process of development that had its commencement in the Law given to Moses at Sinai. Jesus never repudiated that past basis upon which His message was founded. To Him, the words and works of the fathers, the Law of Sinai, and all that these had meant to Israel, was something that had come from God and because it had come from God must be held in due honour. True, He never failed to denounce the formalistic additions which men had built around and upon the Law and He condemned the hypocrisy and blindness of those who had done those things; but for the Law itself He always maintained that reverence and respect which was due to words that had at the first been written by the finger of God and given to Moses on the top of the Mount.

So John hastens to disavow, in his turn, any intention of belittling or denying the principles which had made Israel what it was and had brought his readers to the position in which they could under-

stand and accept Christ. "The Law" said Paul in another place (Gal. 3. 24) "was our schoolmaster" (*paidagogos* or pedagogue, child-leader) "to bring us unto Christ." That allusion is to the family tutor, often a slave, whose duty it was in Greek families to instruct and guide the children of the family whilst they were young and immature. "But after that faith is come" Paul continued "we are no longer under a schoolmaster; for ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." The Law trained the believer so that he could recognise Christ when He came. It is true that only a few, a "remnant", as Paul elsewhere calls them, profited sufficiently by the training of the Law to recognise Jesus as the promised Messiah; but in the training and development of those few the Law had done its destined work and was vindicated. For the successful accomplishment of that work the Law stood in eternal honour, and John realised, as Jesus would have him realise, that the "old commandment" was the indispensable preliminary to the new grace in which all the believers stood and in fact was incorporated in that new faith.

Yet the very fact that the Law and Prophets were intended to develop and, in a sense, "bring forth" the newer and greater revelation of God in Jesus Christ implies that the demands of the Law and the obligations of the Law and the restrictions of the Law must become of no effect, must break down and fall away, so soon as Jesus ushered in the new dispensation. In all development, that which is developed is a greater and a grander thing than that from which it is developed, and as the new comes to birth so must the old give place and disappear. That is what John the Baptist meant when he said "He must increase, but I must decrease". The Baptist knew himself to be the last of the old order, the last of the prophets, the last to call Israel to full compliance with the Law. Christ stood before him, Christ who would make an end of the Law to everyone that believeth, who would cause it to be swallowed up in the brighter effulgence of His own new message, and lift those who came to God to a plane of understanding and union with Him higher by far than anything that had ever been experienced by Moses or Samuel or Elijah or the son of Zacharias.

That is exactly what John the beloved disciple

has in mind now. Knowing that he has given due recognition to the old law out of which the new has been developed he goes on to explain that, for Christians, the new commandment is necessary. Not for them the mere unreasoning and adherence to ritual and ceremony, to sacrifice and keeping of feast-days and "washing of pots and cups". "Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you; because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." (vs. 8.)

Jesus often spoke of the "new commandment". Sometimes it was a direct injunction, such as "a new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another". (John 13. 34.) Sometimes it was not so direct but none the less a clear injunction to do something that was inherent in the spirit of the old Law but not covered by its letter. "Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time . . . thus and so . . . but I say unto you . . . thus and thus." So many things there were in the whole scope of human relations that Jesus lifted to a higher standard, so much higher that he virtually changed the law for his disciples without abrogating anything of the older injunctions. So it comes about that every disciple who keeps the law of love enjoined by Jesus upon His followers automatically attains to a higher degree of keeping the law of Moses than was ever achieved by any Israelite in all the fourteen centuries that the Law was incumbent upon them.

This new commandment, says John, is "true in him and in you". There is a wonderful indication of communion, of common-union, between our Lord and ourselves in that expression. The earnest, pious Israelite who brought his animal for sacrifice to the Tabernacle or Temple, as prescribed by the Levitical ritual, was taught to feel a sense of oneness with his God as the smoke of the sacrifice ascended into the sky; but for all that, God was still very far off, and in any case the priest must stand as an intermediary. The offerer, no matter how earnest or how pious, may not offer on his own account and stand directly in the presence of God. With us it is different. We have "boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus" (Heb. 10. 19), and we can by reason of our consecration of heart and life to God, and our acceptance by Him into His "High Calling", enter into the privilege of full and direct communion. Nothing less is implied by the fact that "now are we the sons of God". Nothing less than this is the honour bestowed upon those who have heard and responded to the call "My son, give me thine heart". It is very true that this thing "is true in him and in you" and we share its truth together.

"Because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." According to the Greek John's words are "the darkness is passing away". Notwithstanding all that he has implied in his previous words as to the value and necessity of the Law and the Prophets, and his insistence that they are not to be rejected or repudiated now that the fuller light of Christianity has come to make the way more clear, yet it is true that compared with the glorious radiance of the Christian evangel, the Mosaic dispensation was as darkness. That was the darkness which was passing away because "the true light now shineth". Perhaps John was thinking of the burning words of his namesake, that other John who stood and beheld the Lamb of God who had come to take away the sins of the world, and in beholding him had exclaimed, rapturously, "that was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world". (John 1. 9.) Out of the darkness of the Jewish Age with its Mosaic Law came the light of the Gospel Age with its higher law of love and its clearer view of the Divine purposes and plans. It is not so surprising to find light thus coming out of darkness; right at the beginning it was the same. The earth was enshrouded in darkness, and "God said, Let there be light; and there was light". So Zechariah, looking forward to the grand consummation of God's Plan, when evil and sin and death have been done away forever, says "At evening time it shall be light" (Zech. 14. 7). The whole story of man's upward struggle toward the destiny that God planned for him at the beginning is one of the passing away of darkness and the final triumph of the light. So John, looking to the great work of the present Age, the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus whereby the spiritual "Seed of Abraham" is to be selected and made ready for the future Millennial work of service, and realising how infinitely superior that work is to the old work with Israel after the flesh, says "the darkness is passing away, and the true light now shineth".

To be continued.

The Church has nothing to fear from criticism, and all the material that critics provide is to be welcomed, carefully sifted and examined whether it tends to create difficulties for the theologians or not, for those who love the truth will not shrink from any toil that can help us into a fuller insight into all its details and all its settings; and those whose faith is firmly fixed on the things that cannot be moved will not doubt that every new advance in Biblical study must in the end make God's great scheme of grace appear in fuller beauty and glory.

Robertson Smith.

Out of the Ivory Palaces

"Blow upon my garden
that the spices thereof
may flow out"

LET US GIVE THANKS

For the discipline of sorrow,
For the angel in distress ;
For the unseen hands that draw us
Into greater blessedness ;
For the lips that close in silence,
For the strong hands clasped in prayer,
For the strength of heart that suffers
But sinks not in despair ;
For the penitence and patience
That are meek beneath the rod,
And our hope's glad resurrection,
We give Thee thanks, O God.

For the many men and women
Who turn aside from song,
To mourn and weep in silence
Because of war and wrong ;
Who can hate none for whom Christ died,
Whichever name they bear,
But must for foes as well as friends,
Fill all their days with prayer ;
For the hearts to peace surrendered,
And full of love's accord,
Though the fight be fiercely raging,
We give Thee thanks, O Lord !

For the hope that right shall triumph,
For the lifting of the race ;
For the victories of justice,
For a coming day of grace ;
For the lessons taught by failure,
Learnt in humbleness and pain ;
For the call to lofty duties
That will come to us again ;
For the hope that those who trust Thee
Shall not be put to shame ;
For the faith that bears us onward,
O God ! we praise Thy name.

(M.F.)

Some time we're going to do a kindly deed,
Or speak a helpful word to some lone heart,
Some time we're going to plant the living seed
In soil where it will thrive and do its part.
Some time we'll stoop to help a wearied soul
That staggers underneath a heavy load ;
Some time we'll pause, while rushing towards the
goal,
To aid a brother on the rocky road.

"COME YE APART" (Mark 6. 31)

*Sometimes amid Life's busy press and throng
We hear the Master say "Come ye apart
And rest awhile". And after toiling long,
It sounds like music to our fainting heart.
For coming thus "apart" full well we know,
By contact with the noise of rushing feet,
The "coming and the going" to and fro
There was "no leisure for so much as eat" ;
And while He sees our heart's desire to be
For service, ere the daylight fades away,
And "night wherein no man can work" we see
Is fast approaching and will end the day,
He also knows our need of food and strength
To toil, or in the crowd to take our "Stand",
And bids us leave our work and come at length
To take refreshment from His loving Hand.*

They tell us there are crystals bright and rare,
Which cannot form till they are cooled and still ;
And certain flowers won't bloom in sunlight glare,
Yet shed forth fragrance sweet, by vale and hill ;
So gems of character may thus be brought
From out the cool and silent resting place
With Jesus, Who such wondrous lessons taught,
And spake such words of wisdom and of grace.

They say we grow like those with whom we live ;
Association likeness doth beget ;
Also in photographic art we give
Some time to rules, which we must not forget.
If we a perfect likeness would obtain,
The sitting still is an important part ;
Thus "sitting still" with Jesus we may gain
His likeness mirrored on our ravished heart.

*O, Master dwell with me in every place
Whether at home I rest, or toiling go ;
That I may gaze upon Thy lovely Face,
And thus into Thy perfect Image grow !*

(R.W.)

SOME TIME

Some time we're going to stop the ceaseless grind—
This everlasting fevered life we live,
And be more loving, tender, true and kind ;
More thoughtful and more ready to forgive.
Some time we'll only see the good in men,
Be blind to all the worthless and the bad,
And recollect our own defects, and then
Just strive to make the whole world bright and
glad.



THE QUESTION BOX



Q. Exodus 19. 4-6 was a promise given to Israel. Verse 5 states "If ye will obey my voice indeed and keep my covenant then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people . . . and ye shall be unto me a Kingdom of Priests and a Holy Nation". Does not Jewish history prove that as a nation they forfeited the right to be the "Holy Nation" and "Kingdom of Priests"? Was it not just the "Remnant" of Israel that obeyed God's voice (Rom. 11. 5; Heb. 1. 1) and the rest were blinded and shut up in unbelief? (Rom. 11. 32; Rom. 11. 8.) Were not the Gentiles called to make up the requisite number of the Priesthood? Are not the Jews at the present time all waiting at Jerusalem and elsewhere for the fulfilment of Rom. 11. 26?

A. There are two phases of the "servant" that is to be God's "salvation to the ends of the earth". It is very difficult—in fact it is impossible—rightly to understand the Divine Plan until we appreciate that God's way of bringing the blessings of life to all mankind is by means of the devoted—and suffering—service of both these classes, one heavenly and one earthly. The earthly class was developed first but it is the heavenly that occupies the superior plane and has the greater blessing. When the prospect of becoming a kingdom of priests and an holy nation was offered to Israel it was conditional. "If ye will obey my voice, and keep my covenant". As a nation Israel failed to keep the condition, as a nation they failed therefore to attain the promise. But individuals within the nation did show themselves of the spirit that God desires to see in His servants and those individuals are called by a name which appears first in the words of the prophet Joel and was later elaborated by Isaiah and Micah—the "remnant". "Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for, but the election (elect—choice or chosen) hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded" says Paul in Rom. 11. 7.

There were some of these in the days of the First Advent, and they accepted Christ and became Christians, heirs of the heavenly calling and had no further part nor lot in the earthly Israel. There were some of them in preceding generations before Christ came, and these are they that God can and will use in the resurrection. The most outstanding of these are the ones to whom we usually refer as the "Ancient Worthies", or as more generally known among Christians to-day, the "Old Testament Saints". Paul's argument throughout

Romans 11 is that there is such a "remnant" that will eventually be brought back actively into God's purposes and become the means of saving, first, their own unbelieving brethren and later, the whole world of mankind, acting all the time under the instructions and guidance of the then glorified Church. It is obvious that those of Israel who rejected the covenant and perished in their unbelief are no more fitted for use in the Kingdom than are Gentiles who in this Gospel Age have turned away from the High Calling and disdained to follow the "Narrow Way". It should be clear therefore that Israel as a nation comes back to life in the resurrection on just the same footing as the rest of mankind, candidates for restitution. Just as the Church in heaven will be composed of the "called, and chosen, and faithful" of this Gospel Age, so the new nation on earth which is to commence the Millennial missionary work will consist, at least in the main, of the "called, and chosen, and faithful" of the Jewish Age.

The first work of this restored "remnant" will be the conversion and reconciliation to God of their own unbelieving brethren; that therefore is the first work of the Kingdom. That is implied by Paul's words "they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in"; "blindness in part is happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, and so all Israel shall be saved". This may well indicate that there will be a large scale conversion of Israel in the Holy Land after the Church has gone and the Ancient Worthies returned but before the full end of the present Age. This would result in a missionary nation composed of men and women of faith, tested and proved by the stress of Armageddon and "Jacob's Trouble", ready for the work of the Kingdom immediately that Kingdom is established in power and announced to all mankind. "If the casting of them away be the reconciling of the world" (in the death of Christ) "what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" (resurrection). The raising of all men from the sleep of death depends upon and waits for the reconciliation of at least a part of Israel, and this seems to demand a prior resurrection, or, perhaps more accurately, the resurrection of Jews before Gentiles when once the "general resurrection" has commenced.

It is not quite right to say that Israel lost the right to their Divine destiny and that it was inherited by the Christian Church, for there are two separate destinies here and each is achieved in due

time. Israel at Sinai was not promised a spiritual salvation and the Church at Pentecost was not offered an earthly salvation. Israel as a nation was offered the opportunity of becoming a Kingdom of Priests on earth but Israel as a nation lost that opportunity; individual Israelites won it and they will eventually form the nation of destiny. The Gentile world was offered a similar, but this time a spiritual, kingdom and again the opportunity was

embraced and won only by individuals; they and they alone will be the spiritual Royal Priesthood. Both earthly and heavenly phases of that royal priesthood, holy nation, chosen people, will represent the consummation of God's work in the Jewish and Gospel Ages, selecting training and preparing the means that He is to use for the reconciliation of all men to Himself in the third Age, the Millennial Age.

AN ITEM OF INTEREST

News of a U.S.A. Convention at Fort Webster, Ind.

The Berean Bible Students of Cicero, Illinois, U.S.A., have sent us the preliminary notice of a summer convention which—for the information of our U.S.A. readers—is planned to be held at the Yellow Banks Hotel, North Webster, Indiana, “on the shores of beautiful Lake Webster”, from July 30th to August 5th, 1950. The avowed spirit in which this gathering is being arranged and the ideals which are expressed as having inspired the decision are those which we would all endorse and with which we will have sympathy. For that reason we reproduce a major portion of the explanatory leaflet which has been sent us. It is not by any means the first time that such sentiments have been expressed; it will certainly not be the last; but because the causes that give rise to the necessity for such exhortations are always with us, and because “the price of liberty is eternal vigilance” we are glad to have the opportunity of passing on these thoughts to our readers, knowing that so many will sympathise with the desire for better things that has inspired their composition. Some who read these lines will remember taking part in similar efforts, perhaps many years ago, and feel now that much of their endeavour was futile and barren of lasting result. The fact that earnest disciples of Jesus still feel led to make their own zealous bid for the unity we all cherish shows that the effort is never in vain; every such uprising of the spirit of freedom and of love, the spirit of Christ, plays its part in the great age-long work which only our Lord can see and rightly appraise in its fulness. We, any of us and all of us, can only hope to hold the torch and bear it onward for a brief space before relinquishing it to the next who is following.

*“This they all, with a joyful mind
Bear through life, like a torch in flame
And falling, fling to the host behind,
‘Play up, play up, and play the game.’”*

Leigh Hunt's inspiring words, more familiar to a previous generation than to ours, are fitting to our case. One of the greatest lessons we have to learn

—and one of the hardest—is to “play the game” with our brethren, and, reverently let it be said, with our Lord. The old English public school tradition of “never letting the side down” is one that it is well should be incorporated into our fellowship. But we can only be true to our brethren and to our Lord if we hold fast to the principles of discipleship, the standards which are inculcated in the seventeenth chapter of John and to which lip service at least is paid in every one of our assemblies.

The leaflet is headed:—

WHY THIS CONVENTION WAS PLANNED . . .

For a number of years, the Cicero Ecclesia, in common with other groups of consecrated Christians, has arranged its local conventions or Bible Conferences, which the Lord has graciously blessed to our spiritual edification. However, with the passage of time our attention has been concentrated more and more upon the possibility, God willing, of arranging a yearly gathering—for a week—in some ideal vacation spot, which would attract a larger number of the Lord's people; who though differing in “head”, but united in “heart”, might thus satisfy their hunger for fellowship with others of their brethren.

While acknowledging for others, as we desire for ourselves, the right to and the need of a clear-cut Scriptural basis for faith, we are nevertheless convinced that as Christians our variations in beliefs are not an insurmountable barrier to mutual fellowship; and IN SPITE OF our differences, it is yet possible, by God's grace, to meet together in the spirit of our beloved Master who taught us that “One is your Master and all ye are brethren”.

Cannot He who died for us all, and whose footsteps we have covenanted to follow, be sufficiently the attraction to draw us apart for a week's fellowship together? Is the Unity of the Spirit of their Head insufficient that the Body-members must seek some human attraction? Has not the Scripture

said that "Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty"? Are we yet bound by our own ideas in a captivity which prevents a holy communion together on this side of the veil, while believing that we can so fellowship beyond it? Has not our Master said "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another"?

Have truer words been written than these, familiar to many of us? "Unity of faith is desirable; it is to be striven for—yet not the kind of unity that is generally aimed at. Unity is to be along the lines of "the faith once delivered unto the saints" in its purity and simplicity, and with full liberty to each member to take different views of minor points, and with no instruction whatever in respect to human speculations, theories, etc. The Scriptural idea of unity is upon the foundation principles of the Gospel:

1. Our redemption through the precious blood, and our justification by demonstrated faith therein.
2. Our sanctification, setting apart to the Lord, the Truth and their service—including the service of the brethren.
3. Aside from *these essentials*, upon which unity must be demanded, there can be no Scriptural fellowship; *upon every other point fullest liberty is to be accorded*, with, however, a desire to see, and help others to see the Divine Plan in its every feature and detail. Thus each member of the body of Christ, maintaining his own personal liberty, is so thoroughly devoted to the Head and to all the members that it will be his pleasure to lay down all, even life itself, on their behalf."

The sound-mindedness of these words is further reflected in the following: "The teachings which were to be presented to the nations are specified by our Lord as being—'Whatsoever I have commanded you'. This, then, proves that the kernel of the Gospel is not the Jewish Law nor certain scientific theories and abstruse problems; but the simple teachings which our Lord delivered to the Apostles. What are these?:—

- (1) He taught that all men were sinners.
- (2) That he came into the world to 'give his life a ransom'—a corresponding price for the sins of the whole world.
- (3) That no man could come unto the Father, but by him.
- (4) That all who would come by him must, in addition to the exercise of faith in him, also take up his cross and follow him.
- (5) That all believers are one with him as the branches of a grape-vine are parts of the vine.
- (6) That every branch to abide in him must bring forth fruit, else it will be taken away.

(7) That those who trust in him are to hope for and to expect his second coming—"I will come again, and receive you unto myself".

(8) That the ultimate end of our hope for all promised blessing is in and through a resurrection of the dead.

(9) That love is the law of the New Covenant—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, mind, soul, and strength; and, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself".

"We are fully authorized, therefore, to teach and to believe that these are the points of faith and practice which are necessary to both Jews and Gentiles who shall be favoured with the call of this Gospel Age; and that *nothing else is necessary or pertinent to the doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ or 'the faith once delivered to the saints'.*"

If, dear brethren, to the above wholesome and sanctified words we add those of the well-known "TO US THE SCRIPTURES CLEARLY TEACH", have we not here a truly Scriptural platform for mutual fellowship? Where is the sincere consecrated Christian who does not find here a sufficiency of belief but which will constrain him to seek the communion of like believers? We believe there are thousands of such throughout this land and overseas. Can we not demonstrate to our blessed Lord, in this the year 1950, that we have profited from our chastisements, that we have learned to appreciate one another's sincerity and desire to be obedient to the "heavenly vision", and that our love for one another, *despite our differences*, has developed and will yet further develop, as is His will?

Can we make the beautiful words of the poet Markham, so often quoted in the past and so often revealed as but a sanctimonious platitude, a true reality in our dealings with our brethren:

*He drew a circle that left me out—
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.
But love and I had the wit to win,
We drew a circle that took him in.*

Brethren, we believe we can so demonstrate both to Him and to ourselves. May God bless this gathering with such an outpouring upon each one of the sweet spirit of His blessed Son, as we fellowship as children of God and brethren of Christ, as we have yet never experienced in this valley of our pilgrimage.

B.S.M. Editor's note.—Readers who would like to have further details of this gathering should write to Berean Bible Students Convention Committee, Post Office Box 125, Cicero 50, Ill., U.S.A. Rates for room and meals, adults \$30.00 full week or \$5.00 per day; children under 10 years of age, \$2.50 per day.

FROM THE CITY WALLS

A Review of Interesting
Current Events

The government of Iraq (the ancient Assyria and Babylon) have announced that the 100,000 Jews at present in Iraq will be allowed to immigrate to Israel if they take their departure within twelve months. The Jewish Agency is making strenuous efforts to assist as many as possible of these Jews to reach Israel within the allotted time. There have been Jews in Iraq for twenty-seven centuries, ever since the "Ten Tribes" were taken into captivity by the Assyrians. They have prospered and multiplied there and although a few did come back to Judah under the Persian kings, Cyrus and his successors, the majority remained. Now, if this giant transfer is accomplished, all the country east of the Euphrates will, for the first time since the days of Jonah, be empty of Jews. That is significant when it is remembered that the Euphrates is the eastern boundary of the territory promised to Abraham and his seed.

* * *

Moshe Sharett, Israel's Foreign Minister, has reiterated his country's determination to steer a middle course, so far as possible, between the Eastern and Western blocs of Powers. For how long this "sitting on the fence" policy can be continued remains to be seen. Israel has trade agreements both with Russia and with the West, and evidently desires to retain the friendship of both for so long as may be practicable. It will be interesting to see how this develops; there may be some bearing here on the prophetic allusion to that "dwelling in safety" of Ezekiel 38 which is to precede the invasion of the "hosts of Gog and Magog", an event which will constitute a very definite pointer to our precise position on the stream of time.

* * *

The population of Israel is now 1,200,000. It is expected to reach at least 3,000,000 within ten years. In the days of Christ, it is thought, the land had between three and five million inhabitants. There is evidently plenty of room yet before the greater expansion of territory involved in the promise to Abraham becomes a matter of moment.

* * *

During March of this year (1950) an important discovery of subterranean fresh water has been made by the Israeli Government Department of

Agriculture in the "Arabah" between the south of the Dead Sea and Elath on the Gulf of Akaba. That is, generally speaking, the district in which the children of Israel spent their nearly forty years wanderings after the spies had returned disheartened from exploring the land, the people had lost heart and lost faith and God had decreed that they would wander until that generation had passed away. "Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them" said the Psalmist of that disastrous period. Now it is expected that large scale agricultural settlements will be possible in this area so soon as the necessary artesian wells can be sunk.

* * *

An Arab spokesman has voiced Arab fears of possible development of the Israeli state. They (the Israelites), he declares "dream of a greater Jewish State between the Nile and the Euphrates". It seems that even the politicians of this world can see what is coming. This is no dream; four millenniums ago the boundaries of the Holy Land that is to be the centre of Divine Government throughout the Millennium were defined and recorded, and they have remained set down in black and white—or its equivalent—ever since, for all to read, and study, and ponder. The Nile to the Euphrates; that was the promise, and it is no dream, it is reality. Looking at this matter from the Christian point of vantage, we know that the Arab states have nothing to fear from the realisation of the promise. The Kingdom of which that land is to be the centre will bring blessings and happiness to Arab as well as to Jew and Gentile, and the sons of Ishmael will find that, after all, the ways of God, mysterious and oft times past finding out, are best in the end.

CONFIDENCE

*Sometimes, your sky is overcast with clouds,
That hide from you the shining of the sun;
Sometimes, your struggling soul is so hard pressed,
You doubt if e're the conflict will be won.
Sometimes, you feel your friends so far away,
No earthly arm is near on which to lean;
'Tis then the time to stretch the Hand of Faith
With firmer strength to grasp the "things unseen."
S.R.S. 1940.*

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



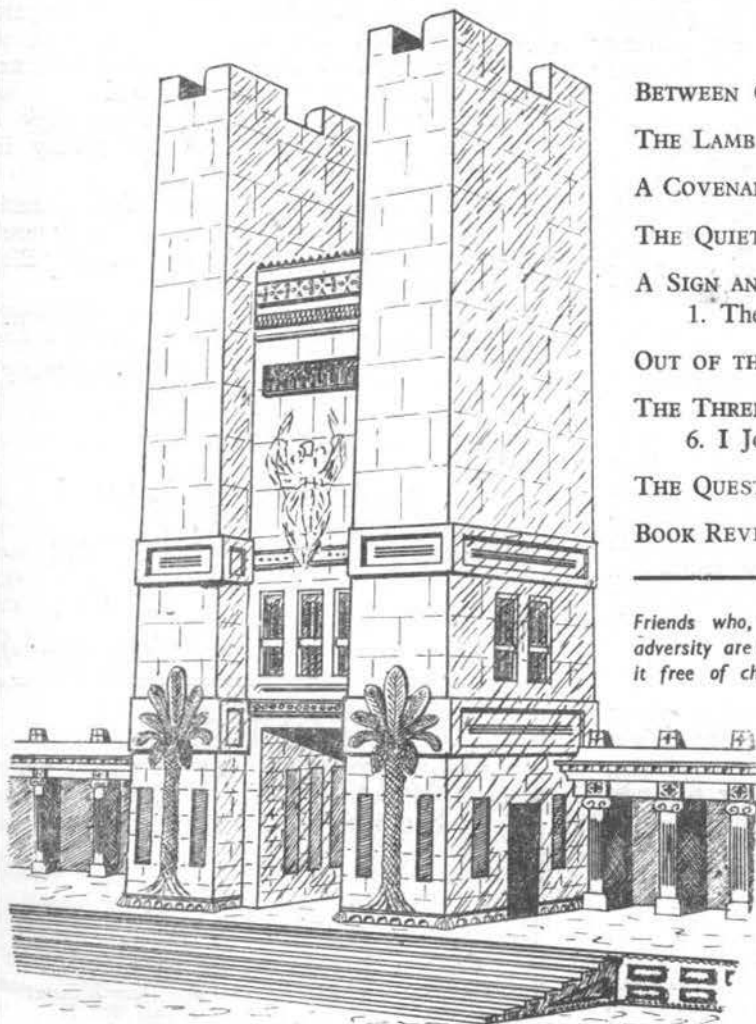
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*Friends who, through old age, infirmity or other
adversity are unable to pay for this journal may have
it free of charge upon request, renewed annually.*



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

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BETWEEN OURSELVES

The Benevolent Fund is in the care of Bro. E. Allbon, 20, Sunnymede Drive, Ilford, Essex. Donations intended for the Fund, and all other correspondence in connection with the same, should be sent to Bro. Allbon.

* * *

The London General Convention sponsored by the Central London, Forest Gate, Putney, Welling and Windsor classes will, D.V., be held again this year during the August Bank Holiday week-end—August 5th, 6th and 7th. It is anticipated that an Immersion service will be arranged. For further information write the Convention Secretary, Bro. G. H. Jennings, Grove House, Roding Lane South, Ilford, Essex. For accommodation requirements address Bro. H. Charlton, Ryvers Farm, London Road, Langley, Bucks.

* * *

The poem "Thanks to God" appearing in this month's issue under our feature "Out of the Ivory Palaces", and reprinted from one of our 1940 issues, was by Brother Charles Wessman of Sweden, who will be remembered by some of our more elderly friends. He has been "with the Lord" now for many years.

* * *

As from the May meeting, the monthly Saturday gathering at Caxton Hall will have the ministry of one speaker only instead of two as heretofore, it being felt by many that the shortness of the time allotted to two speakers does not allow them to do justice to their subjects. The meeting commences at 6.30 as before and closes at 8.0, after which there is an hour of opportunity for fellowship. The nature of the address is being left entirely to the invited speaker and his subject will be announced in the "Monthly".

* * *

In order to clear our shelves of the remaining stocks of several booklets which will soon be out of print and will not be reprinted, we are offering parcels containing 30 such booklets for 6/- post free. Each parcel contains:—

- 6 "Parables of the Kingdom" 30 pp.
- 6 "Lucifer the Prince of Evil" 30 pp.
- 6 "Jacob's Trouble" (old style) 87 pp.
- 6 "Promise of His Presence" 56 pp.
- 6 "From a Prison Cell" 28 pp.

These booklets all present various aspects of our faith and are useful in presenting the message to others, and are mostly well known to our brethren. Lack of storage space renders it imperative that we clear these before other needed literature can be taken in, and we will be pleased therefore to

send these parcels to those who desire to take advantage of this opportunity.

* * *

The little booklet, "A Glimpse of God's Plans" has been used very extensively in some parts of the country and apparently has been found to serve a useful purpose. The little booklet is still available in stock at 1/6 doz. or 11/- per 100 and it will be a pleasure to send copies upon request.

* * *

We are still supplying "Millennial Message No. 3" in quantities for free distribution and the brethren may continue to request such quantities as they can use. It will be a pleasure to despatch them to all such. Here are a few samples of enquiries recently received in consequence of distribution of these tracts in various parts.

"Please will you forward a sample copy of 'Bible Students Monthly'. I am greatly interested."

"I have read a recent copy of 'Millennial Message' and found it very interesting. I would like you to send me a sample copy of the 'Bible Students Monthly' please."

"I received some time ago a 'Millennial Message'. . . . I should be very pleased to receive further numbers, also the 'Bible Students Monthly'."

Gone From Us

+

Sister E. Sharpe (*Grantham*)
Sister Lodge (*London*)
Brother McCorkindale (*East Kilbride*)
Brother Dale (*Leicester*)

+

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

LONDON MONTHLY MEETING

Saturday, 17th June, 1950

6.30—8.30 p.m.

In the Tudor Hall
CAXTON HALL

Caxton Street, Westminster, S.W.1
5 mins. St. James Park Station and Victoria Street

Speaker: Bro. A. O. Hudson.

Subject: "What new thing is this?"

THE LAMB GOES FORTH TO WAR

The fiercest and longest battle recorded in the Bible, the book of many battles, is one between a Lamb and a Lion—and the Lamb is the victor! Apparently the most defenceless, and certainly one of the most harmless, of all creatures, it nevertheless engages in mortal combat the most terrible of the beasts of the earth, and overcomes him. The conflict is long and for the major part of the time it seems as though the Lion is going to triumph, but toward the end he is driven back by the victorious Lamb, compelled to relinquish his prey, and lies prostrate, his might and power laid in the dust.

It is a remarkable thing, to think that a lamb can overcome a lion. No man would have thought of that; no man unenlightened by the Holy Spirit of God would ever have realised that the powers of love, of goodwill, of benevolence, the spirit of service and of doing good, of complete reliance upon the power of God, are forces greater by far than all that the powers of evil can muster. The Lion draws all his strength from the things of this earth and expends it in the manufacture and use of material weapons. The Lamb draws his from the things of heaven and expends it in spiritual warfare. That is the difference.

The Lion is called such only as a matter of courtesy. He has undergone a process of degeneration during the course of his career. At the end he is so nondescript, partaking of the evil qualities of all wild beasts and the good qualities of none, that the scribe calls him a wild beast, knowing not how else to describe him. The lion as God first made him was in reality a noble animal. In the coming day he is going to lie down with the lamb, and be altogether lovable. But not the kind of lion that the lamb is going to slay!

The lion in this Age is a carnivorous beast. He devours flesh. The Lion which the Lamb engages in deadly combat has his archetype in the Devil, whom the Apostle Peter calls "a roaring lion, going about seeking whom he may devour". (1. Pet. 5. 8.) That Lion was defeated in his first endeavour to defy God and frustrate His plans for the human race. True, by virtue of his lie, uttered in the garden, man was enticed into sin, and reaped death, "and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned". (Rom. 5. 12.) But he was defeated for the time being, nevertheless, for the fallen pair still believed in God and began to bring their children up in the knowledge and fear of God, and there is no evidence that they ever heeded

or had anything to do with the Devil again, after that first disastrous experience. Satan had to wait for one or two generations to pass by before he could again make a really effective entry into mankind's thoughts (see Gen. 4).

The fight was not really joined until God's work with the people of Israel began to show some definite fruitage. We are accustomed to thinking of Israel's apostasy and unfaithfulness and of their going repeatedly into captivity because of their sins. What, it may be, we do not realise so easily is that a solid body of people, the "remnant", was being prepared for God's purposes and laid aside to wait the time when He would need them. The Hebrew prophets rendered yeoman service to the Divine Plan in their day and their work was not wasted, even although they were very generally disesteemed in their own generation and as often as not put to death in vain attempts to stifle their message and their work. The rejection and martyrdom of the prophets was the first round in the conflict between the Lamb and the Lion and for the time being the Lion seemed to have the advantage.

The Scriptural symbolism of this conflict commences with the visible appearance of the Lion upon earth. The Devil, in a state of rebellion against God, excluded because of his sin from heaven, was able to prosecute his warfare against God only upon earth and in the affairs of men. It was when the work of the prophets began to produce such an understanding of God's plan in the hearts of men that it must inevitably make some of them ready to receive the Messiah—as it did do some six or seven hundred years later—that the Devil initiated that strategy which has been used to such terrible effect ever since. The people of God began to be menaced by the "wild beasts of the earth"!

There are many powers, forces, institutions in the world that are opposed to the powers and forces and institutions of God and of righteousness. Most of them become, sooner or later, incorporated into the fabric of kingdoms and empires, which then, because of this evil content, become the enemies of God. It is this power of worldly evil in the kingdoms of this world that constitutes the Lion that is eventually slain by the Lamb.

It was in the empire of Babylon that the Lion first became manifest. Daniel in his dream (Dan. 7) saw the thing clearly. A lion with eagle's (vulture's) wings which enabled it to rise up from

the earth and soar into the heavens, but the wings thereof were plucked and it fell to the earth, where it must perforce remain. There is something in this that reminds us of the story of the founding of Babylon itself, how they planned to build a Tower whose top should reach into heaven, as though they would storm the heights of the place of God's throne itself; and how their project was defeated and they were cast down to the earth and scattered abroad on the face of the land. In the days of Daniel the lion's wings had been plucked—but it was standing up like a man and a man's heart had been given to it.

A strange expression, that! Does it mean that the lion had his nature softened and transformed so that the lion-like disposition was tamed? Or was it the kind of heart that man has now, deceitful and desperately wicked, as the Preacher puts it? Or is it a matter of contrast, the erst-while flying creature, aspiring to soar aloft among the angels of heaven, condemned now to be like the sons of men, restricted to walking on the earth and living as do men on the earth. Looking at the reality in history, it would seem that something of the first and something of the third suppositions are combined. The analogy of Daniel's four beasts with Nebuchadnezzar's great image is too obvious to be ignored. The lion is Babylon, and Babylon, although one of the wild beast powers that have oppressed God's people through the centuries, was in some important respects more humane than any power that succeeded her. Under Babylonish rule, the Jews, although held in captivity and their land made desolate, were at least free from persecution and could follow their distinctively Jewish way of life, and worship God according to the law of Moses without let or hindrance. That was more than could be said of any of the succeeding wild beast powers, except perhaps the Persians, who followed Babylon and to some degree for a short time imitated Babylonish policy. God's people were in the grip of the lion, true, but it was a lion with a man's heart.

Satanic strategy could not rest at captivity. The lion became transformed into a bear. The man's heart was gone, and in its place the bear appeared with three ribs in its mouth—the last remnants of its victims—and a voice was heard saying to it "Arise, devour much flesh". Although the Jews had welcomed the advent of Persia in the expectation that they would thus gain freedom from the bondage of Babylon, and although at first, under Cyrus and Darius, it seemed that those hopes were being fulfilled, in later years came the time that Judah hailed the Greeks as deliverers from Persia, and led Alexander in triumph to their Temple to show him the prophecy predicting his coming vic-

tory and conquest. Jewry had suffered greatly since the prosperous days of Babylon. There were Jews in Judea, in Babylonia and in Egypt, three separate and distinct communities each having its own characteristic traditions and culture, but all owning Israel's God. But they were three ribs in the mouth of the bear, pitiful remnants of what had once been, and when the bear in its turn gave way before the four-headed winged leopard they rejoiced.

The rejoicing was not for long. This third wild beast of Daniel's vision was by far more voracious and menacing than either of its predecessors. Its wings were those of a flying creature or flying insect rather than those of a soaring bird like the eagle. They were for speed in flight rather than power to climb. That was characteristic of Greece, this speed with which its conquests were achieved. The same idea is conveyed in the parallel vision in Dan. 8 where the he-goat, Greece, traverses the ground with such rapidity in his onward rush that "he touched not the ground" as he went. The four kingdoms into which the empire was split almost immediately after its formation, in consequence of the death of Alexander and division of his territory between his four generals, brought all Jews under the jurisdiction of one or another of the "four heads". It was under the rule of Greece—or of these Greek sub-kingdoms—that the covenant people suffered the miseries and persecutions which ultimately led to the Maccabean revolt and the recovery of some degree of national independence. The lion had become a leopard and Truth lay almost prostrate under his talons; and still the Lamb had not appeared to give battle.

Although there was as yet no outward sign of the Coming One, the arch-enemy of God and man must have known that the time was not far distant. He must have observed the growing fitness of some in Israel to comprehend Him when He came; the steady development of a "people made ready for the Lord", the fact that "all men were in expectation". And so, relentlessly pursuing his plan to exterminate truth and righteousness from the earth, he produced, only half a century before the Lamb did appear, an even more fearsome beast to supersede the leopard.

Judah had gained measurable freedom from the leopard, from Greece. The cause of the Lion had received a temporary set-back, and the ground lost had to be regained. The emergence of Rome as the fourth dominating power could only be described by Daniel as a beast dreadful, and terrible, and strong exceedingly, and having great iron teeth, a power that persecuted and ground down the saints and destroyed them. Here, it must have seemed, was the final stand of truth against the very embodiment of all evil, and the victory of lawlessness

and sin over all that is good and pure and holy. Here, surely, the Lion appearing in guise of this terrible beast, would overcome the last feeble resistance and finally and for all time put an end to the dominion of God in the earth.

As if in answer to that threat, there appeared on earth—a Lamb!

John stood, and cried "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world". Isaiah, long centuries before, had told of a lamb being led to slaughter in order that he might bear the sin of many. Whatever the spiritual powers of evil might have understood of that at the time, there can be little doubt they had been on the watch for some such development in the Divine Plan. However few there may have been among the people in the days of John's preaching who believed, it is certain that the Devil was one who did believe, and he acted quickly.

The oppressions and cruelties of the wild beast powers before the Lamb stood revealed upon earth were as nothing compared with the cold-blooded ferocity that marked Satan's working through the powers of this world from now on. John, the Revelator, looking back from his standpoint of a century later, saw this opening phase of the activities of the "dreadful and terrible beast" as a great red dragon, standing expectantly waiting to devour the man-child as soon as it should appear on the earth. History records how that no time was lost in launching the attack—the story of Herod's massacre of the infants in Bethlehem is witness to that. Without any delay the great red dragon swept into action, and the battle was joined.

The Book of Revelation is the splendid symbolism of that tremendous struggle. Thwarted in his first attempt to destroy the Lamb, the Dragon sought to suppress the further development of God's work in the earth. The man-child had been caught up unto heaven, beyond his reach; but he could attempt to ensure His perpetual banishment from the earth by destroying the remnant of His brethren, those that kept His commandments. By every diabolic device known to demonic or human ingenuity the Dragon sought to drive back to high heaven those principles of truth and righteousness that with such difficulty had found a lodgment in the earth. He failed; and the rising power of Christianity established itself. So the demon-inspired system of the Dragon gave place to a more subtle creation, another beast also having seven heads and ten horns as did the Dragon, but one owing its origin to earth rather than to heaven; claiming as its authority to rule, not the mandate conferred by pagan gods, demons of the power of the air, but that given by the great and the mighty

men, the kings and princes of the earth. To ordinary men and women the result was much the same; they were ruled from above with no say in the choice of their rulers. To the saintly followers of Jesus the result has been much the same also; if anything the persecution was intensified. The martyrs began to cry out "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell upon the earth" but they were told to wait yet a little season; the time was not ripe.

So the apparently hopeless conflict went on, generation after generation of faithful witnesses for the faith and stalwart soldiers of the faith being laid low in death, waging a good warfare but giving place at last under the well-nigh irresistible savagery of the wild beast. The seven-headed monster exercised power for many weary centuries, but eventually even he became old and no longer so effective. With the rising tide of the power of the people characteristic of these later centuries of the Age there comes a fresh manifestation of the "dreadful and terrible" beast, a manifestation which owes its vitality, not to the energy and dominance of the kings and great men of the earth, but to the clamour and the surging strength of the masses, of the people. But the same unseen power remains behind the scenes, influencing and adapting this new development to serve his own ends. To this very day the Lion relentlessly pursues his attack on the Lamb and the people of the Lamb.

Now we are entering into the final stage of the conflict. The Lamb is being threatened as never before. Truth is in process of being crushed out of existence. Of all the ages that there have been since Pentecost, there has never been one in which belief in God and knowledge of Christ has had less hold on the masses. Not only do the forces of irreligion gather momentum and extend their scope, but the power of Antichrist steadily rises to its climax. There are men to-day who preach a new religion, the faith for which, they claim, the world is waiting. They speak of what they call "cosmic religion", meaning one that is a philosophy of life having no place for anything supernatural and no place for God. They claim that this "new religion", which is to meet the needs of twentieth century man, is superior to the idea of a God who rewards His favourites with Heaven and punishes His rejected with Hell—as though any intelligent Christian believed in such a travesty of God to-day anyway—and banishes the conception of "sin" as a morbid psychological condition. The nobility of man and the kindness of man and the unselfishness of man are all to be expressed through this new religion, it is said, and no account at all taken of the fact that in all history the rejection of religion

has invariably led to the loss of all those virtues. But there again, the Lion has "blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ . . . should shine unto them". (II Cor. 4. 4.)

Let us be under no misapprehension. We are not living in a world which is prepared to tolerate Christians and accept them as rather odd but harmless members of society. We are living in a world which is becoming increasingly intolerant of true Christianity and true Christians. The increasing godlessness and iniquity of this world is showing up in ever clearer relief against the background of Christian standards, and the world hates those standards because its own evil deeds are condemned by them. The imagery of the last assault against the forces of righteousness, given under the symbol of the Beast and his armies gathered to make war against the Rider on the White Horse and those that follow Him, is no empty metaphor. It betokens a very real conflict that is yet to take place, and the battle field is going to be the length and breadth of the whole world.

That is the day of Divine intervention. That is the day when the Beast is captured and cast into the fiery lake and utterly consumed. That is the day when the followers of the Beast are slain by the sword of the Rider on the White Horse—the victorious Lamb. But let no one imagine this militant imagery implies that the Lamb, at the end, lays aside His gospel of peace and takes up the weapons and methods of the Beast; in such case the Beast would have won the final victory after all. The symbol of a fierce and sanguinary conflict in which no quarter is asked or given, culminating in the utter destruction of the defeated enemy, is the only one adequately to express the sweeping, the crushing, the overwhelming nature of the final victory of righteousness over evil. But it must never be forgotten that the victory is only attained because the forces wielded by the victorious Lamb are forces that cannot be touched by material weapons; because in the long run love, and unselfishness, and self-sacrifice are superior to hate and greed and lust. The sin of man, accumulating its evil fruits through the centuries, has undone men at the last and the whole of their world is falling—crashing about their ears by the weight of its own corruption. If in that hour of final disaster they look up into the heavens and see the drawn sword of Divine Truth stretched out over their ruined institutions it will not be surprising if they admit that the Rider on the White Horse has made war on them and has conquered. The Roman emperor, Julian the Apostate, who spent his life endeavouring by all possible means to exterminate Christianity from the earth, mur-

mured as he died "*Thou hast conquered, O Galilean*". So will it be with those who have upheld the systems which in the last days form the final phase of the Beast; when they perceive the armies of heaven advancing to take over the control of this ruined earth they will realise that the Lamb that was slain has received power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. They will witness His receiving dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him; and they will speedily know that his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth; but because of that and in consequence of that, he shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied. "*He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand*", for the Lamb will have slain the Lion, and all peoples of the earth shall rejoice.

Men do not seek to get monopoly on anything except for evil and selfish purposes. The governments of this world have recognised the injustices resulting from monopolies, and seek to curb such by law. In the religious world many sects and parties claim monopoly on the truth for one reason or another. These claims are made with the same selfish spirit that men seek monopoly on worldly things. When a number can be persuaded into believing that certain ones have a monopoly on all truth, then that organization or individual has absolute power over its believers. Such believers will then find themselves in bondage with the privilege of free fellowship and free inquiry gone. Thus we see that a false doctrine brings with it a false spirit because as a rule such is introduced for selfish reasons. We may have the truth on ten different points, and only one error, but if that error dominates our lives we fail to be led by the Spirit of God.

(Bible Student Inquirer.)

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God's way of answering His people's prayers is not by removing the pressure but by increasing their strength to bear it.

* * *

There is no burden of the spirit but is lightened by kneeling under it.

* * *

Sorrow may be subdued by a calm courage and profound hope which are born of Christian experience.

A Covenant by Sacrifice

A Talk about
Consecration

It is only as we reach the higher ground of the New Testament that the true nature of the consecrated life comes to view. All standards and forms of consecration preceding the life and death of Jesus has been formal and ceremonial only, introduced to last only until the times of reformation which followed Jesus' resurrection and ascension to heaven. With Jesus came the beginning of the "better" things—which better things will not be complete till, through a new Covenant, Israel first, and then the whole world, has been brought into conformity with the Will of God.

But, when we have reached that higher New Testament ground, even then it will be only as we understand and appreciate the nature of the fundamental opposing moral qualities of holiness and sin, and the way these principles work out in daily life, that we shall realise to the full what consecration actually means. We shall find every thought, word, and deed involved in that act of dedication which we describe by the word "consecration". It could be an easy matter for us to make a grievously uncharitable mistake on the question of "consecration". Differences of temperament as well as of Christian growth and attainment could easily dispose us to think that those of lesser stature in Christ were not consecrated at all, or were inattentive to their covenant vows. We might be too ready to measure another by our own standards, and expect him to "toe" our own line. A deeper appreciation of what is involved in consecration will show us that it may mean more to some than to others, and that more is required of some than of others.

The dictionary defines "consecration" to mean "the act of setting apart to a holy use—to hallow; to devote". This definition may be understood readily enough of a building or a plot of land set apart for religious purposes, or even of a man who withdraws himself from all secular callings, and applies himself exclusively to a religious life. This, however, does not exhaust the meaning of the New Testament usage, for every true believer in the Lord, whether in "holy orders" or not is exhorted by the Lord and His Apostles not only to offer himself in consecration, but also to maintain that attitude of devotedness so long as life shall last. The unordained "lay" believer is no less exhorted to consecration than his clerical brother—and that exhortation applies while he follows his

ordinary secular calling in life. Hence, New Testament usage is wider in its meaning than the dictionary definition.

The employment of the words "consecrate" and "consecration" brings into use another set of terms, derived from Latin sources, to supplement the Anglo-Saxon and Greek terms already used. We have thus three sets of synonymous words by which we may describe the act of full surrender to God, and the life of obedience which should follow. The word "consecrate" corresponds to the Anglo-Saxon "Hallow" (or holiify) and the Greek "sanctify" while "consecration" is equivalent to the Anglo-Saxon "holy" and the Greek "sanctification". Thus a "consecrated life" is the same thing as a "holy life" or a "saintly life".

Now it is quite proper to ask "To what or whom is the consecrated object devoted, and to what degree is it devoted?" The reply might be that the follower of the Lord is devoted to the Will of God, to live or to die, according to His good pleasure. That is a good answer and in every way correct so far as it goes. But it needs further amplification and definition. What is the Will of God? Is it something that may be known with precision?

The Will of God has many phases or manifestations ranging from its local application in the small sphere of a single life to the vast universal plan that embraces the whole Creation. The Will of God provided for Calvary and all that is associated with that sublime sacrifice. But it did not begin with Calvary, nor with Sinai, nor with Abraham's call, nor yet in Eden, but far back along the highway of time, when God purposed that all things in heaven and earth should for all time be made subject to Christ (Col. 1. 20; Eph. 1. 10). This is an expression of His Will, comprehensive and absolute—towards which all succeeding Ages are contributing their quota—hence the call of Abraham with its unalterable Promise, the thunders and Covenant of Sinai, and even the tragedy of Calvary, are but outstanding steps by the way to that "far-off Divine event to which the whole creation moves". From those far distant days the eternal God made known that He had found One in whom Divine wisdom could have everlasting confidence to "Head-up" both righteous beings, and righteous principles. That in its largest sense is the Will of God; but every stage of the develop-

ment to that distant end is also accomplished according to the same over-ruling Will.

In consecration we behold a new and proper relationship of that sovereign Will to the small circle of an individual life. It brings the heart of a thenceforth willing child into alignment with its Father's good pleasure. The Will of God existed and pre-dated that little life by many ages but that act of submission brings that eternal Will into that little life to direct and use it for God's own ends. Consecration has brought that little life into alignment and harmony with an eternal purpose.

It is here that the fundamental moral issues underlying the whole Divine programme come into view, and give to the "act" and "life" of consecration their proper setting and value. It is very, very necessary to realise (with a very full realisation) that consecration relates the surrendered being to one side of the most intense antagonism which the whole wide universe, and the whole round of time has ever witnessed or can ever witness between the fundamental principles of sin and holiness, and between the two outstanding spirit beings who are their principal protagonists. God's Will is no "hole-in-the-corner" matter—it is no parochial affair. It is universal in its sphere, and will ultimately involve everyone and everything.

Lucifer's rebellion in the heavenly realms sent waves of disaffection universe-wide. It divided into two parts those bright sons of the morning who sang for joy at Creation's early dawn—who thenceforth took their places on this side or that of the contending forces. And as they then took their place, so have they continued to stand. Some of them are now called "spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places" (Eph. 6. 11-12); others are the "ministering spirits who are sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation" (Heb. 1. 14). From Lucifer the spirit of rebellion spread also to the earth and "sin entered into the world".

This spirit of conflict lies at the very heart of the universe and involves every thing or principle that is of good or ill to every intelligent being in heaven or earth. It is not enough to think of Satan and his rebellion in a loose indefinite sort of way, as though the frequent hindering or thwarting of God's saints, or his temptation of weak unstable souls, were the full scope of his activities. These are only incidentals—more in the nature of side issues to a far greater and more fundamental issue. Satan is a powerful rebel against Divine authority, and is fighting might and main for a kingdom. Driven forth from heaven, he is fighting with desperate determination to keep the kingdom which he and his evil minions have built up. Every evil device, every stratagem in iniquity is in his

hand to be employed to that end. And so far, he has every reason to think his rebellion a success, for he won over to his banners those bright angelic beings in the very course of heaven itself, and extended his empire also to the habitations of men.

It is this universal situation that lies behind God's invitation to His people to consecrate themselves to His Will. God has purposed, and pledged Himself on the inviolability of His Holy Name that all the earth shall yet be filled with His glory, and that no trace of sin or rebellion shall be tolerated beyond a pre-determined time. To that end God has been calling all who hate iniquity and love righteousness to enlist beneath His banners, and share with Him in the great task of cleansing both heaven and earth from their defiling stains. "Consecration" implies voluntary enlistment into the ranks of the armies of God in order to be trained and prepared for the great Battle of the Day of God Almighty. It implies the full acceptance of the Will of God as the supreme authority in life, and the full and complete repudiation of the claims of all other men or angels to have any control over the actions or desires.

Hitherto the antagonism between sin and holiness, and between Lucifer and God, has been more like the "pull" of two opposing magnets rather than the clash of open hostilities. Each man throughout the world has been like the compass-needle, possessed of some free swing but swinging towards this or that magnet, according to the power of its pull, and the degree of affinity between the magnet and the needle. Satanic power has exerted all its magnetism; Divine power has not!—hence the "Sin Magnet" has drawn and still draws by far the greater number within its "field". The record of human existence tells of an almost unrestricted permission for Satan to work his way. He poisoned and tainted the affections of almost every human heart and made it difficult for men to live amicably with his fellows. Man, under Satan's influence became more selfish and self-centred—imbued with the idea of self-possession. To obtain and acquire this self-centred, self-satisfying possession of the earth's bounties men stooped to lying, stealing, and other means of taking what they wanted. The strong man either subjugated and exploited his weaker brother, or slew him out of the way. In this way arose the first primitive kingships of antiquity, and the primal orders of society, from which the huge aggressive organisations, and the present world order has been evolved.

Concurrently with them have grown modes of life—customs, institutions and practices which hold the souls of men in thrall. The power of Satan over man is defined as tending to "adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry,

witch-craft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like". Thus, response to the Satanic magnet resolves itself down to acts of wickedness and darkness—the practical level of a sinful life. The world to-day is covetousness and selfishness writ large; the outgrowth of those smaller ancient systems which embodied, for ill, the principles of defiance and rebellion which Satan transplanted from heaven to earth in Eden days. And the whole system of Satanic control reduces itself to constant repetition, from generation to generation, of those various acts of wickedness which man has been taught to love and prefer by his Satanic master. Satan's "magnet" is over the whole Gentile system—it is his "world" and his "kingdom". It is of his building and is permeated with his spirit and his principles.

Into this predominantly Satanic "field" every son of Adam has been born. He has the taint of sin in his blood. The force of heredity and the power of environment constrain each one to run in its grooves. Into this predominating Satanic "field" of evil, God has sent His Word and His messengers to "draw" to Himself such men and women as have some regard for righteousness in their hearts. Enoch and Noah were the choicest products of "the world that was". Abraham, Joseph, Moses, and all the prophets were men drawn to the service of God. Since Pentecost God has been drawing those whose hearts have shown appreciation for righteousness. God has drawn them by the power enshrined in His Word, and by His Spirit, and, as men have willingly yielded themselves to His Will, His holy power has permeated their lives, and led them to a purer and nobler form of life. Self-centredness has given place to self-denial, while love of self has been displaced by a love for one's brother. It is to the point to note that the Apostles set this purer life as the standard of rectitude for the consecrated followers of the Lord. Note particularly the words of Paul in Eph. 4. 17, and onwards to Chap. 5. 20. The good actions required in the saints are set over against the evil deeds of the Gentiles, and the believer is exhorted to eschew the deeds of darkness. This also is the purport of the Apostle's appeal to the Romans (Chap. 6) to present their members unto God as instruments of righteousness, leading unto holiness—so that they shall not henceforth serve sin.

Consecration to God begins by turning one's back upon sin—that is, upon sinful acts—and seeking with all one's power to do those purer things which have God's approval. This means that the Satanic

magnet is attracting less strongly than heretofore, and that the Divine "pull" is getting stronger as the days go by. The reforming drunkard, the converted criminal, are standing on the first threshold of the consecrated life, and as they seek to walk in the ways of truth and rectitude, they become more aligned with God on the great fundamental issues of the Ages.

Consecration, therefore, means the voluntary enlistment of a life (which already has or is finding some affinity with righteousness) in the ranks which Almighty God is assembling and preparing in readiness for the ultimate conflict—the actual clash of hostilities—with which the reign of sin will be brought to an end. It matters not where one's ultimate destiny will be found, whether among the Church of the Firstborns, or among restored and purified Israel, or among the "Whosoever will" of the wider call of Rev. 22. 17, the general principle involved in consecration will remain the same. It will imply the acceptance of the sovereign Will of God as the supreme law of heart and life. It will imply the taking of a vow to withstand the enticing power of sin in every word, thought and act. It implies a pledge to pursue uprightness and transparent honesty in the daily round of life. It means that one would not withhold so little as one hay-seed from the equitable balance, nor one drop from the lawful measure, nor one hairs-breadth from the mete-yard. It means that no inaccurate or untruthful word would willingly be spoken—and that no man's character (to say nothing of his life) shall ever be in jeopardy or danger from our hand.

Thus in the practical matter-of-fact sphere of the daily life, various actions which are described as "fruits of the Spirit" (Gal. 5. 22-23) are set forth as the approved opposites of the evil modes of life peculiar to the world of the flesh and Satan. (Gal. 5. 19-21.) This mode of countering the evil act by the good; of the untruthful word by the true; of the evil thought by the pure, is but bringing the arena of the eternal conflict down to its lowest practical level; and it is on this level that consecration to the good and true, i.e., to the Will of God must begin. Whatever else may be involved in consecration to its higher phases, this lowlier phase carries right through for every man, no matter what his ultimate destiny comes to be. Call it conversion if we will, or describe it by other term, consecration begins by turning away from the path of sin (which is the path of Satan) into the path of virtue and righteousness.

It is a voluntary choice of sides in the eternal conflict—choosing the banners of the Lord, instead of the service of Satan.

THE QUIET TIME

"My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places."

REFLECTION

*Yes, think and thank! 'Twill lighten care,
And make thy pain less hard to bear.
Count up the mercies of to-day,
And discontent will flee away;
More calm and patient thou wilt grow,
While from thy lips thanksgivings flow.
Yes, think and thank! Look up and see
By faith the home prepared for thee,
Where neither weariness nor tears
Can ever come—nor pain, nor fears,
Think how 'twas bought—by Jesus' death—
And thank Him with thy latest breath.*

PROSPECT

When the Queen of Sheba saw the glories of Solomon, it is said (1 Kings 10. 5) "there was no more spirit in her" or, as we should put it to-day, "it took her breath away". Her astonishment at what she found, and her declaration that the half had not been told her, reminds us of the Scriptural declaration respecting the greater than Solomon and the wonderful kingdom glories in reservation for His faithful. We read, "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath in reservation for them that love Him". Now we know in part and see as through an obscure glass, but then we shall see as we are seen and know as we are known, and be like our Lord and share His glories.

DISCIPLINE

The family discipline is the discipline of love. Every step of it is kindness. There is no wrath or vengeance in any part of the process. The discipline of the school may be harsh and stern, but that of the family is love. We are sure of this and the consolation it affords is unutterable. Love will not wrong us, there will be no needless suffering; it is of the Lord. Good is the will of the Lord, he cannot wrong me or mine, He has made goodness and mercy to follow us all our days.

HOME INFLUENCE

Home religion is as important as personal religion, and is essential to it. The relationship between parents and children grows pure and dear when they all kneel together and ask the peace of God to rest on their home. Many of us remember the dear old days when at the family altar morning and evening prayers were offered together, and the Sunday evening hour, when we sang hymns, each choosing his favourite.

REJOICING

Christianity has too often been associated with gloom, both in our places of worship and in the lives of its adherents. When filled up with the Spirit of God, we shall be delivered from our icy coldness to the life exuberant, cordial and infectiously happy.

CHRISTIANS

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

CONSECRATION

Our little all is surely none too much to give to our God, to our Redeemer, to the cause of righteousness. A mistake made by many well-meaning people is the keeping back of a part of their heart for themselves. If we give the Lord nine-tenths of our heart and our will and reserve one-tenth, in the furthest recesses, it will but weaken and blemish our character, our success in Divine service. We will find ourselves making paths for selfishness and sin from the unconsecrated farthest corners all over the consecrated nine-tenths. Properly the Lord could not accept such a consecration under His call, "My son, give me thine heart".

BOLDNESS

*But be not thou as those whose mind
Is to the passing hour confined;
Let no ignoble fetters bind
Thy soul, as free as mountain wind.
Stand upright, speak thy thought, declare
The truth thou hast, that all may share,
Be bold; proclaim it everywhere;
They only live who bravely dare.*

A Sign and A Witness

Part I.—The Casting Down of Egypt

A Study in the
Millennial Visions
of Isaiah (Chap. 19)

The nineteenth chapter of Isaiah's prophecy was spoken in the ears of Israel at a time when Egypt, the great earthly power in which they had trusted for so long, was declining to its fall. It is one of the paradoxes of history that the nation that had held their forefathers in bondage for four centuries and from which they had been delivered by a signal exercise of Divine power should be the very nation to whom they would turn for protection only four centuries later. For something like four more centuries Israel flirted with Egypt, making agreements and alliances and generally looking to Egypt for the help they should have expected from God, and then Egypt and Israel fell together and the people of the Lord found they had been trusting, as Rab-Shakeh the general of Sennacherib's host on one occasion taunted them with trusting, on a broken reed which would pierce the hand of the man who was foolhardy enough to lean upon it.

Isaiah never wearied of warning his fellow-citizens of the weakness of Egypt and the folly of trusting in the Egyptians. His warnings were very generally unheeded and so disaster came upon the nation. The same warning comes to us; we have the same God and He still abides by the same principles. He will still deliver the nation that puts its trust in Him, and disaster will still overtake the nation that puts its trust in the arm of the flesh. Egypt in prophecy usually pictures the secular world in contrast to the Christian community which has separated itself from the world and no longer holds to its standards. So often, though, members or sections of that community do leave somewhat of their high ideals and lose something of their high faith, and begin to trust to an extent in the standards and policies and weapons of this world. When they do so, the burning words of Isaiah are to the point and applicable to them. "*Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help, and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord When the Lord shall stretch out his hand, both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is holpen shall fall down, and they all shall fall together.*" (Isa. 31. 1-3.) It is impossible not to notice the military "flavour" of these verses. If there is one particular aspect of this modern world that is represented more than

others by Egypt, it is the military aspect, the policies and principles and activities that have to do with war between nations. Israel looked to Egypt for protection because Egypt was a powerful military nation, and Israel had forgotten that her own mission was to demonstrate the power and efficacy of the rulership of God, a rulership which has no place for armed conflict between men. That is one of the greatest failures of organised Christianity to-day; in the face of the apparently overwhelming nature of those militarised forces which threaten our own orderly way of life they know of no effective defence than resource to the same weapons. It is not surprising therefore if, despite the rightness of the cause, they ultimately find that trust in carnal weapons and the policies of the unregenerate man leads to the same type of disasters in our day, that this same trust brought to Israel in their day.

Isaiah's nineteenth chapter had a message for his own generation and it has a message for us. In both cases the message is prophetic; it spoke, and speaks, of things to come. Like so many of Isaiah's visions, the Holy Spirit showed him, first, a picture of his own day and the consequences that would arise out of the political situation then existing, and then, by a swift transition of scene, took him forward into the world's day of judgment and showed him how the same wrong principles, followed this time by all the world, would bring about even greater trouble, but that behind it all was God, waiting to bless all His creatures when the due time for blessing had come. In this particular chapter the first fifteen verses picture the decline and fall of Egypt, from Isaiah's own day to her utter subjugation by Rome six or seven centuries later, and the last twenty verses picture the Divine restoration of Egypt in the days of the Kingdom—an Egypt that is no longer a symbol of militarism or of the policies of this world, but has become a co-partner with Israel the restored people of God, and is herself also blessed with the honoured title, given her by the Most High himself, of "Egypt my people". It is obvious from what we know of history and of the Divine Plan that this sequel must take us into the Millennial Age for its accomplishment, and it is in the golden days of that blessed Age therefore that the chapter closes.

"*The burden of Egypt*" (vs 1). This word "burden" is one that, from a root meaning "something carried" or lifted up, had come to signify a message delivered, an oracle or a prophecy. We sometimes use much the same term when we speak of the "burden" of an individual's message. In many cases, but not in all, the message is a condemnatory or warning one; but the idea of the word is really that of the charge laid upon the prophet himself to deliver the message and in this case the theme is a message concerning Egypt which Isaiah is under strong obligation to deliver.

"*The Lord rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt; and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt.*" (vs 1.) This is quite a remarkable passage. The next fourteen verses describe the literal ravaging of Egypt by her literal enemies, the Assyrians, but here the Lord Himself is pictured as leading the attack and, in His entrance to the land, destroying the idolatry thereof. Now that is just what we must accept, that the Lord God is overseeing and overruling the affairs of the nations in order to bring into full effect the provisions of His great Plan. In another place the Assyrians are called the "rod of God's anger" and even in the narratives of their impact upon the children of Israel it is plain to see that, all unknowingly, they were being used as His instruments in the diverting of human affairs to work out His own ultimate purposes. So here, now that the time had come to show Israel, and us through Israel, the futility of the arm of flesh, and the sin of ignoring Divine principles, the Lord allowed the Assyrian hosts to achieve successes they had never achieved before. In the spirit of prophecy, and the symbolism of the vision, that fact was shown in symbol by the Lord, the God of Israel, riding upon the heavens in His war-chariot of thunder clouds, advancing upon the proud empire of the Pharaohs with the multitudes of the Assyrian host behind him; and at that sight the gigantic, impassive statues of all the gods of Egypt took fright and fell down prostrate in their places, and the glory that was Egypt passed away for ever.

Just so will it be when the last great conflict of this Day of Trouble comes upon the world. The battle is called the Battle of the Great Day of God Almighty. It is a conflict between contending factions among mankind but it is the overruling power of God that has caused the elements of that conflict so to converge together that the battle takes place when it does. The contestants do not know that; their motives are greed and hate and lust for power, just as were those of the Assyrians advancing to the destruction of Egypt in Isaiah's day; but all unknowingly they will be

fulfilling the purposes of God, and when the conflict is ended it will be the voice of God that calls for peace and commands the allegiance of the shattered remnants of both sides.

Now in verses 2 to 13 Isaiah declares that the Egyptians will fight the Egyptians; there is to be civil war amongst them, and the wisdom and discretion of their governors will vanish. They will seek to idols and wizards and the supernatural forces of evil in their extremity, as did Saul in his, when he visited the witch at En-dor. The people would be given into the hand of a cruel and fierce ruler and the land would languish. The Nile, upon which the prosperity of Egypt depends, would fail to send down sufficient water and there would be consequent famine; the industries of fishing and clothmaking from the native cotton and other textile plants would dwindle and disappear. The princes of Egypt would become as fools and the whole nation as incapable of guiding its own destinies as is a drunken man of walking a straight course. The picture is that of a people, highly organised in science and art and industry, as was Egypt, whose whole economic structure has broken down and which is very near to complete disintegration. It is the picture of a nation having a glorious past, but no future. The melancholy catalogue ends (vs. 15) with "*Neither shall there be any work for Egypt which the head or tail, branch or rush (king and prince, artisan and labourer, the "head" and the "tail" of society) may do*". For Egypt, it is the end.

Ezekiel saw the same thing at a time when the sentence was in process of execution, and he said of Egypt "*It shall be the basest of the kingdoms; neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations; for I will diminish them, that they shall no more rule over the nations. And it shall be no more the confidence of the house of Israel . . . but they shall know that I am the Lord their God*". (Ezek. 29. 15-16.) That word stands as condemnation, not only of Israel's confidence in Egypt three millenniums ago, but of the spiritual shortsightedness of every Christian in this day who trusts in worldly policies and national armaments to defend God's cause. And it stands as condemnation of every Christian body that trusts in the arm of flesh rather than in the Lord their God.

Historically, events came to pass just as Isaiah had foreseen. At just about the time he uttered the prophecy—certainly not many years later—the military power of Assyria, which had been steadily increasing for several centuries, for the first time came into collision with the military might of Egypt. At this period Egypt was governed by a powerful Ethiopic dynasty (the 25th dynasty of Pharaohs) and the warlike Ethiopians, always

superior in military skill and energy to the more peaceable native Egyptians, formed the mainstay of the Egyptian forces. These Ethiopians were not like the natives of Ethiopia of to-day; they were a highly civilised and physically powerful race, that for a long time dominated Egypt in the north and exercised a profound influence upon the history of nations. They were descendants of the sons of Cush who had migrated in ancient times from the Persian Gulf along the coast of Arabia and crossed the Red Sea into Africa. The Ethiopian viceroy in Egypt was Sabaca (called "So" in 2 Kings 17. 4, where he is shown as conspiring with Hoshea King of Israel against Assyria). The failure of that conspiracy and the consequent fall of Samaria and captivity of the "Ten Tribes" laid the way open for the Assyrian advance upon Egypt, and within a few more years Sargon of Assyria was besieging the southern Palestine city of Ashdod preparatory to invading Egypt itself. (Isaiah 20. 1 refers to this event; "In the year that Tartan came unto Ashdod, when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him, and fought against it, and took it".) This was the first outward evidence to Israel of the fulfilment of the prophecy of the 19th chapter. Six years later Sargon died and Sennacherib succeeded him; almost at once he was in the field and reduced Egypt to subjection, but suffered his memorable defeat outside Jerusalem when his army was destroyed in a single night by the "angel of the Lord". (Isa. 37.) After that, for twenty-six years there was a cessation of Assyrian aggression both in Egypt and Judea, which is remarkable when it is realised that this coincides with the latter years of the reign of Hezekiah, and God had promised him, after his miraculous recovery, that there would be peace in his days. (Isa. 39. 8.) Sennacherib never tried conclusions with the Lord God of Israel again, but after his death, his son and successor Esar-haddon (Isa. 37. 38) invaded Judah, took Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, then only twenty-three years old and already an idolater, prisoner to Babylon and went on into Egypt. This time the country was devastated. Esar-haddon well fills the role of the "cruel king" prophesied in Isa. 19. 4. The ancient city of Memphis, the capital ("Noph" in Isa. 19. 13) was completely destroyed and all its treasures, dating back for more than two thousand years, taken to Nineveh. Thebes, the second holy city (the "populous No" of Nahum 3. 8) suffered a like fate, and for only the second time—the first being the short-lived rule of the "Shepherd Kings"—since the sons of Ham entered the country a few generations after the Flood, Egypt became subject to an Asiatic power.

There were times of rebellion and of temporary national independence. Native Pharaohs exercised

control and held the foreigners at bay for a generation or two, but the doom of Egypt had been pronounced and slowly she sank under the pressure of Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Greek and finally Roman invasions until all pretence of national sovereignty was completely lost. To this day Egypt, the greatest military empire of the ancient world, remains a "base kingdom", a pawn and a catspaw for the great powers of the earth.

It is just at that point that the vision changes. "In that day" cries Isaiah suddenly "shall Egypt be like unto women, and it shall be afraid and fear because of the shaking of the hand of the Lord of hosts, which he shaketh over it. And the land of Judah shall be a terror unto Egypt, every one that maketh mention thereof shall be afraid in himself, because of the counsel of the Lord of hosts, which he hath determined against it". In one swift flash the Spirit-illuminated mind of the prophet was carried forward from his own day to "that day"—the Millennial Day is always in his mind when he says "in that day"—to a greater Egypt which, like its prototype of old, has come to the brink of destruction because of its reliance on the gods of war. But this time there is a difference. This greater Egypt, this militarily organised warlike world of the Last Day, broken down and at its wits end in consequence of the havoc wrought by its own internecine conflicts and the terrible effectiveness of its engines of war, is in terror of the land of Judah! That is a situation which can only have its application to the greater world, Egypt at the Time of the End, for it has never been true in history previously. From the time that Israel established itself in the land, through all the chequered history of the Judges and the Kings, the Captivity, the days of the Maccabees and then of the Dispersion, there has never been a time when Egypt went in terror of Judah. In terror, successively, of Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, Islam, yes, but never of despised Judah. It is only now, when Israel is again established as a nation, and a vigorous, and self-assertive nation, that even the modern literal Egypt shows any signs for apprehension. The fulfilment must be a future and not a past event and therefore take its place as an element in the order of events that characterises the dawning of the Millennium. And the association of the name of the Lord of Hosts with the cause of the "terror" certifies that it is not going to be in consequence of any temporary political or military success the present State of Israel is destined to achieve, for that State is founded, like all the Gentile powers, on that very principle of military force that stands condemned in the sight of God, the very principle that in this our day is entering into judgment. It is going to

be in consequence of the fact that Judah is backed by the power of God.

The conclusion, therefore, is that this "terror" with which "Egypt" views Judah refers to the same thing that is described 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.*" The "terror" is due to the fact that a righteous nation, led by the "Ancient Worthies", will be taking up its destined work and impressing the peoples around with a consciousness of the fact that God is working mightily in earth's affairs and that the days of injustice and unrighteousness are numbered.

The Authorised Version inserts a paragraph mark at this point, indicating that a new section of the narrative now begins. That is rightly done, for at this point the reconstruction of this world-Egypt, that has seen the sign of the Kingdom in the fact of restored Judah, commences. From now on, the healing and reconciliation of Egypt commences, and this is Millennial work indeed. The language of Egypt becomes the language of holiness; the cities of Egypt are sacred to the Lord; the altar of offering is set up in the midst of the land and the stone of witness at its border. The Saviour appears, and the Egyptians hail him and worship him; there is no more any war or enmity between the nations but all are one in the brotherhood of mankind and all are blessed of God. These are the things that Isaiah saw and recorded in verses 18-25 of this thrilling chapter, things that we shall go on to examine in the detail that they deserve.

(To be concluded next month)

At one of his meetings in New York, Dwight L. Moody, the evangelist, quoted this sentiment in beginning his address: "The Bible is a lamp to direct us; a bit to restrain us, a sword to defend us; water to wash us; fire to inflame us; salt to season us; milk to nourish us; rain to refresh us; treasures to enrich us; and a key to unlock for us heaven's gate". All this it is, he said, and much more. The man who came to a meeting to get an anointing that would last a lifetime was compared to the man who ate a breakfast to last a lifetime. Daily, hourly feeding on the Word is necessary, if the soul would grow.

* * *

If we but trusted our hearts instead of our eyes, we should know that God is the soul's circumstance, and His infinitude is its breathing-space.

He who would continue to be taught of the Lord must continue to listen for His voice, continue to be in the hearing and obeying attitude of heart. The difficulty with some apparently is that their own wills are not fully extinct, dead—that their consecration is not complete; hence while consecrated enough to wish not to disobey the Lord's voice, they have certain ideas of their own respecting what His voice should say, and they prefer to interpret His message in conformity to their own preferences: they will to do more or less their own wills, and will to hear the Lord's voice directing them in accordance with their own wills. This is a most dangerous situation and is generally accompanied by self-conceit and self-assertion and will ultimately lead far from the Christian's goal. Let each of us resolve by the Lord's grace that we will out of an honest heart continually seek to hear the pure Word of God, and that with a desire to obey it as far as we are able.

* * *

From cover to cover Moody believed the Bible. A man brought a difficult passage to him with this question:

"How do you explain that, Mr. Moody?"

"I don't explain it."

"Well, how do you interpret it?"

"I don't interpret it."

"How do you understand it?"

"I don't understand it."

"Well, what do you do with it?"

"I don't do anything with it."

"You don't believe it, do you?"

"Certainly, I believe it. There are lots of things I believe that I don't understand. There are a good many things in astronomy, a good many things about my own system that I don't understand, yet I believe them. I am glad there are heights in that Book which I haven't been able to climb. I am glad there are depths I haven't been able to fathom. It is the best proof that the Book came from God."

"But you don't believe in the Old Testament just as you do in the New Testament?"

"Yes I do. We have one Bible, not two. The very things in the Old Testament that men cavil at the most to-day are the things the Son of Man set His seal to when He was down here, and it isn't good policy for a servant to be above his master. The Master believed these things."

* * *

Before Dwight L. Moody, the great revivalist, came to London, one fearful questioner had suggested that he print his creed before coming. "My creed is in print", Moody replied. "It is found in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah."

Out of the Ivory Palaces

*"Blow upon my garden
that the spices thereof
may flow out"*

"YE ARE CHRIST'S!"

"YE ARE CHRIST'S!" oh yes; I know it! for
He bought me with His blood;
And I never can forget it, all the way His feet
have trod,
In His hands are strength and healing, in His face
eternal love.
How I long to be just like Him in the Father's
house above!

"LIFE IS YOURS:" oh yes; I have it—having
all in God's dear Son;
He began "the life" within me, and He'll work
till all is done.
His eternal mind inspires me, breathing through
His holy Word,
So I'm resting in the keeping of the Spirit's voice
I've heard.

"DEATH IS YOURS:" oh yes: but vanquished
—for "the Son of God" has died:
With His righteousness I'm clothed: in His life
I'm sanctified.
He is coming soon to take me, so I'm watching at
His gate;
As I long for His appearing, I am serving while
I wait.

"PRESENT THINGS!" oh yes: I use them as
I cross the ocean's foam,
On the voyage of life's journey to my Lord's eternal
home.
His own guide-book is my treasure, and His life
boat cannot sink;
Christ, the Captain, gives me daily more than I
could ask or think.

"THINGS TO COME:" O depths of riches!
all God's promises are sure;
And through these I'm made partaker of the life
which shall endure.
In the "Times of Restitution" of the "all things"
He hath made,
I shall evermore behold Him in the light which
cannot fade.

"IN THE WORLD:" I live above it—all the
mammon with its load;
For I've found the "Enoch" secret—how to walk
along with God;

Christ is risen. He lives in me; and all power to
Him is given;
Thus, He'll use me for His glory till He takes me
home to heaven.

"THANKS TO GOD"

Thanks to God for my Redeemer,
Thanks for all Thou dost provide;
Thanks for times now but a memory:
Thanks for Jesus by my side.
Thanks to Him for flow'rs in spring-time:
Thanks for dark and cheerless days;
Thanks for tears by now forgotten:
Thanks for peace through all my ways.
Thanks for prayers that Thou hast answered,
Thanks for what Thou dost deny;
Thanks for storms that I have weathered,
Thanks for all Thou dost supply.
Thanks for pain and thanks for pleasure,
Thanks for comfort in despair;
Thanks for grace that none can measure,
Thanks for love beyond compare.
Thanks for roses by the wayside;
Thanks for thorns their stems contain;
Thanks for home and thanks for fireside,
Thanks for hope, that sweet refrain.
Thanks for joy and thanks for sorrow,
Thanks for heavenly peace with Thee;
Thanks for hope in God's tomorrow,
Thanks through all eternity.

It is not necessary to be always audibly speaking
to God in prayer, or always to be hearing from
God by the ministry of His Word to have com-
munion with Him. There is an inarticulate fellow-
ship more sweet than words. The little child can
sit all day long beside its busy mother, and, although
few words are spoken on either side, both being
busy, the one in his absorbing play, the other in
her engrossing work, yet both are in perfect fellow-
ship. The child knows that mother is there, mother
knows the child is all right.

How comforting and glorious to feel that every
little thing he does is touched with the consciousness
of the Father's presence, and the sense of His
approval and blessing!

May God help us to keep this spirit of childhood
—that is, our spirit of Sonship, undiminished, to
the end.

The Three Epistles of John

Comments on the writings
of the "Beloved Apostle"

Part VI. I John 2. 9-11.

After showing his readers that the man who claims to know God and does not keep His commandments is grievously in error, John leads their minds to an even more searching question. What about the man who claims to know God but does not love his own brother in the faith? This is another aspect of practical Christianity, of the Christian faith in everyday life. "*He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.*" This word "hateth" has a wide range of meaning in the Greek. It is "*miseo*" and does mean the evil thing we call "hate", in many instances, but it also can and does denote disesteem or indifference. It is not necessarily a question of departing so far from Christian principles as to allow the evil passions of hate and malice to take possession of the mind and heart; it also includes the act of despising or ignoring, being indifferent toward, the person and the interests of one's brother in the faith. "One is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren" is the standard laid down, and to which we are all required to conform. Those whom our Lord has given us to be our brethren must be received and treated as such; and even then not as it were of constraint or compulsion, but spontaneously and of our own free will. "*We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.*" Later on in this epistle John returns to this point and puts the question "*He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?*" (1 John 4. 20.) It is clear that in his mind this question of brotherly love is of the utmost importance. Perhaps John had learned, better than any of his fellow apostles, the lessons of those times of dispute and wrangling when they were with Jesus and some had sought to gain pre-eminence over the others. Perhaps he had realised more than most the spirit that was being inculcated by Jesus when he reproved those who in mistaken zeal would have called down fire from heaven upon some misguided villagers, and would have forbidden those whom they found casting out demons in the name of Jesus although following not with Him. There was so much they must needs learn before they could be "made perfect in love"; John, here at the end of a busy and devoted life, was perhaps in a position to have learned more deeply than the rest what was meant

by the magic phrase "the love of the brethren". Sometimes the meaning of this expression to those who lived in New Testament times comes out in the narratives in a totally unexpected manner. The wonderful little letter written to Philemon by Paul is as lovely a gem of brotherly love as can be found anywhere in the whole of the Scriptures. "Without thy mind would I do nothing" said Paul. What an example of true humility and Christian consideration! Paul, the chief of the Apostles, must of all men have surely possessed the conceded right to require or expect the ready assent of Philemon to his request; but no, he would win his consent by love or not at all. "Yea, brother" he writes, "let me have joy of thee in the Lord". The affectionate manner in which he refers to his co-labourers speaks volumes. "Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you" "Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellow soldier" "Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord". So many references there are which show what the love and fellowship, no less than the ministry and service, of these loyal ones meant to the great Apostle of the Gentiles. And no doubt John had a similar experience.

The ease of falling into the condition of "hating" or failing properly to esteem or care for the interests of one's brother is shown in passages such as Romans 14 where Paul enjoins us not to destroy with our "meat" our brother for whom Christ died. There are times when for love of our brother we must impose some self discipline upon ourselves that he be not stumbled. To cause a brother to stumble when one could have prevented that stumbling by the exercise of some personal self-denial is surely one example of "hating" our brother within the meaning of this text, and an evidence that we are measurably still in darkness.

James, in his epistle, leads our thoughts in a different direction. He speaks of the brothers or sisters who are destitute of daily food, and of our obligation in such case to do what we can to give those things whereby they may be warmed and filled. In so many ways in life do we come up against these words, "*he that hateth his brother is in darkness*", and it is only as we do in very truth manifest true love and kindness towards those who are Christ's that we can be said to be walking in the light of the Lord.

Therefore, concludes John "he that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes" (vs. 10-11).

This verse is the end of a long warning commencing at verse 6 of chapter 1. In that warning John has traced the course of the disciple who has turned, at the first ever so imperceptibly, from walking in the light to walking in darkness. From failing to attain and maintain true fellowship with God he descends to a wrong understanding of his true position before God, claiming to be literally sinless, whereas no man is actually so. From that there is a retrogression to failure to keep God's commandments and from that to a position of antagonism towards the brethren of Christ. At that point he enters into the darkness which blinds his eyes so that he knows not the direction in which he is going and is unable any more to perceive the light of the truth of God. It is significant that the first step in this drifting away from the light is loss of fellowship with God. "If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." It is a point that maybe ought to be stressed more than is usually done, that the first effect of our consecration is entry into communion, fellowship with God. In our progression toward Divine things we first of all accept Jesus Christ as our Saviour and are justified by faith, in that acceptance and the belief that prompted it. Then—and not until then—do we properly hear and understand the call to consecration of heart and life and all our powers and possessions and abilities. "My son, give me thine heart"! The result of our Father's acceptance of that consecration is that we become His sons. "Now are we the sons of God"; the Father hath bestowed great "manner of love" upon us, that we should be called by that honoured name. By virtue of that fact we came under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in a manner that would have been impossible otherwise. We have been delivered from the kingdom of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear son. The fellowship into which we enter is not only a fellowship of the "saints" here below, a communion that can be seen and experienced in tangible fashion, as when we come together in conventions and assemblies and the like; it is also a fellowship in which we, believers on earth, are included with God in heaven. The medium of that fellowship is prayer, and meditation, and a silent lifting of the heart to God in worship and adoration and gratitude amid the manifold activities and interests of the day. That is the fellowship that we each ought to have with

Him and which can be ours and assuredly is ours if we continue to walk in the light. Without sincerity of heart and purity of mind and fixedness of purpose that fellowship cannot endure. Without the consciousness that we are constantly endeavouring, however imperfectly, to carry out our covenant of consecration to Him and become a vehicle of His purposes, a tool in His hand, a vessel ready for His use, the communion is interrupted, the light fades from the sky—and we commence to walk in darkness.

Perhaps John's greatest point here is that we must appraise the situation intelligently. We must not delude or deceive ourselves. Unless we continue in the right attitude of heart toward our Father in heaven and our brethren on earth we cannot possibly remain in fellowship with God. Unless we hold the right understanding of sin, the basis of our cleansing from sin, and the nature of the standing we have before God, we cannot remain in fellowship with Him. Unless we come into harmony with His ways and to the utmost of our powers obey His commandments, that fellowship cannot exist. In this long appeal of warning which comes to us with all the urgency that the "beloved disciple" can infuse into his words, we are reminded solemnly and intensely of the great fundamentals of our acceptance with God. Observe the orderly fashion in which they are set out, as if to command our closest attention; the four stages of the Christian life, briefly outlined in these few verses.

First: Admission of sin—*repentance*. (Chap. 1. vs. 8-10.)

Second: Cleansing in Christ—*justification*. (Chap. 2. vs. 1-2.)

Third: Acceptance of His commandments—*consecration*. (Chap. 2. vs. 3-5.)

Fourth: Abiding in Him—*sanctification*. (Chap. 2. vs. 6-9.)

The man who hates his brother has lost all this and is back where he started—in the darkness, stumbling and staggering uncertainly, not knowing whither he is going, and at every step straying farther and farther from the true path. John is not really saying that his readers are like that: in his next exhortation he will express his confidence in their right standing before the Father, but here in this opening chapter of the epistle he does draw aside the curtain, as it were, and show them—and us through them—the tragic end of those who because of lack of love and zeal and sincerity take the path into what Bunyan called "By-path Meadow" and never find the way back.

(To be continued)



THE QUESTION BOX



Q. Can the "Deliverer" of Romans 11. 26 operate before the Ancient Worthies are established in power? (Psa. 45. 16; Luke 13. 28-29.) Does not all creation (marginal reading) including the Jews wait for the "manifestation of the sons of God"—God's great "seed" and the channel of blessing. Is there any other channel of blessing? (Heb. 1. 1-2.)

* * *

A. Paul quotes the Old Testament as saying "There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob". The Hebrew text is not quite the same; it runs (Isa. 59-20) "And the Redeemer shall come to Zion and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord". Paul was evidently quoting from the Septuagint, the Greek Bible which was in general use in his day, the text of which reads "And the deliverer shall come for Zion's sake, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob". Now there are three distinct thoughts here and yet all are true. The Redeemer or Deliverer comes to Zion, He comes for Zion's sake, and He comes out of Zion for general salvation. That Redeemer is Christ; we need be in no doubt about that; but His "coming" is in two phases. Zion is Jerusalem; the reference here is quite apparently to the earthly political government to be set up at Jerusalem when the Kingdom on earth is established, the system under which the law of the Lord is to "go forth from Jerusalem". Now the Redeemer is to come to Zion, Jerusalem, the earthly servant; but when He thus comes His Church will be with Him. He does not assert any kind of kingly power in the earth until His Bride is complete and the "marriage feast" has taken place. This is the time of which it is said "then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father". Following that there is the other phase, when the Redeemer will come out of Zion and extend the blessings of His Millennial Government, first to the earthly "Seed of Abraham" gathered in the Holy Land, and then to all the world of mankind everywhere. Now at that time the Ancient Worthies will most assuredly be established in power, for they are to be the agents in administering this law and this knowledge of the Kingdom. They are to be the intermediaries, so to speak, between Christ and His Church, who will be spiritual beings normally unobserved by human sense, and all mankind.

The first work of this Deliverer is to "turn away ungodliness from Jacob" or at least to come to those "who turn from transgression in Jacob".

"Jacob" when used prophetically or symbolically always applies to the earthly "Seed" of Abraham, the people of Israel in the Holy Land of that day, and this is only what we are led to expect from other Scriptures, that the first national conversion to earth's new King will be of that people over whom the Ancient Worthies are directly ruling. Now it is obvious that these Ancient Worthies must return from the dead at some time before this manifestation of the Lord Jesus Christ and His assumption of Kingly power, in order that they might gain the necessary knowledge of world events and progress to those places of authority in the national affairs of Israel that will enable them to take the lead in the closing troubles of this "Time of the End", as Zechariah indicates they will. But their resurrection cannot precede the resurrection of the Church, for that of the Church is the "First Resurrection". We should expect, therefore, in order, first, the "change" of the last members of Christ's Church to be with Him in the heavens, second, the raising to earthly life of the Ancient Worthies and their gradual coming into prominence (without their identity necessarily being known); third, the last feature of the Time of Trouble, the final attempt of the hosts of "Gog and Magog" (Ezekiel 38 and 39) to subdue God's people, and their crushing defeat, and then, finally, that long-looked for time when the returned Lord, with His "saints", manifests His power in a universally recognised manner and commands obedience to His new Kingdom of righteousness. That is when the Deliverer will have come to Zion. This is the "manifestation of the Sons of God" spoken of by Paul in Rom. 8. 19 for which the whole creation is waiting. This is God's channel of blessing and there will be no other channel. Those blessings will come from Christ, first through His Church, thence through the Ancient Worthies, thence through Natural Israel, thence to all mankind.

Such power as the Ancient Worthies may possess prior to this event will only be within the confines of their own land. They will without doubt have been accepted as Israel's leaders and there will be a measure of national faith before the last onslaught of their foes. "The governors of Judah shall say in their hearts, 'The inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem shall be my strength in the Lord of Hosts their God,'" says Zechariah. But their real power, their power over the nations to proclaim and administer the laws of the Kingdom, cannot begin until the Redeemer has "come to Zion", until earth's new King has assumed His rightful power and commenced His reign over the earth.

BOOK REVIEWS

"*Mary of Bethany*" (Loane) Marshall, Morgan & Scott. 126 pp. 5/-. (By post 6/- or \$1.00.)

This is a most pleasurable written study of Martha, the sister of Mary and Lazarus, drawn from all that can be deduced from the Scriptures concerning her life and activities and character. It commences with a prologue describing the village of Bethany, passing on to an account of the household and the incidents connected therewith, progressing then to the graveside, where gloom, grief and death are contrasted with light, love and life, and concluding with the supper in the house and an epilogue enshrining the story of the alabaster box. Canon Loane has written a book which does not profess to be abstruse or "deep," but describes in simple and homely fashion the everyday life and circumstances of a family that Jesus dearly loved.

"*The Old Testament in the Church*" (Woods) S.P.C.K. 144 pp. Index 9/6d. (By post 10/6d. or \$1.50.)

This is a scholarly work and essentially one for students. The author takes up the various aspects of the Old Testament—science, ethics, philosophy, history—and examines them from the standpoint of progressive revelation in religion. He quotes copiously from writers modern and ancient, always giving his sources, and endeavours to show what basic Christianity has in the Old Testament. He leans heavily upon the conclusions of modern critical scholarship at the expense, one fears, of adequate belief in the power and manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the narratives. We cannot agree with him, for example, that the "compelling words" of the prophets "cannot be explained by a theory of mystical insights given to individuals" (p. 25) for St. Peter expressly declares that holy men of old spake and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit; without the "mystical insight" they were given they could never have become the reliable guides to Divine purposes that they are in fact to us. His rather casual dismissal of books such as Canticles and Ecclesiastes will seem strange to Bible students who find in these books a wealth of meaning and of teaching. It is a pity that the work has these—from our point of view—defects; its quite obvious allegiance to modern criticism obviously lessens its value to those who consider so much of that criticism damaging rather than helpful to the Word of God.

"*The Bible in Britain*" (Harrison) Thos. Nelson & Sons. 200 pp. 7/6d. (by post 8/6d. or \$1.25).

A most useful and interesting book giving the story of Bible translations in England from earliest times to the present day. The account is prefaced by a short outline of the manuscripts and early renderings back to the second century A.D., upon which our Bible is based, and then takes up the story from Anglo-Saxon times and traces the whole course of Bible translation, printing and publishing, from the days of Bede and Alfred the Great, to Wycliffe, Tyndale and Coverdale; the Great Bible, the Bishops Bible, the Authorised Version; all in stately panorama until the present day is reached. Vivid backgrounds of English life in those past centuries enhance the interest of the book. It is furnished with twelve full page facsimile reproductions of various ancient editions or manuscripts. Canon Harrison's book is a stirring record of the triumphs and vicissitudes that have attended the preservation, in England, of the Word that "liveth and abideth for ever", and a portrait gallery of the men who gave their lives in the service of that Word, and to whom, in the providence of God, we owe its possession to-day.

Covetousness is not the desire for more blessings for ourselves, but an enviousness of the possessions of others, and a desire to appropriate them for ourselves. It is akin to envy but worse, because it goes further. Someone has said, "Envy makes a weakling; covetousness a fiend". Standing as it does as the last of a series of commandments, this one, as it were, casts a reflection upon all which precede it—it is the climax of all the commandments respecting our relationship to our fellowman; it takes hold of the thoughts, whereas the others take hold upon the words and deeds. Of it Canon Farrar has said:—

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The following tracts are supplied free on request, stating quantity that can usefully be distributed. The Tract Fund is supported entirely by voluntary offerings.

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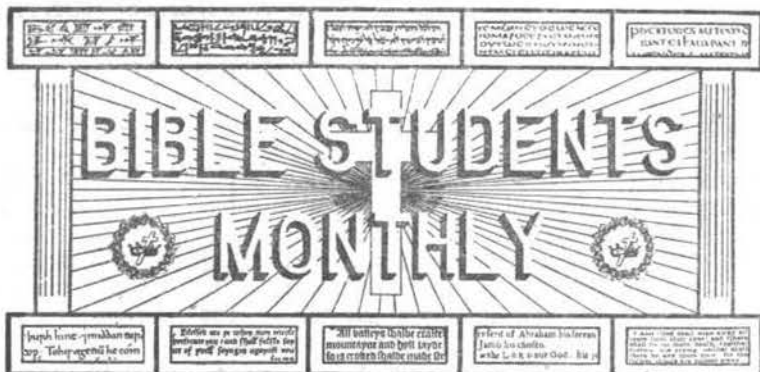
101	Times of Restitution.	109	Creation of Man.
102	Call of the Church.	110	The Second Advent.
103	Day of Judgment.	111	Armageddon.
104	Where are the Dead?	112	Restoration of Israel.
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Thou, therefore, endure
hardness as a good
soldier of Jesus Christ.



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JULY, 1950

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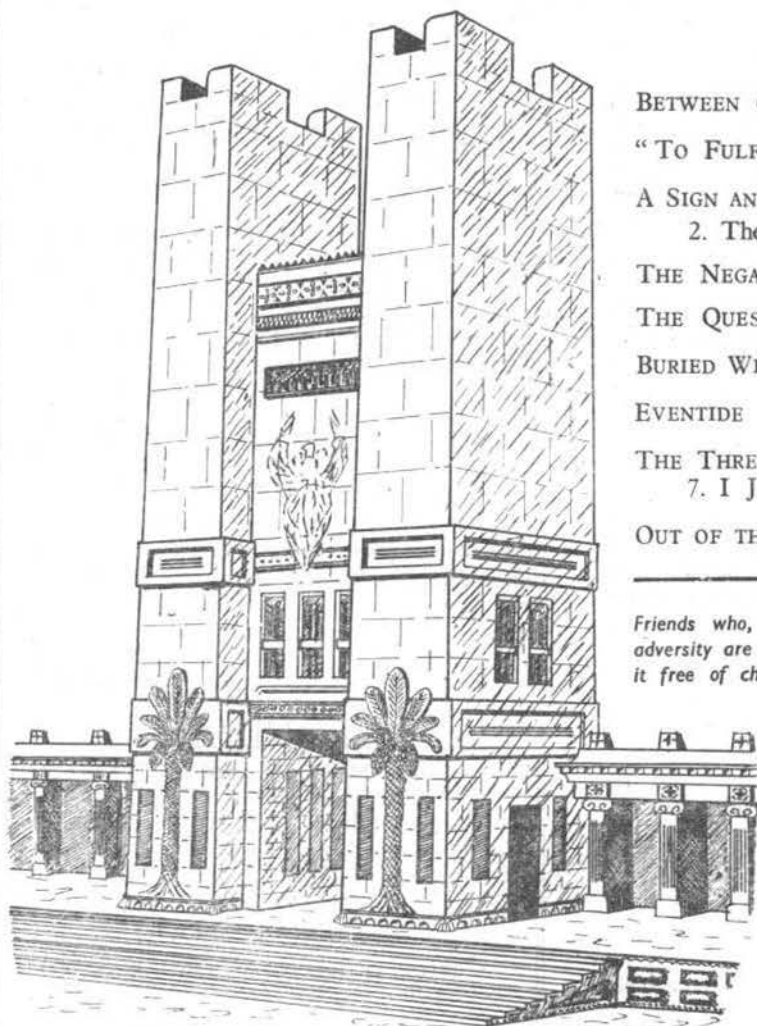
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Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

The friends at Cardiff announce a Home-Gathering, to be held in that city on Saturday and Sunday, 23rd and 24th September, 1950. The Saturday meetings will be at the usual meeting-place, 35, Windsor Place, and the Sunday meetings at the Pavilion Cafe, St. Mary Street. The visiting speakers are Bros. S. H. French (London), W. F. Fox (Yeovil) and W. Pritchard (Bristol). The brethren arranging this gathering say "remembering the happy occasion experienced last year we look forward confidently to a season of spiritual refreshment and vision on this, another such occasion". Needless to say, a warm welcome awaits all who can manage to attend this gathering.

* * *

The London General Convention sponsored by the Central London, Forest Gate, Putney, Welling and Windsor classes will, D.V., be held again this year during the August Bank Holiday week-end—August 5th, 6th and 7th. It is anticipated that an Immersion service will be arranged. For further information write the Convention Secretary, Bro. G. H. Jennings, Grove House, Roding Lane South, Ilford, Essex. For accommodation requirements address Bro. H. Charlton, Ryvers Farm, London Road, Langley, Bucks.

* * *

It seems necessary once again to remind some British readers of the "Herald" that it is illegal to send postal orders, or money in any form, to America in correspondence. If intercepted it is liable to be confiscated. All subscriptions to the "Herald" from readers in Great Britain and Northern Ireland must be sent to the British address shown in every issue of the "Herald". The money is then sent to America under official arrangements which have been made. Will such readers please take careful note of this?

* * *

The Benevolent Fund is in the care of Bro. E. Allbon, 20, Sunnymede Drive, Ilford, Essex. Donations intended for the Fund, and all other correspondence in connection with the same, should be sent to Bro. Allbon.

* * *

From time to time friends have enquired if we can supply the Masoretic translation (alternatively known as "Margolis"). This is a translation of the Old Testament prepared by a committee of Jewish scholars and first published in 1917. It was intended to become the standard translation for English speaking Jews and to supersede that of

Leeser, which is fairly well-known amongst us. For some time it has been unobtainable but we are now able to supply a new edition from Welling upon request, at 13/6 post free. The book is a handsome and well-produced volume and contains a most useful introduction dealing with the origin and the various translations of the Hebrew Bible.

* * *

In order to clear our shelves of the remaining stocks of several booklets which will soon be out of print and will not be reprinted, we are offering parcels containing 30 such booklets for 6/- post free. Each parcel contains:—

- 6 "Parables of the Kingdom" 30 pp.
- 6 "Lucifer the Prince of Evil" 30 pp.
- 6 "Jacob's Trouble" (old style) 87 pp.
- 6 "Promise of His Presence" 56 pp.
- 6 "From a Prison Cell" 28 pp.

These booklets all present various aspects of our faith and are useful in presenting the message to others, and are mostly well known to our brethren. Lack of storage space renders it imperative that we clear these before other needed literature can be taken in, and we will be pleased therefore to send these parcels to those who desire to take advantage of this opportunity.

* * *

The material for "Millennial Message No. 4" is now being compiled and it will be appreciated if brethren and classes desiring to take quantities of this issue for distribution will let us know how many they require, during the next month, in order that we can budget for the quantity to print and have them sent directly upon publication. As with previous issues, they are supplied free of charge.

LONDON MONTHLY MEETING

Saturday, 15th July, 1950

6.30—8.30 p.m.

In the Tudor Hall
CAXTON HALL

Caxton Street, Westminster, S.W.1
5 mins. St. James Park Station and Victoria Street

Speakers: Bro. L. Kinsey (Brighton).
Bro. D. Nadal (Welling).

"TO FULFIL ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS" *Some thoughts on baptism*

John lifted up his eyes from the water in which he stood and beheld his cousin Jesus stepping into the stream to be baptised by him, and his whole being rebelled within him at the very thought. "I have need to be baptised of thee" he protested "and comest thou to me?" He knew, perhaps better than any other man, the spotless life of this One standing before him. Whether or no he had realised prior to this moment that the firstborn son of Mary was indeed the Messiah that he had been proclaiming for six months past, he well knew that of all men in Jewry this One least needed his baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Therefore he demurred, and in his idea of what was fitting would not lift his hand to baptise his cousin, until the quiet, compelling voice of Jesus broke down his resistance and induced compliance with the request. "*Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.*" (Matt. 3. 13-17.) So Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, led the way and set the example in the performance of a ceremonial symbol which His disciples, with but few exceptions, have followed ever since.

What is the significance of this act which has occupied so prominent a place in Christian thought and practice through the centuries? Is it nothing more than a ritual cleansing, a sign that the believer has been purified and made acceptable in God's sight and accepted into His Church, or does it indicate some deeper and more far-reaching truth? The fact that the Apostles and the Early Church attached so much importance to the ceremony—no less than thirteen instances are recorded in the Book of Acts—surely justifies at the very least some serious consideration of this subject.

"*Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness!*" What did our Lord mean? He himself, holy, harmless, separate from sinners, surely needed no "baptism of repentance for the remission of sins", which was the avowed purpose of John's baptism (Mark 1. 4). Neither did He dispute nor deny John's implied assertion that He needed no baptism of that nature. Quietly, nevertheless, He insisted upon going through the ceremony. That it marked some very definite change in His life and work is shown very clearly in the fact that at this time He began His ministry, a ministry that culminated three and a half years later in His death on the cross.

The word translated "righteousness" in this text is used in the New Testament for "righteousness" ninety-four times. It is the word that in a slightly different form is used for "justification", and its primary meaning is that of being right with God or doing the thing that is right with God. The Diaglott translates "it is becoming us to establish every ordinance" and this may express something of the thought, although the true meaning is undoubtedly that of "filling full", or fulfilling, the thing that is right with God. In other words, this is an instance of "Lo, I come, to do thy will, O God". And in so coming to Jordan and sinking beneath the waters, then rising again and going forth into a new life, Jesus was assuredly doing something that had a significance far greater than that of mere cleansing, a significance that touches things of the future life and the next world, penetrating into Ages which as yet have not dawned. What He did, must have been for His followers' sakes as well as His own, that they might understand the relation of this simple act to their own lives and standing before God, when in their turn they too came, as Jesus did when He was thirty years of age, to enter upon a life of consecration unto death for the salvation of the world.

It is usual to go back to the Old Testament for light on the ritual and the doctrines of the New Testament. In the case of baptism the Old Testament very nearly fails us; but not quite. There is no such thing as baptism in the Old Testament; the word is not mentioned and the children of Israel at no time in their history practised baptism. When John the Baptist waded into Jordan and commenced baptising repentant Jews for the remission of their sins he was instituting something entirely new. The idea of repentance was not new but this expressing of repentance by an outward act was. But John's baptism did have a basis and something of that basis is found in the Old Testament. The Law provided that those who came to the Lord with offerings and sacrifices must first be ceremonially clean by washing in water. The priest before being inducted into office was first washed in the great "Laver" in the Court of the Tabernacle. In that simple act and the consecration ceremony that succeeded it we have the principles upon which acceptance with God is achieved. *Cleansing—Anointing—Sacrifice*; that was the order of things in the duty of priests in

Israel and the same order prevails among Christians now. Repentance and belief in Christ brings justification by faith. That is the first step. That is cleansing. That is the truth lying behind Paul's word to the Ephesians when he declares that Christ gave Himself for His followers, the Church, "*that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word*" (Eph. 5. 26) and his declaration to Titus that Jesus saves us "*by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit*" (Titus 3. 5). The washing must come before the renewing.

That is only one aspect of the true baptism that lies behind the symbol, the ceremonial. The second aspect is that which follows the initial justification, and is best expressed in the words of Paul to the Romans (Rom. 6. 4-5) "*we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death . . .*" Here is a theme that has nothing to do with cleansing but everything to do with the dedication of life to death that out of death there might come eternal life. It has to do with the going into death of the few, following the One Who first went into death alone, that out of that death all might be received into life. And that in turn harks back to a truth that was first enunciated in New Testament days by Peter on the Day of Pentecost itself, that this coming of man into eternal life is really a restoration of that which existed at the first. "Times of Restitution of all things" he calls the day when this new life is to be extended to all men, for there was a day at the very beginning when man, newly created by the hand of God, had eternal life within his grasp.

It is because the surviving records of those far-off days are so scanty that we are not able completely to trace this aspect of the doctrine of baptism back to its probable origin in the days of the promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head (Gen. 3. 15). The Apostle Paul, whose knowledge of ancient lore was almost certainly far more profound than we to-day can easily realise, referred to something of this when he wrote in I Cor. 10. 2 of Israel, passing through the Red Sea, being "*baptised unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea*". That was not a baptism of cleansing; it was a baptism of separation, of dedication to the purposes of God that they might be a chosen people, a Royal Priesthood, ultimately to become an instrument in God's hand for the reconciliation of fallen man to Himself and the accomplishment of His purposes with them. To accomplish that end they must of necessity pass through the waters

that separate between fallen man in a sinful world and the eternal life that can only be achieved in God's world.

Peter must have seen something of that too when he likened Christian baptism to the historical incident of the Flood. In the days of the Ark, he says, a few were saved by water—were carried through the water and saved when all others perished—"the like figure whereunto baptism doth also now save us by the resurrection of Jesus Christ". (I Pet. 3. 21.) He certainly did not mean that a literal plunging of ourselves into the literal baptismal font will save us as the Ark, floating on the waters of the Deluge, carried to safety those who dwelt within it during that momentous twelve months. What he did mean, surely, was something very much akin to Paul's words about Israel's baptism in the Red Sea. Noah and his family were forever separated from an evil world, where sin reigned, by the waters of the Deluge, and they came forth into a new world which to them was a world of new and Divine life, a world where the Spirit of God could have full scope for the exercise of its beneficent power and the righteous live according to the dictates of their own pious hearts with none to make them afraid. The fact that in after days the world relapsed again into evil does not spoil the picture of the new, renovated world into which Noah and his family entered when they emerged from the Ark, nor of the fact that we who by baptism are separated just as surely from a doomed and dying world come forth to a new order of things which is ultimately to become the "desire of all nations".

Now it is a rather remarkable fact that in the mythologies of the ancient people from whom Abraham came, the present sinful world was considered to be separated from the original perfect and sinless world by water—a sea that was impassable to ordinary human beings and could only be crossed by the favour of the gods. What dim memory of some great historical fact is enshrined in that idea we shall probably never know, at least this side the Vail, but the vague outline of the belief remains and it has some bearing upon our subject. In the Babylonian story of the Flood the patriarch Noah, for his piety, was carried across the sea and given a dwelling-place among the gods in the "glory land". Only the pure in heart and righteous of life could hope thus to traverse the waters and enter into eternal life. Even the evil spirits of the heavens could not cross them, but must forever remain with men in the world of sin (this is the belief that gave rise to the idea that the demons are unable to cross running water, a popular belief to which our Lord referred in

Matt. 13. 43 when he said that the unclean spirit, cast out of a man, "walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and finding none"). In order to symbolise this separation between the worlds of evil and good there was, in the great Temple of Marduk (Bel) at Babylon, a huge basin or tank of water, known as the "apsu" or "sea", and a ceremony very similar to the later washing of the Levitical priests was conducted there. As showing the similarity of ideas it is interesting again to note that the great Laver in Solomon's Temple is called in the Old Testament by this very name of "sea". (I Kings 7. 23-44; I Chron. 4. 2-15.) One of the oldest of Sumerian traditions tells how at the birth of Marduk or Bel, the god of Babylon, he was brought and baptised in that "sea" and thereupon became the Redeemer of mankind. Sometimes those legends and mythologies have been dismissed as inventions of the Devil; what is far more likely is that they represent distorted memories of what were once, in dim antediluvian days, a tolerably clear understanding of the Divine purposes. It might well be that our first parents during the nine centuries in which they lived and learned about God, were given some understanding that the promised Seed of whom God had spoken in the Garden must one day plunge beneath the waters of separation and of death that He might rise again in newness of life for the salvation of the world. There is some reason to believe that man's separation from Eden was brought about by the submersion of the Garden by the waters of the sea. That theme cannot be enlarged upon here, but if such should actually have been the case it becomes easier to understand why subsequent generations, as the world grew steadily older in sin and death, should look longingly back to that former golden age and wondrous garden from which the relentless sea had forever separated them, until the memory passed into a legend growing ever more dim with the passage of years. Logically, then, the only way back to the lost Paradise would be by a passage through the sea, and that in turn would lead to the realisation that the One Who was at the end to be man's Redeemer must Himself pass through that sea, alone, and emerge triumphant on the other side.

There we have what may be the foundation of this second and so much more important aspect of baptism. We who are buried *with* Christ by baptism into His death are forever separated from the world and its aims and interests; we have elected to follow Christ whithersoever He may lead—and He leads into those symbolic waters and beneath those waters and then out of those waters into a new life. Like as Christ was raised from the dead,

so we also rise to walk in newness of life. That new life is lived in this world, here and now, but because of that new life we are no longer of this world. We are in the world but not of the world. We have become citizens of the perfect world, the Paradise of righteousness which lies beyond the waters, the Paradise to which all men will attain when at last the waters are done away—they in the earthly phase of that Paradise, whereas those who went through the waters will be in the spiritual, heavenly phase.

That then is the vision before as we go down into the symbolic baptismal waters, when by the One Spirit we, individually, are baptised into the One Body (I Cor. 12. 13). We, here, are still in the world of death and suffering and all manner of evil. Over there, on the other side of the water, there is the glorious world of the future, Eden restored, the River of Life and the Trees of Life, and the Holy City, New Jerusalem, waiting to come down from God to man. But Eden cannot be restored to man, much as man needs it and, maybe, longs for it, until Christ's consecrated followers have followed Him into those waters and been planted together in the likeness of His death. Only then can they emerge also in the likeness of His resurrection (Rom. 6. 5). The world must wait until that has become an accomplished fact and the consecration of earthly life which is the real baptism has been consummated in actual death of the human frame and a glorious resurrection to spiritual being. "*We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.*" (I John 3. 2.) Until then "the earnest expectation of the creation *waiteth* for the manifestation of the sons of God" (Rom. 8. 19.) The measure of our desire to see evil brought to an end and all mankind ushered into everlasting happiness, and God's will done on earth as in heaven, will be revealed by the whole-heartedness with which we present our own selves in absolute dedication of self and consecration of life to our Heavenly Father, willingly accepting whatever in His providence is to be our experience in life, and seeking in every possible manner to be so fashioned and moulded by the all-powerful Holy Spirit of God that we shall ultimately become vessels fitted for His future purposes.

It is after consecration has become an established thing with us that we enter into the third aspect of baptism. The true baptism is not only cleansing; it is not only separation to holy things; it is also an entry into suffering. Suffering is an essential factor in the Divine Plan. We may not know—we do not know—just why that is so and just what redemptive or reformatory power is inherent in suffering, but the Scriptures show clearly that

it is so. Our Lord's death on the Cross provided the Ransom for man, but His life of suffering was the offering for sin by means of which man will ultimately be reconciled to God. Both are necessary in the Divine Plan. And with those who are Christ's consecrated followers, seeking to become joint-heirs with Him of the Kingdom and associated with Him as His "Bride" in the glory of all future ages, the fact that they are dead to the world and are ready to lay down life itself for the Lord and the Truth is not the only fruit of their lives that God can use for the salvation of mankind. He can, and will, also use the fruit of every act of sacrifice and every pang of suffering that there has been throughout those consecrated lives. We realise, and say, at times, that suffering and sacrifice plays an important part in the development of character. Perhaps we could never approach conformity to the Divine likeness without it. We do know that our Lord was made perfect through suffering, and the disciple is not greater than his Lord. Therefore our baptism is, beside a baptism of cleansing and a baptism of separation, a baptism of suffering. It was so with Jesus. "*I have a baptism to be baptised with*" He said "*and how am I straitened till it be accomplished.*" (Luke 12. 50.) When the mother of Zebedee's children, John and James, asked that her sons be given the chief places of honour in the Kingdom, Jesus asked them if they were able to be baptised with the baptism that He was baptised with. They assured Him that they were able. What innocent confidence they had, knowing not what the future held for them of suffering and persecution and death! Jesus knew. "*Ye shall indeed be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with.*" Perhaps He knew also that they would be faithful and come through triumphant at the end. In after days they must often have thought of their early joyous ignorance.

So it is with us. We enter the Narrow Way full of confidence—perhaps we think of our baptism principally as a cleansing; that it is also going to mean separation we see to some extent; that it will additionally involve suffering we see not at all. The revelation comes later, when we are becoming progressively stronger and more able to bear it. If then, when the trials of the way are more than usually oppressive, and affliction more than usually difficult to bear, and darkness seems to have overcome the light, and the things of this world to be overpowering the things of the Spirit, then is the time to remember that we who have entered the waters of baptism are half-way through to the glory land on the other side. We are in process of being buried with Him by baptism into His death, and the process in its working out may be a painful one

at times—but we shall rise again, and when we do rise again it will be in the likeness of His resurrection. "*I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.*" (Psa. 17. 15.)

Cleansing — separation — suffering; thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. How can we hold back longer from yielding "our reasonable service"? "*I beseech you, therefore, brethren*" pleads the great Apostle "*that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds . . .*" (Rom. 12. 1-2.) Will we not answer his plea with a joyous assent and a willing coming to God in full surrender?

What of the symbol? What of the simple, eloquent ceremony in which the believer, heart full of love to his Lord, testifies before his brethren of the decision that has already been taken and the consecration of life that has already been made, it may have been, a considerable time ago, within the privacy of the heart and mind? Our Master surely knew that some great value lies in this joyful ritual, some great blessing for the one thus symbolising his or her consecration. The fact that He Himself insisted upon leading the way for all His disciples in going down into the literal waters is surely evidence enough for that! So too, when about to leave them, He bade them go forth and teach all nations, baptising in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28. 19-20). The Book of Acts offers abundant testimony that the Apostles interpreted that instruction very literally and obeyed it very wholeheartedly, and the Church throughout all subsequent ages has done the same. Whatever may be our feelings as to the value and usefulness of ceremony and ritual, or whatever the reasons that may tend to deter from the outward symbolic performance of a rite that testifies to the inward surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ that has already taken place, do not let us allow them to silence the gentle, compelling tones of the One we love and serve. "*Nevertheless suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.*" He knows, better than we can ever hope to do, what source of strength, what stabilising and sustaining influence, the memory of that little ceremony may become to us in some dark or stressful experience of life that still lies ahead of us, in the unknown future.

"*See, here is water*" said the Ethiopian eunuch after Philip had expounded the words of life and opened his eyes. "*What doth hinder me to be baptised?*"

"If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest."

.....
 "And he went on his way rejoicing!"

So may we, having understood and experienced the true baptism of consecration to God and burial

into the death of Christ, follow that surrender with an outward testimony to our brethren—and to our Lord—in the fashion hallowed by Jesus Himself, so setting our feet firmly and straightly on the road that leads to the Kingdom, and going on our way . . . rejoicing!

A Sign and A Witness

Part 2.—The Raising Up of Egypt

A Study in the
 Millennial Visions
 of Isaiah (Chap. 19)

"In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the Lord of Hosts; one shall be called, The city of the sun." (Isa. 19. 18, margin.)

Six times in this passage does Isaiah use the expression "in that day". Each time it is used to introduce one of the characteristic features of Egypt's conversion and reconciliation to God, using Egypt as the symbol of the world of mankind "in that day". Particularly does Egypt picture the military and warlike aspect of the world, and hence this reconciliation that is pictured in this nineteenth chapter does show up in brighter relief than other prophetic writings the fact that "in that day" nations will no longer be at enmity but will live amicably and at peace with each other, in the knowledge and reverence of God.

In this 18th verse the stage of "terror" described in the preceding two verses have passed. The world is no longer in fear of this new thing that has come into the earth. They have now become used to the idea of a central world government operating from Jerusalem under the direction of the "Ancient Worthies", and although they do not as yet comprehend a great deal of the law that is going forth from Jerusalem they do, at least in the main, realise and accept the fact that it is going to be for their good. The world will be so sick of war and destruction by that time that it will at any rate be thankful to know that the time for all that has passed and that real security of life and limb and prospect of physical well-being is henceforth its lot. That realisation will undoubtedly sink first into the minds of most men before the deeper implications of this Millennial Day will have impressed themselves, and men appreciate that they are called and required to come to the Lord Jesus in full surrender of heart and life if they are to continue in the enjoyment of these blessings.

Five cities are to speak the language of Canaan. That the world will speak a "new language" is

fairly easy to appreciate. Men are to have turned to them a "pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent". (Zeph. 3. 9.) This promise indicates how the law of the Lord and the word of the Lord, going out from Jerusalem, will be understood and re-echoed by the world, and its terms repeated to each other by them, so that no man will need to "say to his neighbour 'know the Lord' for all shall know him, from the least of them unto the greatest". (Jer. 31. 34.) But what is the meaning of the somewhat strange expression "five cities" and why is it that one of them is called "The city of the sun"? (The text rendering "city of destruction" is incorrect and has been replaced by "city of the sun" in the margin.) It seems a strange limitation; had it been *seven* cities the idea of universal turning to the Lord could well have been attached to it in accordance with normal Scripture symbolism. None of the orthodox commentators has any suggestion to make. But during the preparation of this treatise one interesting fact came to light. In ancient times Egypt was divided for political purposes into forty-two provinces, twenty-two in Upper Egypt and twenty in Lower Egypt, each province having a capital city, sacred to one or another of the Egyptian gods. Of these forty-two provincial capitals, just *five* are mentioned in the Bible, and one of these five is the city of On, which in after days was called Heliopolis, a Greek word which means "city of the sun". The five cities so mentioned are:—

No (Greek *Thebes*) Jer. 46. 25, Ezek. 40. 13, Nah. 3. 18.

Hanes (*Herakleopolis*) Isa. 30. 4.

Noph (*Memphis*) Isa. 19. 13, Jer. 2. 16, 44. 1, 46. 9, Ezek. 30. 13.

On (*Heliopolis*) Gen. 41. 45, 46. 20.

Zoan (*Tanis*) Num. 13. 22, Psa. 78. 12, Isa. 19. 11, 30. 4, Ezek. 30. 14.

These five cities were scattered over the country, one in the Delta, two in Lower Egypt and two in

Upper Egypt. Is it possible that we have here an indication that the "cities of Egypt", the nations of mankind in the dawn of the Millennial Age, will only speak the "language of Canaan" by coming into contact with the Word of God? Five cities out of forty-two are symbolically to speak the new language. Five cities only of those forty-two are mentioned by name in the Old Testament; none of the others have any contact with its narratives or its prophecies. One of the five, at least, is definitely identified by the Holy Spirit through Isaiah, as Heliopolis, or On, the city of the sun, a city which from ancient times had been sacred to Itum, the god of the setting sun. If this is indeed the intention then we have in this verse a plain intimation that the world's salvation in the Millennial Day will depend upon two things; contact with the holy people of the Holy Land, and contact with the Word of God which is to be proclaimed from that land. The "five cities" of that future day would then automatically include all of mankind who have come into contact with the means that God has provided for their reconciliation, and those who will not avail themselves of those means and will not "make contact" must perforce remain unreconciled, until and unless the remedial judgments of the Millennial Age effect in them a change of heart.

"In that day shall there be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the Lord. And it shall be for a sign and for a witness unto the Lord of hosts in the land of Egypt: for they shall cry unto the Lord because of the oppressors, and he shall send them a Saviour, and a great one, and he shall deliver them" (vs 19-20). Moffatt puts the first phrase very clearly "an altar to the Eternal in the heart of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the Eternal on the frontier". There are two separate erections indicated here; "altar" is "mizbeach", meaning an altar for sacrifice or offering, and used in the Bible to describe the brassen altar in the Court of the Tabernacle, the incense altar in the Holy, the brassen altars of Solomon's and Ezekiel's Temples, the idolatrous altars of the land, and so on. "Pillar" is "matstebār", a monument or memorial set up to commemorate some event or agreement, such as the pillar set up by Absalom to keep his own memory alive (2. Sam. 18. 18), the pillar set up by Jacob to mark the spot where God had talked with him (Gen. 35. 14) and the pillar he set up to be a witness between himself and Laban (Gen. 31. 45). It is necessary to realise therefore that this verse speaks of an altar of offering being set up in the centre of the land of Egypt, and a pillar of witness at the border or frontier between Egypt

and Judah. Like the preceding and succeeding verses of this chapter, this verse is symbolic. "In that day", i.e., in the Millennial Age, there will be the altar of God, the place of approach to God, the place where acceptable offerings may be presented before God, in the very heart of the formerly evil and godless world of mankind. The world will no longer be able to ignore the message; neither will the Lord's messengers be universally despised and rejected. The time will have come when will be fulfilled the words of the Psalmist "*Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar*" (Psa. 51. 19). The coming of perfect men to God in whole-hearted consecration of life will be a common-place in that glad day, and this offering of perfect manhood to do the will of God will be a symbolic "offering of bullocks" upon the Millennial altar. The fact that a few verses farther on the Egyptians are pictured as being converted to the Lord shows that this symbolic altar "in the midst of the land" does denote the avenue of approach to God which will be open to all men during that Age.

The pillar at the border speaks of something different. It is this pillar that is the "sign and witness unto the Lord of Hosts" of vs 20 "for they shall cry unto the Lord because of the oppressors, and he shall send them a Saviour, and a great one, and he shall deliver them". The clue to the meaning of this symbolic "pillar" is probably to be found in the story of Jacob. When parting from Laban his father-in-law he set up a pillar to mark the boundary between their respective domains and to be a witness of the covenant they had made between themselves. "*This heap be witness, and this pillar be witness, that I will not pass over this heap to thee, and thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar unto me, for harm. The God of Abraham . . . judge betwixt us.*" (Gen. 31. 52-53.) That pillar stood as the sign and witness of a covenant of peace between Jacob and Laban, entered into in the name of God and with the blessing of God. So here in Isaiah, the pillar on the border of the land is a sign and a witness to a covenant of peace between Judah and Egypt under the power and protection of God. It is a sign and a witness of an alliance formed between the righteous nation which represents the nucleus of the Kingdom of God upon earth and the unrighteous world which, although it has opposed and fought that righteous nation in the past, is now to be blessed by it and led into the way of the truth. The world of mankind will be crying to the Lord "because of oppressors" and He will send them "a Saviour, and he shall deliver them". That

Saviour, of course, is the Lord Jesus Christ at His Second Advent when He is revealed in glory with all His saints for the salvation of the world.

How clear it is, therefore, that, as the next verse tells us (vs 21) "*the Lord shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day, and shall do sacrifice and oblation; yea, they shall vow a vow unto the Lord and perform it*". Thus is pictured the reconciliation of mankind to God and their eager coming to the source of instruction and blessing that they might learn of the laws of God's Kingdom and willingly align themselves with them. It will be a time when, at last, men will perform before God what they have covenanted to do; a time when righteousness prevails and there is the tremendous force of public opinion encouraging men to walk in right ways instead of leading them to wrong ways as at present.

"*And the Lord shall smite Egypt: he shall smite and heal it; and they shall return even to the Lord, and he shall be intreated of them, and shall heal them.*" (vs 22.) This is a further light on the characteristics of the Millennial Day; it is a time of discipline, of "stripes" for the wayward and rebellious, and it is not by any means going to be "roses, roses, all the way" for those whose hearts and minds have been degraded and brutalised by sin. The rule of the Millennial Age will be benevolent and merciful, but it will also be firm and just, and there will be many who will experience chastisement, chastening, "smiting" in the process of their recovery from sin and evil. But the smiting is to heal, according to this verse; it is not punitive but reformatory and we do well to take careful note of the fact for it represents a very important principle in the Divine dealings with mankind. The whole purpose and all the arrangements of the Millennial Age are for one end only, for the reconciliation to God, and the eternal salvation and everlasting life, of "whosoever will", of all who can possibly be persuaded to abandon sin and turn themselves to accept Christ and serve the living God. Speaking of a similar process with the Holy Nation at a slightly earlier date, God says through the prophet Ezekiel "*I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant. And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me*" (Ezek. 20. 37-38). In that instance the reference is to the purifying of regathered Israel preparatory to their appointment as the earthly missionary nation that is to take an important part in the conversion of "Egypt", but the principle is the same. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth" is going to be as true of Israel and of the world of mankind then as it is of the Church

now. And the general result, as predicted by Isaiah, is that "Egypt", mankind as a whole, will return to the Lord, and He will heal them.

"*In that day there shall be a highway out of Egypt into Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying 'Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.'*" (vs. 23-25).

A wonderful conclusion to the chapter; a picture of universal peace! Throughout Israel's history Assyria and Egypt were alternately at warfare with the nations around Palestine, or with each other, marching and counter-marching across the fair lands of Judah and Israel and ravaging wherever they went. The picture of a highway between the territories of these two great empires, with the citizens of both passing and repassing upon their lawful business, must have seemed a very unlikely one, especially in the days of Isaiah, when Assyria and Egypt were locked in a death-grip which had to end with the crushing of one. But that is what Isaiah saw, a day when the contending factions of mankind would have resolved all their enmity and jealousy into that calm and quiet fraternity which is to be the hall-mark of the next Age. The highways of that day will be highways of peace, and war and violence will be no more.

Perhaps there is a covert allusion also to the outcome of the conflict that brings about the end of the Gospel Age and prepares the way for the Millennial Age, the conflict that Daniel describes under the symbol of a battle between the "King of the North" and the "King of the South". Assyria and Egypt, geographically north and south of Palestine, could well fill that role in symbolic imagery. Whoever and whatever are the powers and forces in the end of this Age that are represented in Daniel by those two kings, it is certain that their violence and their warfare will not extend beyond the close of this Age, after Armageddon. "In that day", the Assyrian and the Egyptian will be equally conscious of a great chastening that has taken away from them all desire for further sallies at arms. The highway connecting Assyria with Egypt will be a quiet, a peaceable, and a joyous one.

The next verse adds the connecting link that makes this possible. Assyria and Egypt are made one because of Israel between them acting as peacemaker. Thus is symbolised the beneficent work of the Holy Nation, regathered Israel, under the guidance and instruction of the glorified Church,

working zealously to weld all men together into a brotherhood that is to endure for all eternity. Israel, says the prophet, is to be the third in this earthly trio, a blessing in the midst of the land. The picture of a nation of peacemakers in the midst of the earth, playing their part in the reconciliation of men to God, is one that is very vividly shown in this verse.

So the Divine blessing comes upon a world made new. The earth has yielded its increase and justified the declaration God made so long ago "I will make the place of my feet glorious." "*Blessed be Assyria the work of my hands.*" Mankind will have come to perfection and entered into sonship; with sin cast away, and evil a thing of the past, they will have become sons of God on the human plane, and God says of them "*Blessed be Egypt my people*". Israel, the missionary nation, comes in for the closer and more intimate word. Her work finished, God says "*Blessed be Israel my inheritance*". Perhaps we ought to realise that the earthly nation that has carried out this missionary

work on earth is, after all, only working under the control of the Church of Christ, glorified in the heavens, and maybe much of what is credited in this chapter to Israel belongs properly to the spiritual Israel which will be ordering these things from above. At the same time it should be fairly clear that this nineteenth chapter of Isaiah is looking at things practically exclusively from an earthly point of view and describes the work of God as it will be observed and appreciated by men upon earth. If there were nothing else in all the Scriptures to tell of the hope for mankind that is to be realised in time to come, this glowing passage should be enough to convince us that God has planned for the conversion of symbolic Egypt to Himself. He will bring to an end all war and strife and tumult, and all those things that have made the world, in our day, a replica on a greater scale of Egypt, as it was in its relation to Judah in the days of Isaiah the prophet. And He will have reconciled "Egypt" and purged it of all its sin.

THE END.

THE NEGATIVE COMMANDMENTS

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Psychologists generally are of the opinion that a positive command or suggestion is better than a negative one. Accordingly they decry the "Thou shalt nots" of the Bible and imply that our first parents might never have been tempted to eat of the forbidden fruit if nothing had been said about it. The wisdom of the wise notwithstanding, the negative form of instruction is abundantly used throughout the Bible, the ten commandments, eight of which are negative in form, being an outstanding example. The origin of sin and the reason for the permission of evil are closely linked with this method of instruction.

In James 1. 15 we have a clear, Divinely supplied definition of sin: "*Then when lust (Greek Epithumia—great or over desire) hath conceived it bringeth forth sin*"; and this is followed by a clear statement of the ultimate result of sin in the words: "*and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death*". Peter also speaks of "the corruption that is in the world through lust". (2. Pet. 1.4.)

God is the creator of all life. He is not the creator of sin. Whence then, this appalling, destructive force that ends inexorably in death, the very opposite of life? We find the answer in the words of James. It is lust or strong desire, a basic principle of life, whether vegetable or animal.

UNCONTROLLED INSTINCTS DESTROY

Once created, life has an overpowering impulse to maintain itself. Self preservation ranks as the strongest of all instincts. Tiny seedlings have been known to push their way through concrete walks with slow, irresistible force seeking air, sunlight—and life. Great trees cling tenaciously to bare rock surfaces, through blasting heat and freezing cold, buffeted by winds and storms; living by the power of the lowly fraction of life imparted to them by the Lord of the Living, who knows neither beginning of life nor end of days.

The second great instinct of life is the preservation of the species or pro-creation.

If uncontrolled, the determination to live and to multiply can become a very destructive force. In the vegetable and animal kingdoms this potential menace of imbalance is controlled by natural and impersonal laws instituted by the Creator. All have natural enemies which prey upon them and thus they are kept in check. No moral issue is involved.

NEGATIVE COMMANDS TEACH SELF CONTROL

But man was created in the image-likeness of God. He is a free moral agent. If he would live forever, he must learn to CONTROL HIMSELF. The lust or strong desire for all that ministers to the maintenance of life must be kept within reason-

able bounds. That theme begins in Genesis and may be traced throughout the sacred pages. Man's lesson in SELF control began with Genesis 2. 17: "*But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it*".

In due time there followed: "Thou shalt have no other Gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his ox nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbour's". (Exod. 20. 3-17.)

Long before this time Lucifer had already made his fatal error of yielding to lust or covetousness, the charge against him being: "*For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God—I will be like the Most High*". (Isa. 14. 13, 14.) Concerning the fall in the garden we read: "*And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food—and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof*" (Gen. 3. 6.) This agrees with James' explanation of sin: "*But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed*". (James 1. 14.)

SELF CONTROL BRINGS LIFE

The development of SELF control carries with it a growing trust in God's willingness to supply all life-needs in His due time and way. "*I have seen the wicked in great power and spreading himself like a green bay tree*". (Psa. 37. 35.) This grasping or powerful spreading out beyond reasonable bounds is characteristic of all uncontrolled life. The explanation that the six thousand years of sin and death were permitted so that man might learn the exceeding sinfulness of sin is true, but inadequate without a full understanding of the Divine philosophy. All who will attain everlasting life must have deeply engraved in their very natures, so that it is instinctive, the conviction that God's laws are good. "*Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city*". (Rev. 22. 14.)

For those who are to receive immortal life the need of being SELF controlled is even greater, and the tests more severe. Of Jesus it is said: "*Though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered*" (Heb. 5. 8). The word obedience (Greek *Hupakoe*) means to hearken submissively. The mature Christian will know that

at times the test of submissive obedience to God under suffering has been applied well-nigh to the breaking point. Many indeed have fallen under these tests and proved thereby that they could not be trusted with a deathproof life.

A strongly developed control of the natural human desires helps to keep the Christian safely in the path of necessary trials. "*For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride (or glory) of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world*". (Mark 4. 19.) "*They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts*". (Gal. 5. 24.) In the New Testament we have the most all-embracing and significant negative commandment of the entire Bible. "*If any man would be my disciple, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me*". This blanket self-denial under any test permitted by the Heavenly Father is a strong lesson in SELF control. Jesus must have experienced it in its full intensity during his last hours on earth. This is attested by the account of his struggles in Gethsemane, and the victorious prayer: "*Not as I will, but as Thou wilt*", and a short time later when, with the mob approaching he said: "*Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father and he shall presently give me twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?*" (Matt. 26. 53, 54.)

Take heart then, wayworn pilgrim! "Gird up the loins of your mind and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts." (1. Pet. 1. 13, 14.) "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." (1. Pet. 5. 10.)

And now, in imagination, let us travel backward through the centuries to the time when God was alone. He who knows the end from the beginning, knew full well that the creation of living beings would bring suffering. Was it worth it? It must have been. For after the creation of countless hosts of heavenly beings the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters and a formless void became a teeming planet, and eventually God's altar, upon which His Only Begotten suffered a bitter and painful death.

Let the Heavenly Father's "Thou shalt nots" be faithfully and reverently heeded, for "He layeth sound wisdom for the righteous—he keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints". (Prov. 2. 7, 8.)



THE QUESTION BOX



Q. What is the meaning of the Apostle's words "What shall they do who are baptised for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptised for the dead?" (1 Cor. 15: 29.) What is it to be "baptised for the dead"?

A. This Scripture can only be rightly understood in the light of God's Plan for "two salvations"—one for the Church and another for the world. Theologians have almost invariably confessed themselves baffled by it; usually it is suggested that Paul must have been referring to some custom of baptising a living person on behalf of one dying unbaptised, but the same theologians invariably admit that there is no evidence whatever of such a custom existing in Paul's day. There are a few references in early writings to something of the nature in the second century but of course Paul could not have referred to that.

It is likely that he used this expression "*baptised for the dead*" to indicate the consecrated disciples of Jesus who had entered the "Narrow Way" and had been baptised into Christ knowing that the purpose of their calling, and therefore of their baptism, was for the giving of life to a dead world. The whole world of mankind is dead—dead in trespasses and sins and under sentence of death; "so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned". Now God purposes to restore the dead to life, and to give them the opportunity of eternal life, and He will use, as His agents and instruments in this work, the glorified Church. Therefore it would be quite proper for Paul to refer to the Church as being "*baptised for the dead*" and the drift of his argument is then plainly seen. He is refuting the error of those who say there is no resurrection. Since the future work of the Church depends on a general resurrection of the dead, it were futile for the disciples of Jesus to present themselves in consecration to God for the purpose of reconciling mankind to Him, if the dead rise not. The resurrection is essential to the completion of the Divine Plan, and those who have given themselves in consecration that they might be used eventually to bring life to dead mankind are "*baptised for the dead*".

Q. Romans 8: 33 states "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth . . . ?" What is the meaning of this Scripture? How do we harmonise it with the fact that the same Apostle (Paul) who wrote the above had to lay "something to the charge" of Peter when he withstood him to the face because "Peter was to be blamed"? (Gal.

2: 11.) *Also we have to discriminate and are asked to use discernment in various matters. (1 Cor. 6: 1-3.) Also Titus was told to rebuke the Cretans because they were unruly, etc. (Titus 1: 10-13.) Did not these cases quoted involve the "laying something to the charge of God's elect"?*

* * *

A. The key to this text is found in verse 31. "*What shall we then say to these things. If God be for us, who can be against us?*" It is the outside world that cannot lay anything to our charge, for "it is God that justifieth" and no one can upset that. The theme of the whole chapter is the fact that there is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. They are freed from the burden of their sin and have become acceptable to God through their Lord Jesus Christ. The outside world may condemn such believers if they like, but that makes no difference. In God's own sight no man or no angel can lay anything to the charge of His elect, for He Himself has justified them. They are trusting in the death of Christ and He ever liveth to make intercession for them.

There is nothing in this that has any connection with that rightful "judging" or discrimination which we must exercise upon occasion. This "*laying to the charge of God's elect*" is something the object of which is to do harm to the believers, a carping, criticising attitude akin to that of Satan in the story of Job; "*Doth Job fear God for nought?*" Our privilege of discernment, of exhortation, reproof or rebuke is ours for a good purpose, to be constructive, not destructive, to save a brand from the burning rather than consign it to the burning. "*If one of you do err from the truth*" says James, "*and one convert him, let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.*" (Jas. 5: 19-20.)

Will all brethren please take careful note that correspondence in connection with London Convention (except for accommodation) shall be sent to Bro. A. O. Hudson, at 24, Darwin Road, Welling, Kent, instead of to Bro. Jennings, at Ilford.

It is also announced that Bro. Wilhelm Trippler, of Germany, will address the friends at the Convention on Sunday afternoon. In order to make this possible a slight change in timing is made. The morning address will commence at 11.0 instead of 11.15 and finish at 12.0, and the afternoon meeting will commence at 2.30 instead of 3.0.

Buried with Him in Baptism

One of the deepest
of Bible truths

The choice of fitting words by the Apostle, under the Holy Spirit's guidance, to describe the experiences involved in the Christian life is very precise and accurate. It is just wonderful to us to find how much of vital truth, and of religious experience can be compressed into a single word.

In this respect let us take note of the first word quoted at the head of our little study—"Buried". Who among us has not witnessed the little cortege slowly wending its way to some selected spot, at which the earth has been opened in readiness, to lay away the lifeless remains of some beloved one, whose torch of life has been extinguished. The angel of Death has swept by, and one who had been full of activity and vitality has fallen a victim to the sweep of his ruthless scythe, and now lies inert and motionless. And while we have watched, the little farewell ceremony has progressed, and the officiating minister and the bereaved mourners have laid "earth to earth—ashes to ashes—dust to dust", and there they have left the precious burden, as with weeping eyes, and sorrowing hearts they have turned away from the place of repose, and returned to the habitation which will know the loved one no more, till the voice of the Son of God calls all the waiting dead from their long silent sleep. And then, after the mourners have moved away other hands have returned the earth to the cavity, and have hidden from sight all that was left of the departed, and the earth has then received to her bosom that which she had hitherto given, for dust we are, and unto dust shall we return.

Burial! entombment! intern-ment! sepulchre! the close of a career; the end of an existence! a sleep—and a forgetting. This whole range of thought is taken by the Spirit of God to describe that act of full surrender of all that one is, of all that one has, and of all that one hopes for, to the claims of the sovereign Will of God. No matter how strong and directive the will of the deceased had been it directs no longer now. Nor does it matter how brilliant the mind and intellect had been, its glory is now departed. Nor yet does it matter how strong the affections and love had been, they will not move the lifeless form again. They are as lights that have become extinguished, and have left no trace behind.

There is no memory, no knowledge, no understanding in the brain that once pulsed with life.

How impressive and full of meaning, also, is the

symbolic ceremony whereby the surrender of the Christian's life is pictured forth. Of all the four main elements of nature—earth, air, fire, and water,—how appropriate is the submergence in water, to depict the complete and entire burial into the Will of God. All the days of our life we are immersed in Air—the atmosphere surrounds and envelops us always, everywhere,—and we could not live were it otherwise. Whatever other lessons it may teach us, our immersion in air does not depict for us a willing voluntary immersion, and for that reason comes short of what is required to teach consecration. Submergence into a flame of fire could overwhelm and envelop us fully but it would go too far in that it would leave nothing to represent the entrance of the New Creature into newness of life. Some have come forth after an entombment in the earth, but there would be much danger and in-commodation about such a practice, if used as a symbol of Baptism. All things considered, the descent and plunge into the watery sepulchre, with waters above, around, and beneath seems to be the most fitting symbol to represent complete submergence into the Will of God.

And suitable and fitting as is the symbol, it is not one whit more emphatic and definite than the great reality which it depicts. For it means, by a process of agreement and covenant, all that is seen every day of our life, when some member of our earthly kith and kin comes to the gates of the dark valley. In the Divine purposes, it means the termination of a life—not merely of a mode of life or a way of living; something very much more than that. Consecration does not merely mean the turning over of a "new leaf", and the beginning of a different clean page. If that were all, the same old book is still retained and though the page is new, the book is still the same—the "identity" is still the same. "Burial" with Him means the cessation of the identity; the dissolution of the personality which hitherto had lived and functioned: and in God's sight the dissolution of the identity is just as complete when made by covenant, as when made by death, for when we go down into the waters of baptism it is to depict that "We"—our "self"—have gone down into the Divine sepulchre for ever. We are swallowed up into His Will and His Purpose, and there is nothing left for any other purpose. By the terms of the covenant the old will and mind and affections are dead; and

if God should call upon us at any moment to consummate our existence in His service, we have no cause of complaint open to us.

But this burial is a prelude to a new life—a New Creature life—a resurrection life—a life of great possibilities, a life in association with Jesus, in heavenly exaltation and glory. From out of this covenanted tomb the flowers of immortality will spring, if so be that the Will of God is not thwarted and hindered by the perversity of the members of the human body which has to serve the New Creature till a better one is found for it.

Thus in going down in to the symbolic waters

of baptism (down into the waters of God's Will) we go down into death and dissolution as men, but when we come up therefore, we arise as a New Creation, a new being, with hopes thenceforth of a spiritual existence, blossoming forth into immortality.

What a wonderful height and depth, length and breadth of Divine truth, and Christian experience, therefore, is crystallized and condensed into this graphic word "Buried".

May we see to it with all our hearts, that we do appreciate the privilege of being "Buried with Him in baptism".

Eventide

"So he bringeth them unto their desired haven"



"My peace I give to you" said Jesus to His loved ones in the upper room. *"These things have I spoken unto you that in Me ye may have peace"* (John 14. 27; 16. 33). "My peace"! Yes, His Peace indeed!

For our present meditation we turn to that tragic episode in which, had not His peace been deeper than the deepest sea, the waves of anguish that smote His soul could have swept the Master from His anchorage in God and wrecked for Him the one purpose of His life. Its setting is the garden of sorrows, and there the fell purpose of His malignant foe is about to begin its accomplishment. Of His little band, eight have been left just within the gate to await His return. The "three" have been invited to accompany Him yet further to "watch" with Him. But even these were not permitted to attend Him to the place of prayer and conflict. There He must plead alone; there He must battle alone! Thrice from His lips rose the anguished prayer, and thrice came the non-compliance with His yearning plea! In the deepened shadows there, the bitter conflict was fought and won!

We will not further, by unskilful pen, probe the awful pathos of that tragic hour lest irreverent thought or ill-chosen word should blur or desecrate the incomparable grandeur of a conquest over fear and self that knows no parallel in human times. We pass right on to the ensuing episode where the High-Priestly apprehending band were about to lay His Person under arrest.

Due to their approach, His own little company would begin to close their ranks against the encircling host, and forthwith swords were drawn in

His defence. Always ready on the up-take, Peter, impulsive ever, quickly drew first blood, opening thus a door for retribution, of this kind or that, to ensue. Had the "letting" been of Roman, not of Jewish blood, retribution might have been both summary and severe. Quickly and with commanding dexterity the Heart bowed down so lately with its own load of care, touched the smitten ear and made it whole, requiting thus with tender compensating sympathy the servant of the man most responsible for His arrest.

Then with stern rebuke He turned upon the impetuous would-be protector to remind him how barely he was escaping death, for in unsheathing sword, he was, by the sword, courting his own destruction. "Put your sword back into its place" was His peremptory command, "for all who take the sword will perish by the sword." "Dost thou not know that I could appeal, even now, to My Father and He would send me at once more than twelve legions of angels to protect Me? But if I did, how would the Scriptures be fulfilled?" Force could be met by force, but that was not, at this hour, the Father's way, hence, at that hour, it was not Jesus' way!

But, on the other hand Jesus knew that all the dark forces of this present evil world, human and Satanic, were concentrating their malignant hate into the space of that one dark hour, and that He was to be the centre and target of the venomous attack. Scarcely had He come to read, with clarity, His Father's Will than all these hosts of wickedness were unleashed to take advantage of their hour! Heaven's protecting guard had been withdrawn;

ten thousand times ten thousand of the Heavenly Host must stand aside to watch the undefended Lamb of God man-handled, mocked, and done to death by those He had come to save.

Thrice had He pleaded that the bitter Cup might pass; thrice had He interpreted the non-responsive answer to be His Father's Will! Then be it so, God's Will be done! Henceforth He would not have it otherwise though all the furies of the world should meet on His despised head! That crucial epoch-making decision once reached, His heart returned to its place of rest! Peace reigned at the centre of the storm! God, not Satan, would ride the tempest to its close, and the Scripture would be suitably fulfilled. That conviction was His place of rest, the source of His abiding peace!

This is the peace, the unruffled "quiet" in the heart of the storm that Jesus has bequeathed to those that follow in His steps. This is the inheritance of all who have been linked with Him in covenant by sacrifice. An "inheritance" and "gift" we say!—yet must it be "attained" unto! To be able to "inherit", and "receive the gift" requires that we be much grown in grace; that we have attained to some likeness in Him. For Him, its fulness came in the last tragic test of His long-suffering life; at its very end! Would we think

to attain its depths and fulness at an earlier stage? Yet there is some "peace" for the earlier days, in proportion as we live with Him from day to day.

*"Like a river glorious is God's perfect peace,
Over all victorious in its bright increase,
Perfect, yet it floweth fuller every day,
Perfect, yet it groweth deeper all the way"!*

Dear child of stress and storm, knowest thou the compensating hush of peace when winds blow high and seas run strong? Knowest thou that self-same peace that kept thy Master when the hour and power of darkness smote His troubled soul? or that peace of God, unruffled and undisturbed when sin despoiled creation's mighty work? It is thy "due" if thou canst receive it day by day! Should the "hour" and "power" of darkness gather round thy path, know thou that Jesus holds thy "peace" in His mighty hand if thou thyself art nestling there.

*"Peace troubled soul, thou need'st not fear;
Thy great Provider still is near,
Who led thee last will lead thee still,
Be calm, and sink into His Will.
Rest in His love though storms prevail,
No storm can there o'erwhelm thy soul,
Ne'er let thy faith and courage fail,
Ill shall work good by His control."*

The Three Epistles of John

Comments on the writings
of the "Beloved Apostle"

Part VII.

I John 2. 12-17.

"I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.

"I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning.

"I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one.

"I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father". (John 2. 12-14).

This is the commencement of the second part of John's letter; it really ought to have been the beginning of chapter two. At this point John passes from the realm of warning to that of exhortation, and although he will still have a great deal to say about the snares that beset the Christian's path, he will infuse into his words much that is pure encouragement and stimulation of hope. Even though Antichrist shall come and seduce any who are unstable, there is an anointing which remains upon those who are Christ's indeed, an anointing that guarantees the operation of saving power during this dark time of earth's history and

imparts a confidence that will not desert those who look for their Lord's appearing. So he writes, addressing all who are of the Divine family, mature elders and babes in Christ alike, knowing that all have come under the same spirit of anointing and will one day be presented before the presence of the Father's glory with exceeding joy.

These three verses, twelve to fourteen, have caused the commentators some concern because of the evident repetition of thought. John says, first, that he *writes* to the little children, the fathers, the young men, and then again to the little children. Immediately thereafter he declares that he *has written* to the fathers and the young men. A possible explanation is that the apparent repetition was never intended by the beloved Apostle himself. It might well be that verse fourteen represents a slightly variant rendering, in some ancient manuscripts of John's epistle, to that which appears in other manuscripts as verses 12-13, and that at some time prior to the compilation of the version upon

which our New Testament is based, both renderings were incorporated, the one after the other, by a copyist who was unable to decide which was the more correct, and so included both. It does seem that verse 14 adds nothing to what has already been said in verses 12-13, and it is certainly true that the exhortation of verse 15 "Love not the world" follows quite naturally after 13.

We must go back to the Greek if we are going to appreciate the full meaning of John's appeal. The "little children" of verse 12 does not mean the same as the "little children" of verse 13. In the first instance the word is one that is used very often to describe disciples or pupils of a teacher, beloved followers of a master. In the other case it is a word that does only indicate a young child. We have, therefore, John writing first to his beloved pupils, the brethren in general, next to the fathers in the faith, the mature believers who were the strength and stay of the churches, after that to the young men, the stalwart and active workers who prosecuted the missionary work of the community with unflagging zeal, and finally the "babes in Christ" who as yet were only just taking first steps in the way. John well knew that every member of the body, whether possessing abundant comeliness or not so abundant comeliness, whether eye, ear, or hand, whether in the "milk" or "strong meat" stage (Heb. 5. 13-14) was equally the subject of God's loving care, and stood in need of his own devoted ministry. Therefore his writing was addressed to all of them and he called each class, as it were, by name.

The mission of the writer occupies a very honoured place in the Word of God. John is by no means the first whose service in this direction has been blessed of God. Not so many years before, Luke the Evangelist, writing to his friend Theophilus, left a priceless legacy to all future generations in the two books accredited to him, the Gospel according to Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. In Old Testament days the saintly Daniel was one who wrote down the visions he had seen and the revelation he had heard at the lips of angels, a wonderful guide to the onward progress of the Divine Plan through the ages. Habakkuk, whose tongue and hand alike were touched with fire, hastened to write down the vision and make it plain upon tablets that he might run who reads. John himself, an exile in the penal colony of the Isle of Patmos in the Aegean Sea, committed to parchment the vivid sights that passed before his eyes, and set the seal upon God's revelation of the ultimate triumph of all His faithful servants. It must have been with a sovereign sense of the vast potentiality for good contained in the

closely written scroll that lay outspread before him that John penned those simple yet tremendously significant words "I write unto you".

There is an appealing fitness in the several commendations which John addresses to each of these classes of brethren in the church. It is almost as if he is showing them how deeply and intimately he knows their hearts and their characteristics and their position in the race for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. His first word goes right to the basis of all that we enjoy and possess in the family of God. "I write unto you, beloved pupils"—for that is what this first "little children" means—"because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake". Forgiveness of sin consequent upon repentance and faith in Christ is the foundation of our whole standing before God. Without that we cannot even enter the Narrow Way, cannot even make a start on the road that leads to the presence of God and the Kingdom. This is one standing which all the Lord's people, young and old, mature and babes, must possess in common and retain to life's end. It is this knowledge, that our sins are forgiven for His Name's sake, that gives us fresh confidence after every stumbling and every giving way to some weakness of the flesh. That forgiveness stands, all the while that we are truly repentant, and in the power of that forgiveness we grow stronger after every fall, even though we may offend "seventy times seven".

From that general exhortation John turns to the fathers, the mature brothers and sisters of long service for the Lord, men and women with whom he himself had borne the heat and burden of many a strenuous day. With some of these whom he addresses as "fathers" he could probably claim twenty, thirty, perhaps even forty years of service. Although we do not know just when John first took up his ministry at Ephesus, it might have very reasonably been after the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 when the armies of Titus captured the city. But others of the Jerusalem Christians may have come into Asia with him—most of them were scattered abroad after that great disaster to their native land. Some of these "fathers" may have known the early days immediately after Pentecost, and be able to look back upon fifty or more years in the way of the Lord. Whatever the truth about this, John writes to them, saying "I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him from the beginning". (The two words "that is" have been supplied by the translators and are better omitted.) Of all the brethren gathered together in fellowship, one would have thought these mature and experienced old stalwarts to stand the least in need of such exhortation from the Apostle: but the very

thing that did distinguish them from the others, the fact that they had known Christ "from the beginning" is the very reason John has for writing to them. The purport of his writing is to be found in verse 15 "love not the world" and so on, and this exhortation and warning is the same for all three classes of believers. Even although these "fathers in the faith" had known the Truth so long a time and were evidently so well advanced in the Christian way, there was still need to warn them "love not the world".

How true that is to-day as well! Those whose love waxes cold are not drawn solely from the immature, who have been but a short time in the way. It is by no means an unheard-of thing to find one who has passed a long and busy life in the service of the Lord, the Truth and the brethren, and given every evidence of sincere and whole-hearted consecration, to leave it all quite late in life and go back to what Paul called the "beggarly elements" of this world. Increasing material prosperity, perhaps, or the opportunity of greater leisure after the close of business life, give opportunity for the indulging in material interests that would have been quickly rejected before. John knew how subtle are the snares of the Evil One and even although these "fathers" had known their Lord from the beginning, John had the same word for them that he had for the newer and younger believers.

"I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one." In what is perhaps the alternative vision of this message, John says "because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one". It is impossible not to notice how John stresses the very qualities in which the disciples might well take pride as being those by means of which they might easily fall. These young men, the zealous and active workers, missionaries, of the community, on whose shoulders the bulk of the labours of the Church must be borne, were strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. That very strength could become a source of spiritual pride! In their strength they came in contact with the world, in their preaching and their evangelising, in the care of the poor, in the many ways by which a vigorous and active Christian community does come in contact with the world, even whilst remaining not "of the world". In that intimacy of contact the injunction "love not the world" was very necessary. The garment must be kept unspotted. Christ hath no concord with Belial. Their very consciousness that in the power of Christ they had overcome the wicked one could tend to make them less vigilant and less watchful, and they be over-

taken unawares by that same wicked one from whose power they had formerly escaped. We do well to remember that it is more often in our fancied strong points that the Adversary takes us than in our weak points. We usually watch our weak points closely; the strong ones may easily be ignored.

Finally John comes to those for whom he must have had a very special affection, the "babes in Christ", the newly converted ones and the young in years, just setting out on the journey that is to lead them to the promised land. "I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father." That is all he can say to them at this early stage. That is all to which they have attained as yet, to "know the Father". With the knowledge of that wonder still fresh in their minds they are being encouraged to follow out the implications of their knowledge without faltering. To know the Father is a progressive thing; we pass on from stage to stage of knowledge, entering into a deeper and ever deeper intimacy with Him as the years follow one another. But only if we "love not the world"! This knowledge of the Father can come to us only in consequence of our consecration to Him; and more than that, in consequence of a consecration that is ever fresh and living, ever zealous and sincere, and that counts all things well lost if only Christ be won and life lived in Him. The warning "love not the world" was necessary to the old and the young, the fathers and the children, in John's day; it is no less necessary to us in ours.

So John comes at last to the exhortation toward which he has been leading all this time. He is so earnest about this, for it is so important a thing. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (vs. 15). The meaning of these words ought to be very plain to us. They certainly do not imply that we are to turn away from all things material in disgust and disdain, and count the lovely things of this earth as things unclean. The mediæval church made a sad mistake in that direction and their theologians and priests taught them that all that is fleshly, material, of human nature and of the earth, earthly, is inherently corrupt and evil and that they would do well to dissociate themselves from it. That view is a blasphemy and a libel against God. He made the earth, beautiful and fruitful, capable of giving not only life and sustenance, but also pleasure and happiness, to the men whom He created. When God had finished His work, He looked upon it, and, behold, it was good! We also, as intelligent and loyal disciples of our Master and reverent worshippers of God, ought to take pleasure in this

creation which gave God pleasure; we ought to esteem and appreciate all the beautiful things of the earth and all the lovely things of life. Even *although some of them we ourselves have given up "for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake"* we should not do else than look on them with pleasure, because God made or instituted them. In that sense, at any rate, we *should* "love the world". But that is not what John meant.

We all know perfectly well what he did mean. We are not to love the world and the things of the world in the manner that would involve placing them before God and the higher interests of our consecration. We may use the world and its good things, assuredly, but only in such fashion as to bring glory to our God and in the interests of His Plan, and we are at all times to "seek first the Kingdom of God". We may accept and use our material gifts and possessions and joys and opportunities in the outworking of our Christian lives, and give God thanks for them, but we are not to love them in such a way that they take first place and God and His Truth take second. If we do give way in that fashion, it is evident that our consecration is not sincere and not whole-hearted; as John says, in such case the love of the Father is not in us. And to point the danger of such a position he tells us just what is involved in the course of the man who does love the world and the things that are in the world more than he loves the Father and the things that are in the Kingdom of Heaven. He tells us that such an one becomes hopelessly entangled in the fate of a world that is passing away, and that he will eventually find himself bereft of those things in which he trusted and bereft also of the prize of the high calling from which he had allowed himself to be diverted.

"For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (vs. 16-17).

"The proud glory of life" Moffatt calls it, and it is an expressive phrase that he has chosen. The desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the proud glory of life; these represent the inordinate use of things that are good within themselves but bad when carried to excess, or even to a degree which may be quite all right for men and women who have not given themselves in consecration to God but will assuredly militate against the highest interests of those who have. There are so many things in life, good and right in themselves, that can become subtle snares to the "sanctified in Christ Jesus" purely because those sanctified ones

do not impose upon themselves the necessary degree of self-discipline in their handling or use of those things. John does not mean in this verse that because these things are "of the world" they are necessarily bad things. The word "lust" has changed its meaning in the four centuries since the *Authorised Version* was translated and we do well to substitute the word "desire" which to-day much more nearly expresses the idea behind the Greek. There are many things that the flesh and the eyes may legitimately desire; and much in life that may give a justifiable ground for proud glory; but the important thing for us to remember is that no matter how good and right these things may be, so far as we are concerned they are of this world and will pass away with this world. Even *although the good things and the right things and the beautiful things of this material earth will persist and come forth in renewed and more excellent glory in the next, they still are not for us, for God hath prepared even greater glories for those who in this Age love Him in sincerity and truth. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for them that love Him."*

Therefore, in the First Resurrection, nothing will remain save the building of one who has done the will of God. In the universal destruction of all the works of man it is he that doeth the will of God who will abide for ever. God grant that we, all of us, may so take to heart the lesson of this verse that we shall not be attracted for one moment by the glitter and sparkle of the attractions of this world, but soberly appraising them at their true value, and knowing that they are doomed, turn instead with the greater determination to have the will of God done in our mortal bodies that we may be that part of God's workmanship which shall stand the fires of proving and so abide for ever.

To be continued.

In the Bible are the records of His Righteousness, Holiness, Love, Mercy and Grace. But the greatest of all the Bible messages is not the Law, but the revelation of a redemption which man needs and which God has provided in the unspeakable gift of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

* * *

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Out of the Ivory Palaces

"Blow upon my garden
that the spices thereof
may flow out"

THE PRAISE BELONGS TO HIM

I know if I am chosen to joint-heirship with my Lord,
To reign with Him in glory, to receive that great reward;
If after all my weaknesses a crown for me He'll claim,
I know that choice will surely bring great glory to God's name.
If I had been more worthy, and my stumblings had been few,
When men gave *God* the glory, they'd have praised *my* virtue, too;
If I'd ne'er lost a battle, or had never missed the mark,
As they talked about *His* goodness, *mine*, also, they'd remark.
But my being so deficient, in thought and word and deed,
Means *He'll* get *all* the glory—He deserves it all, indeed.
When they see this weak mortal raised to such immortal heights,
What praise will rise to Him who in such nothingness delights!
I know that when my Saviour did return to Heaven above,
And was crowned with wondrous glory, it did prove His Father's love;
But thinking of *Christ's* merit, and His sinless life of grace,
'Twas no wonder that Jehovah chose *Him* for such a place.
With *me* it is so different; I have not one thing to plead,
That I should be more honoured than another bruised reed;
And truly there's no reason to give *me* a mite of praise;
To Him belongs all glory for the joys which crown my days.
If you knew all my failings, and my blemishes so vile,
And saw the loving patience my Father shows the while,
'Twould amaze you beyond measure to think he *could* or *would*
Make me an able servant who should do His people good.
But if to Him such praise is due because of what *I am*—
Because of such a weakling He has made a stronger man,
Then what will be His glory when He's raised me higher still,
And crowned me with His choicest on the top of Zion's Hill?
That all these years of striving find me so imperfect still,
Does not speak much to my credit nor give a happy thrill;
Where I *appear* as *worthy* 'tis because *His* grace is there,
And in the praise and glory I deserve no part, no share.
I hate my faults and failings, and I fight them day by day,
But from self with all its weaknesses I cannot get away;
Despite this fact, He uses me—*beyond is still more grace*—
And hosts will tell His glory—*His*, who found poor me a place.

Benjamin H. Barton.

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202 The Dawn of a New Era.
203 Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand.
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Thou, therefore, endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.



Vol. 27, No.8

AUGUST, 1950

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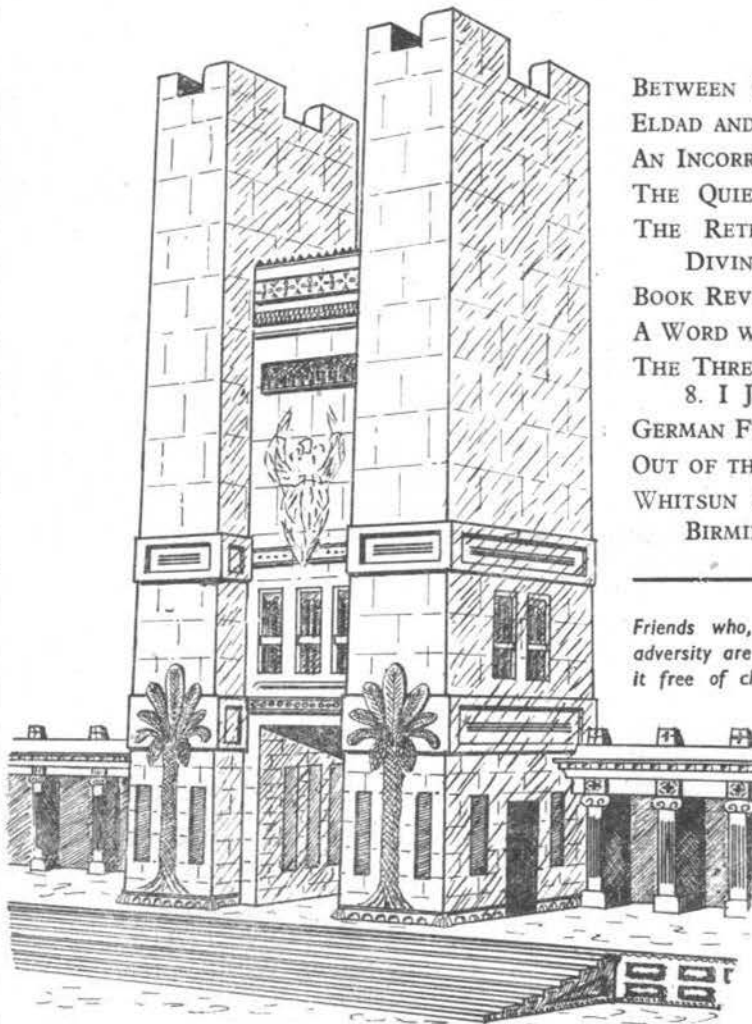
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Lift up your heads, O ye gates.
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

The friends at Cardiff announce a Home-Gathering, to be held in that city on Saturday and Sunday, 23rd and 24th September, 1950. The Saturday meetings will be at the usual meeting-place, 35, Windsor Place, and the Sunday meetings at the Pavilion Cafe, St. Mary Street. The visiting speakers are Bros. S. H. French (London), W. F. Fox (Yeovil) and W. Pritchard (Bristol). The brethren arranging this gathering say "remembering the happy occasion experienced last year we look forward confidently to a season of spiritual refreshment and vision on this, another such occasion". Needless to say, a warm welcome awaits all who can manage to attend this gathering.

* * *

The London General Convention sponsored by the Central London, Forest Gate, Putney, Welling and Windsor classes will, D.V., be held again this year during the August Bank Holiday week-end—August 5th, 6th and 7th. It is anticipated that an Immersion service will be arranged. For further information write the Convention Secretary, c/o 24, Darwin Road, Welling, Kent. For accommodation requirements address Bro. H. Charlton, Ryvers Farm, London Road, Langley, Bucks.

* * *

In consequence of invitations received from the brethren organising the North Webster Convention and from the Pastoral Bible Institute, two of our brethren, Bros. G. H. Jennings and A. J. Lodge, are now spending two months in America for the purpose of addressing that Convention and visiting some of the classes. We feel sure that many of our readers will follow this trip with sympathetic interest and desire the Master's blessing upon their ministry, and that in consequence the bonds of love and fellowship between our overseas brethren and ourselves may be strengthened. This visit has necessitated Brother Jennings relinquishing his position as Secretary to the London Convention this year, which is the reason for the change of secretarial address noted in this and the last issues of the "Monthly".

* * *

We are sorry to announce that Brother Trippler of Germany will be unable to visit this country this summer due to his inability to obtain his passport in time for the convention. The programme alteration for the Sunday meetings at Conway Hall announced in the July "Monthly" are therefore cancelled and the sessions will be exactly as stated on the programme.

* * *

A great many brethren write from time to time expressing their appreciation of the "Monthly"

and its contents, and although the custom of printing some of these letters in the "Monthly" itself is not one that appeals to the Editor, and so unlike others of the journals that circulate amongst us, such letters do not appear, we do want it to be known that they are very sincerely appreciated. The kindly and appreciative thoughts of the writers are by no means wasted. All such expressions of feeling are copied on to typed sheets and are kept constantly before us. They form a very valuable means of discerning to what extent the "Monthly" is meeting a real need amongst the friends and they form, too, a real source of encouragement to continue the work while our Master thus indicates that it has His blessing. There is one thing that those who thus appreciate the "Monthly" can do to help its work very materially. We always have a number of spare copies of back issues on hand. Those who will ask for and distribute these to other brethren who do not yet see the "Monthly", and thus assist in the increase of its circulation, by encouraging others to become subscribers, will help more than is usually realised. From a humble beginning twenty-seven years ago the "Monthly" has been built up by the labours and the support of our brethren to the position it occupies to-day. It is only one of the many means of grace the Lord is using for the encouragement and instruction of His disciples, but if you yourself find it helpful in your own life, then surely it can be helpful to others also! We will be most pleased to send you as many copies of back issues as you feel you can use. Alternatively you can send us names and addresses of brethren you feel might be interested and we will first check that they are not already readers and if not, send them copies by post. Maybe some of you will be glad to know that here is an opportunity of service that you can take up acceptably. We here will be most pleased to hear from you and to act accordingly.

LONDON MONTHLY MEETING

Saturday, 19th August, 1950

6.30—8.30 p.m.

In the Tudor Hall
CAXTON HALL

Caxton Street, Westminster, S.W.1
5 mins. St. James Park Station and Victoria Street

Speakers: Bro. L. Smethurst.

Bro. W. Batcheller.

ELDAD AND MEDAD

A Reflection on
Num. 11. 27-29.

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

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

They had waited a long time—forty years since the disappearance of Moses and in all that long period no sign that God either knew, or cared. Eldad and Medad were no longer young men now;

they had both passed their threescore years and began to find the daily tale of brickmaking strangely arduous, much more so than of yore. But there were compensations. To the little circle of slaves that, unlike the majority of their fellows, refused to worship the gods of Egypt but held fast to the dim traditions of Abraham and the promise, Eldad and Medad had become pillars of strength. They still believed, strong in faith, and looked daily for the coming of the Deliverer. Somehow there was in them the workings of a Spirit, telling them that the time would not be much longer delayed. . . .

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

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

It was true! While the rest of the elders of Israel had gathered at the Tent of Meeting to hear the instructions of God at the mouth of Moses, the Divine Spirit had rested upon those two who had remained back there in the Camp, and now they were prophesying there among the people, telling them of the things of God, without any mandate or permission from Moses the Leader. Disapproval showed itself on each countenance; resentment that these two men should apparently have appointed themselves to proclaim and teach the truth of God without waiting for or seeking an ordination from Moses the accepted leader of the people in things relating to their covenant with

God. A whispering began, a shaking of heads; these two men were surely slighting the company of the elders, setting up their own judgment as against the judgment of the majority. This independence of thought and action ought to be stopped; the Lord surely had already shown that His favour was with the organised body of elders and the priesthood in whose care reposed the Tabernacle and all its ceremonies. What right had these two, owning responsibility to no influential company in Israel, subject to no kind of control from priest or prince, to assert for themselves the privilege of preaching to the people? Surely Moses would quickly put a stop to this incipient heresy. He had been in the mountain with God and had spoken with God and God had given him the Law which he had written with his own finger; Moses would surely very soon put these upstarts in their proper place. The elders turned towards him expectantly, still burning with indignation at this audacity. "*Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp.*"

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

The magnificent figure of Moses stood motionless, his clear eyes piercing into the distance straightly to where those two dynamic forms could be descried in the middle of the crowd, moving from side to side and gesturing with hand and arm as they addressed the multitude. Long did he gaze, and slowly withdrew his eyes from viewing that distant scene to turn them upon those who now crowded around him so closely. He looked upon the runner, waiting before him, so secure in his knowledge of duty well done; upon the righteous elders, every movement of their robes betokening the quivering of outraged dignity; upon Joshua, standing there in wrathful indignation; and as he looked, the keen eyes suddenly softened, the stern lips, almost hidden by the shaggy beard, parted in a half smile, and in an indulgent, almost fatherly tone, he asked them "Enviest thou for my sake?" The strong hands moved suddenly in a gesture of entreaty; the fine eyes looked upward with an expression of unutterable longing; "*WOULD TO GOD*" cried the great Prophet of Israel "*WOULD TO GOD THAT ALL THE LORD'S PEOPLE WERE PROPHETS AND THAT THE LORD WOULD PUT HIS SPIRIT UPON THEM!*"

* * *

Three thousand four hundred years have passed since that memorable day. We have not learned

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

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

his own business and see to the execution of his own commission. "Go thou and preach the gospel". So with us; we enter most into the spiritual presence of our Lord if we realise that He is conducting a great work here on earth in this our day; that to each one of us is committed some very small and yet some very definite and very important part of that work; that we individually are not permitted to view the whole work in its entirety and indeed could not do so, but that our Master has all the threads in His own strong hands

and will bring all together in one harmonious structure in His own due time. Meanwhile we do well to pray and labour for the increase of the number of those who will serve the Lord. "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that He would send forth labourers into the harvest." The need is great, there is room and yet room for all who will come and serve our Lord. Would to God, let this be our prayer, would to God that *all* the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them!

An Incorruptible Crown

An exhortation
to endeavour

"Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." (Rev. 3. 11.)

The possibility of losing the crown of life, even though that crown seem to be almost within one's grasp, is a very real one. Whenever the New Testament speaks of the award that awaits faithful disciples the conditional nature of that award is stressed. It is not the one who enters into a covenant with God, and is accepted by Him in the High Calling, who is to receive an abundant entrance into the Kingdom, but the one who wins his Lord's approval by patient continuance in well-doing. He is the one who eventually receives the crown of life which the Lord has promised to them that love Him. In the meantime, during the span of the life time, be it short or long, during which that consecration is being worked out, there is always the possibility of the promised crown being lost. Not that God is ever unfaithful or that He will change His mind or vary the terms of the offer. His unchangeable Plan ever stands and so far as He is concerned the acceptance of a disciple into the race for the prize is as good as saying that the prize is already won. What He has promised He is abundantly able to perform. The decision rests with us. If we continue, He abideth faithful; He cannot deny Himself (2 Tim. 2. 13). But if we deny Him, then He cannot do other than deny us, for He ever respects our free will and if we deliberately take ourselves out of His love and care by repudiating the terms of our covenant with Him there is really nothing He can do about it—not in this present Age anyway.

The loss of a crown is rarely so simple a matter as this. The responsibility for the change of mind or loss of faith which involves such disaster is all too often to be laid at the door of others, and in

the last analysis, the great Adversary of God and man, Satan himself. That is why the risen Christ in His message to the Church at Philadelphia, and through that message to all Christians everywhere, beseeches us earnestly "Take heed that no man take thy crown". There are so many in this world who can, wittingly or unwittingly, become the means of robbing the unwary disciple of his promised crown. It is not that they win it or even desire it for themselves but their influence on the life can be such that they have taken the crown from the one who might otherwise have had it, and destroyed his hopes of joint-heirship with Jesus the Lord.

It is a very appropriate symbol of the Christian life, this metaphor used so much by the Apostle Paul. It was taken from his knowledge of the Greek games of his day. All the early Christians were familiar with the games. They occupied a prominent place in the life of the people as does organised sport in the world's social life to-day. In one respect they differed. The competitors were required to go into very strict training long before the day and encouraged to lay aside every other interest in order to be as fit as possible for the event; when then the great day came they were expected to manifest much more than usual physical prowess in order to gain the approval of the judges.

In the great national annual games of the Greeks—the Olympic games, recently revived in Western Europe, was one such event—preparations began ten months beforehand, and those chosen to compete in the actual contest were already known to be fit men and measurably prepared for the trials of strength and endurance they would be called upon to undergo. In like manner, we are told, no man can come to Jesus except the Father, who is over-

seeing the interests of His work in the world of this Age, draw him. Who does the Father draw? Quite obviously those whose hearts are already turned toward Him to some extent or who are seen by Him to possess those qualities and that disposition which will make them amenable to His leading and His instruction when once they have been brought face to face with Christ and have accepted Him. Right at the outset we have to accept the fact that God, who knows every one of His creatures so well, is busy, through the medium of His Holy Spirit, ceaselessly working in the world, selecting those whose hearts are likely to be responsive and bringing them into touch with His truth. That is where the work of His ambassadors, His witnesses, comes in. They are agents of the Holy Spirit, sharing in this search for likely candidates for the great contest.

Now here is a candidate who has heard the call, and answered it, and has progressed through the successive stages of repentance, belief in and acceptance of Jesus and His redemptive death, justification through faith in Him, and consecration of life to be dead with Him. Not all who are led by the Spirit of Jesus, who are "drawn" of God, progress even to this point. Many are called, but not so many accept the call. Some there are, like the rich young ruler, who come within measurable distance of the High Calling and appreciate something of its glories, but turn away at the last moment, unwilling to pay the price that is asked. But here is a candidate who has done all these things and has been entered for participation in the race. He is accepted by the Father as a member of the Church in the flesh—he has come "into Christ"—he has been buried with Him by baptism into His death and has risen to walk with Him in newness of life—old things have passed away and all things have become new, for he is now a "new creature in Christ Jesus"—and as he walks on to the course and crosses the starting line he squares his shoulders for the effort and hears the judges' assuring admonition "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it" (I. Thess. 5. 24). In his own zealous and hopeful condition of mind the prize is already his, for he fully intends to complete the course and win the crown.

Now there were two kinds of races to which allusion is made in the New Testament and the peculiarities of each should be kept in mind if we are to draw right conclusions. There was first of all the short foot races, in which a number of competitors ran to determine who could reach the finishing line first, and the first one to do so was acclaimed victor and crowned with the laurel or parsley wreath (the "crown" which is referred to

in the New Testament). The other was the much longer course, usually of many miles in length, in which the object was to show how many of the competitors could summon sufficient endurance to run the whole distance. In this case each one who "finished the course" received a laurel wreath as victor; those who dropped out by the wayside through inability to finish the course were losers, and received no wreath.

The first, the short race, is the one mentioned in I. Cor. 9. 24 "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain". Now this must not be interpreted to mean that of all who enter the race for the prize of the High Calling only one disciple will eventually win that prize; such a thought is an obvious absurdity. The Apostle's meaning is that just as in a worldly race each competitor, knowing that the first past the tape will receive the prize, puts forth every possible endeavour to run his best, hoping thus to outdistance his rivals, just so, says Paul; should the Christian run, putting forth every endeavour. As he says in another place "*this one thing I do, forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things that are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling in God in Christ Jesus*". (Phil. 3. 14.) "So run, that ye may obtain." The other type of contest, an example of which was the well-known Marathon, in which all the contestants sought to stay the course and all who did so received crowns, is a much closer analogy to the life of the Christian and this is the one alluded to by Paul in 2 Tim. 4. 8 when at the end of his life he looked back and said "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day". He knew that he was close to death; he knew that he must stand before the judgment-seat of Christ and that decision would then be pronounced as to his worthiness or unworthiness of the crown of life; he knew that now, so late in his Christian life, so near to its end, the things that now lay in the past must determine the issue, and looking back over the way he had come he exulted in the knowledge that his faith had held firm, his integrity before God was inviolate, he had finished the course and come to the end of the way still trusting in Christ, and therefore without any doubt the wreath of victory was his—even although its actual bestowal must wait for the end of the Gospel Age and the time of the Lord's appearing, an end that in his day was still far in the future. Paul had once referred to the possibility of he himself becoming

a castaway (I. Cor. 9. 27) and that knowledge was always with him through life as it must be with us; but now that he realised within himself the end was at hand, he rejoiced in the knowledge that he had finished the course without falling out by the wayside and so losing his crown, or giving heed to men who might seduce him from the course and so in that way rob him of his crown. "*Take heed, that no man take thy crown.*"

We are in the same position as Paul. While we are yet in the running of the race, still on the course, there is always the possibility of our turning aside and failing to finish. It is only when we arrive at its end that we can say as did Paul "I have finished the course and now the crown is mine". We do well to remember that the judgment is given, not on account of the work which we have done or the knowledge which we have gained, but purely on account of our loyalty to our Lord, our faithfulness to our covenant, and our sincerity of purpose. Whilst we retain these things we are still on the course and must eventually reach its end and win the promised crown. But until then the snares and delusions of the world, the flesh and the Devil, the effects of disillusionment and discouragement and unbelief, will always be seeking to destroy our faith and draw us away from God, and that means becoming unfit for His purposes, and unworthy of His Kingdom, and in the end involves the loss of the crown. It is only he that endureth to the end who is to be saved. "*Blessed is the man that endureth temptation*" (or proving) says the beloved James "*for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of righteousness which the Lord hath promised to them that love him*" (Jas. 1. 12). Note well that the crown is bestowed *after* the man has been tried (tested, proven worthy) and the plain implication is that if he does not stand the proving and the trying process, then he loses the crown. Exhorting the elders of the Church to faithfulness in the discharge of their duties, Peter says (1 Pet. 5. 4) "*When the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away*". That is conditional upon faithfulness to their charge. And to seal all these words with His own approval, our Lord says to all His Church and to each member thereof "*Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life*" (Rev. 2. 10).

In the clear light of so many Scriptures how plain it is that our whole Christian calling is altogether and completely conditional, and that we have it within our own power to make or mar our future, to win or to lose the crown of life. To be sure, there is room in the "Church of the First-born" beyond the Vail for all who may be drawn

of the Father, hear the call, accept same, and enter into the Narrow Way that leads to life. It is quite unthinkable and quite out of accord with the fundamental principles of the Divine Plan to consider that the Father would call any who remain faithful and yet could not at the end be awarded the prize for which they had run and which they have merited. Whatever may be the truth regarding any question of a pre-determined limit to the number of the "Elect" or of God's foreknowledge regarding the number who will eventually be faithful, we must hold as an essential article of faith that all who are called, who enter, and are faithful, will receive the promise. There can be no shadow of doubt about that.

Upon the other hand, we should not interpret the Scriptures to teach that each one who receives the call and is accepted by God as a member of the New Creation must inevitably progress the whole length of the course and receive the crown. That is equally a violation of fundamental Scriptural principle. So far as the Father is concerned, it could well be said that the entry into the race is as good as the end of the race, for having once accepted a human heart in His covenant the Lord guarantees that He, on His part, will abide faithful. His power will bring us through "more than conquerors" if we allow Him. But this is an agreement between two parties both having free-will. God can guarantee His own part; He cannot guarantee ours. He abideth faithful and bestows upon us the inestimable blessing of His Holy Spirit to be a guide and a counsellor through life, but with that the issue rests with us. It is only if *we* abide faithful also that the end of the course can be attained. To what end God does or can see that end before we have reached it, and know the result of our race before that result is attained, is not really of consequence so far as we are concerned. What we do know and what the Scriptures constantly warn us against is the possibility of our falling away from the faith we have accepted, by so doing demonstrating our unworthiness for the purpose for which God is calling us, and so, inevitably, losing the crown which otherwise we might have had. "No man" said Jesus "putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God." He knew, only too well, the danger that would confront all His followers in after days, of setting out with high hopes, and then, for one reason or another rejecting the High Calling into which they had entered, and losing everything. The Father requires of us faith, belief, sincerity. These are the essential factors which will carry us safely through all the besetments of life and bring us at last into the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, at that right hand where there are pleasures forevermore.

THE QUIET TIME

"My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places."

COMMONPLACE

*"A commonplace life" we say, and we sigh;
Yet why should we sigh as we say?
The commonplace sun in the commonplace sky
Makes up the commonplace day.
The moon and the stars, they are commonplace things,
And the flower that blooms, and the bird that sings;
Yet sad were the world, and dark were our lot,
If the flowers all failed and the sun shone not.
And God, who considers each separate soul
Out of commonplace things makes a beautiful whole.*

ENCOURAGEMENT

He shall drink of the brook in the way; therefore shall he lift up the head.—Psa. 110. 7.

Drinking of the brook does not imply that we sorrow and are disconsolate above others; on the contrary, those who drink of the brook properly are full of joy. As the apostle declares, they are enabled in everything to give thanks unto God—in life's difficulties, as well as in its pleasures—even as He again says, Count it all joy when ye fall into divers difficulties, knowing that under divine providence they will work out for you a greater blessing. (Jas. 1. 2.)

DEEDS

Elijah the prophet was a prophet of deeds. So far as we know, he wrote nothing; and this does not surprise us; for such devout impetuosity and tempestuousness as Elijah's seldom go with patient penmanship. Many of the most passionate and energetic reformers have been altogether ungifted as writers. They were dynamic rather than academic. They flung themselves with passionate abandon into the effort of prevailing upon the men of their own day. They may not have perpetuated their names in books which have been handed on to succeeding generations; but they live on, none the less, in the abiding results which they wrought for the betterment of their fellows.

LIGHT

It will be as when sunshine draws forth the glory of colour in a landscape that has been lying under a pall of cloud. . . . Under the direct rays of the Sun of Righteousness buds of earth will become flowers of heaven. Vision will beget likeness, and likeness, again, give clearness to vision, their endless interaction securing endless progress towards the inexhaustible fulness of Christ.—Robert Law.

EMOTION

There is such a thing as healthy emotion. Emotion often plays a vital part in conversion. When that great Methodist layman, Lord Rochester, spoke to one of my young people's rallies in the Central Hall, Westminster, recently, he said: "Do not despise or stifle your emotions; they often play a vital part in spiritual things. Remember, many of our big ships can only go in and out of port at high tide". Lord Rochester was right.

GOD IS LOVE

Whatever may be the explanation or the origin of evil, for practical purposes, and it is only for such purposes that theology is of any use, we get the best point of view by maintaining absolutely that God is good, and nothing but good, love, and nothing but love. Whatever is counter to good or to love is not God, but the obstacle which God is overcoming and will some day completely overcome.—R. F. Horton.

HEAVENLY WISDOM

So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.—Psa. 90. 12.

As the Christian numbers his days gliding swiftly by, and perceives how he is using them in harmony with Divine instructions, he ultimately comes to that condition of heart in which he is longing for the Kingdom and the full attainment of all the glories into which he hopes to be ushered, as a sharer in the first (chief) resurrection. And from this standpoint he numbers his days as they go by joyfully, and is glad when the days of the years of his present pilgrimage end; because his hope in the Lord, and in the gracious features of His plan, is growing daily stronger, clearer and brighter.

MY LIFE

*IF THIS BIT OF EARTH MAY BE
Stronger for the strength I bring,
Sweeter for the songs I sing,
Happier for the path I tread,
Lighter for the light I shed,
Richer for the gifts I give,
Purer for the life I live,
Nobler for the death I die,
NOT IN VAIN HAVE I BEEN I.*

THE RETRIBUTIVE CHARACTER OF DIVINE LAW

A Doctrinal Essay

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap."—(Gal. 6. 7.)

The Apostle Paul, addressing the Church, announces a principle of Divine Law which is applicable not only to the Church, but to all men everywhere. Hosea expresses the same truth, saying that if we sow to the wind we shall reap the whirlwind. (Hos. 8. 7.) Solomon says, if we sow iniquity, we reap vanity. (Prov. 22. 8.) St. Paul says, if we sow sparingly, we reap sparingly, and if we sow bountifully, we reap bountifully. (2 Cor. 9. 6.) This is equally true, whether we sow wild oats or good wheat.

It is in view of the harvest of the world's sowing, that we are informed that *"the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good"* (Prov. 15. 3); that *"God shall bring every work into judgment with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil"* (Eccl. 12. 14); and that *"there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, neither hid that shall not be known"*; that *"whatsoever has been spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light"*; and that *"spoken in the ear, shall be proclaimed upon the housetops (openly)"*. (Luke 12. 2, 3.) And again we read *"Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, saith the Lord"*. (Rom. 12. 19.)

But when will this reckoning time come? Now, as saith the Prophet Malachi (3. 15), men *"call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered"*. With the Psalmist (Psa. 94. 3, 4) we inquire, *"Lord, how long shall the wicked triumph, and all the workers of iniquity boast themselves?"* The Apostle Paul answers that the Lord *"hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained"*—Jesus Christ. (Acts 17. 31.) And *"then"*, says the Prophet Malachi to those who fear the Lord and whom He hath chosen as His jewels, *"shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not"*. (Mal. 3. 18.)

But take heed. The same Prophet raises a suggestive question, which all would do well to ponder. He asks, *"Who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. . . ."*

And I will come near to you to judgment, and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, and the widow and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not Me, saith the Lord of hosts". (Mal. 3. 2, 5.)

The reference of these Scriptures is to the great judgment of the Day of the Lord—the day of trouble with which this Gospel Dispensation is to close—variously described as a day *"of wrath"*, *"of vengeance"*, *"of recompense"*, and as a *"time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation"*.

But while this great judgment will have to do with the world in general—with nations and corporations and all civil, social and religious organisations of men; and while it will touch the cases of all the individuals living at that time, we naturally inquire where retributive justice came, or is to come in, in dealing with all the generations of the past?

Our Lord answers the question when He says, *"The hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection by judgment"* (John 5. 28, 29; see R. V. and Diaglott.) The whole Millennial Age is thus set forth as a *"day"* of reckoning, of trial, of judgment. In that searching judgment there will be a reckoning, even for every pernicious word (Matt. 12. 36); and by submitting and learning obedience under those judgments, the masses of mankind who *will to obey* are to be gradually raised up to perfection of being, as well as of knowledge.

But here a philosophic and important question arises as to the extent to which the *justification* of a sinner, through faith in the precious blood of Christ, and his full consecration to do the Father's will, may intercept the course of the Law, that a man must reap what he has sown. In other words, Will his new relationship to God save him from a miserable harvest of a former sowing of wild oats?

In one sense it will. The just penalty for all sin is *death*—the severest penalty that can be inflicted. And from this penalty his justification freely exonerates him. His past iniquities and sins will no more rise up in judgment against him, demanding their just penalty—*death*; for *"blessed"*

are they whose iniquity is forgiven and whose sin is covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute (reckon) sin". (Rom. 4. 7, 8.) All who by faith in Christ's sacrifice for sin and by consecration of heart and life to God's service come under the Robe of Christ's Righteousness are thus blessed. The iniquity, or legal sentence, of such is passed altogether or forgiven; and while the results of their sins, the harvest of their misdeeds sown before they came to a realisation of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, or to an appreciation of God's mercy in Christ, are still painfully with them, yet they are assured that these are covered. They are further assured that God's provision for them is that they may some day be healed, or cured, of the weaknesses brought on them through sin and now reckoned as "covered" from the Divine eye.

These sins, or actual defects, are to be blotted out or wiped out when the Times of Restitution shall arrive, at the Second Advent of Christ. (Acts 3. 19.) The result of this blotting or wiping out of sin will be new bodies, new beings—free from sin, from imperfection and every consequence and evidence of sin. With the Church, this cleansing and blotting out process begins with the present life, and will be completed early in the Millennial Day (Psa. 46. 5) by a share in the First Resurrection.

The world's cleansing time will be the entire Millennial Age, or "Day of Judgment", when those who then shall accept Christ and the New Covenant may gradually be cleansed and healed. At the close of that Age, if faithful to their opportunities, they may be presented blameless and perfect before God, needing no further healing or cleansing, but each being, as was Adam, a human image of the Divine Creator—a perfect man.

The Scriptures, as well as observation, assure us that our justification before God does not remove at once and without our co-operation all the results of previous transgression. The harvest is like in kind to the sowing; but the penitent and forgiven one has the promise of grace to help in the battle with his inherited as well as cultivated weaknesses; and so we read (1 John 1. 9), "God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness". It is in this cleansing process which follows vitalised justification that the consecrated believer must of necessity suffer from some of the baneful results of a past course of sin—reap the reward of his former sowing. While the Lord will be very merciful in dealing with him, nevertheless, as a Wise Physician, He will not spare the necessary experience to eradicate the deep-seated evil propensities of long cultivation in the past.

Here the retributive character of Divine Law is

especially noteworthy. Men often make a distinction between the law of nature and the moral law, calling the one natural and the other Divine. But the fixed principles of both are of Divine origin, and accomplish the Divine will in their operation. Both operate on the basis of retributive justice. All Divine Law, whether of nature or of morals, is but the operation of certain fixed principles of righteousness, having for their object the peace and happiness of all intelligent creatures under its jurisdiction. Obedience to this Law brings its reward of happiness, while any interference with it incurs its certain penalty.

If you hold your hand before the fire, it will be warmed, and your comfort and happiness will be thus ministered to; if you put your hand into the fire, it will be burned, and you will suffer pain. Thus the law of nature, which was designed to comfort and bless us, is also prepared to punish us if we violate its proper use. And not only so, but it is prepared to grade its penalties in proportion to the aggravation of the offence against it.

If you put your hand into the fire for a very short time, it will be scorched; persist a little longer, and it will be blistered; and a little longer still, and it will be consumed. Applied properly to the cooking of your food, fire will reward you with a savoury meal; but applied improperly, it may render the food undesirable or unfit for use. Water, also one of our greatest blessings, becomes, if the law of nature be disregarded, an agent of death and destruction. So throughout the laws of nature we might trace retribution.

In the realm of moral law, the case is the same. If you violate the principles of righteousness, you deface the image of God in your being. Impure thoughts write in clearly legible signs upon the countenance the dark lines of a bad character; while pure, just and noble thoughts illuminate the countenance and render the pure character transparent to beholders. And the operations of moral law are as sure and reliable as are those of natural law.

The fact that the retribution—the reward or the penalty—is often delayed is frequently presumed upon by the foolish, who vainly think they can sow their crop of wild oats and never realise their harvest. Both individuals and nations have long presumed to act upon this hazardous and vain hypothesis; and well indeed would it be if they would even now hearken to the Apostle's warning: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap".

The operations of this law are most manifest upon classes and nations—first, because their prominence gives them world-wide publicity; and second, because their judgment must of necessity

be in the present life, since beyond the grave the present order of society will have no existence. A glance at the pages of history reveals the fact that all the nations of the past have reaped a bitter harvest, and amid harrowing scenes have breathed their last. They had their rising, their struggling periods, and their flourishing eras; and then "pride and fulness of bread" caused them to rest in fancied security, and to sink in the scale of morals, until their decline was followed by their fall. They reaped what they had sown.

Just now, all the nations of the world are fast approaching the most terrible crises of their national existences. In a great time of unparalleled trouble, which is even now imminent, they are about to reap what they have sown. They have sown to the wind the seeds of selfishness, and now they are about to reap the whirlwind of terror and the destruction of all law and order, and of national and social organisation.

The operation of this law in individual cases, though not so prominent, is none the less sure. Every thought harboured, every disposition exercised and cultivated, becomes a component part of individual character; and this character, which is more or less tender in early life, becomes fixed in the course of years. If the cultivation of character has been along the lines of righteousness and truth, according to the light possessed—whether of conscience merely, or of revelation also—the ripened fruit of an established, right-preferring and benevolent character is a blessed harvest in comparison with others, the reverse. If the cultivation has been along the lines of depravity, self-gratification and degradation, the terrible fruits are a fearful penalty.

Even though such a one be freely forgiven upon repentance and faith in the redeemer—fully absolved from legal condemnation through Christ, who bore its Divinely pronounced penalty—death—nevertheless, the fruits of his sowing are manifest in his character. Evil propensities must all be rooted out and a proper character formed at a considerable cost of painful, but valuable experience; for God is just, not only to forgive us our sins, but also to *cleanse us* from all unrighteousness. The eradicating of these evil dispositions, propensities and appetites, deep-rooted and long-cultivated, will cause great disturbances of the soil in which they have grown; and pain as well as joy will attend their removal, and their replacement with the graces of the Spirit.

The Lord, as a wise Physician, will be as merciful and tender with His patient as the necessities of the case will permit. All will be shown their need of His aid, but no patient will be treated further

except with his own consent and co-operation. With the Church this treatment takes place in the present life and is a treatment of the *will* rather than of the body; for although the body will be greatly helped by the treatment, it is not the Great Physician's purpose to *cure* these marred bodies, but to give to this class perfect spirit bodies early in the Millennial Day. In these the consecrated *will* is being transformed and renewed to perfect harmony with the will of God, the mind of Christ. The "overcomers", the true Church, passing through difficulties and cleansing and trials of faith and afflictions now, and being approved of the Lord, will not come into the judgment trial of the Millennial Age (1 Cor. 11. 32); but, with the Redeemer, their Lord, will be Kings and Priests of God, who shall judge the world and recompense to them good or evil, impartially, under the terms of the New Covenant. (1 Cor. 6. 2.)

Another feature of retribution upon the world during the Millennial trial will be the publicity which will then be given to the reaping and to the deeds of the past. Our Lord has so intimated, saying, "*There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid that shall not be known*". (Matt. 10. 26; Luke 12. 2, 3.) This also will come about in a natural way, when in that day all that are in their graves shall come forth. Then the murderer and his victim, the debtor and his creditor, the thief and his dupe, the defamer and the defamed, must face each other and the facts, which, with even the secret motives, will be discerned. The terms of their reconciliation to each other and to the Judge will be equitable, and will be known to all.

Past history will have proclaimed to the world the character of many a Nero; but additionally, there will be the necessity of seeing the former victims of their ignoble cruelty, and facing them in the light of a new and healthy public sentiment, which will manifest crime in all its horrid deformity. Truly such "shall awake to shame and lasting (Heb. *olam*) contempt", even in their own eyes; for as the renewed manhood of the race begins to assert itself, they will the more fully realise the depth of the pit of degradation whence they were digged; and even the generous forgiveness of formerly injured and outraged fellow men will be a great humiliation. It will truly be, as the Scriptures suggest, the heaping of coals of fire on their heads (Prov. 25. 21, 22; Rom. 12. 20), so great will be their shame and confusion. (Jer. 20. 11.)

It should be borne in mind, too, that the only standard of judgment in public sentiment at that time will be *character*. None of the *false* standards—wealth, noble birth, or aristocracy of power, by

which men are often measured now, and under which cloaks the wicked often take shelter—will then avail anything; for under the New Dispensation men will come forth shorn of all their former possessions. They will have neither wealth nor power; and in the light of that Age, heredity will be nothing whereof to boast.

The same conditions which will thus expose the evils of the past life and thus, in the natural operations of moral law, bring about a measure of retribution to the evil-doers, will also make manifest the good deeds of the righteous, so that even the slightest favours done for others, deeds which at the time blessed the characters of the doers, will then be recognised and appreciated.

In this view of the matter we can see how, in a perfectly natural way, a man must reap the harvest of his sowing of wild oats, even though he has been freely forgiven, absolved from guilt and its penalty, death, and legally justified through faith in Christ. He will reap it, not only in the difficulties he will have piled up for himself in the hardening of his own character, making the steps up to perfection more painful and slow, and requiring severer discipline, but also in the just disapproval, or indignation of a righteous public sentiment in that Millennial Day of Judgment.

Such will be the natural and inevitable results of present wrong-doing. One consolation, however, will be the fact that this humiliation, in some measure, at least, will be *shared by all*; "for there is none righteous (none perfect), no, not one" (Rom. 3. 10); and all must pray, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive others". It will indeed be a time for melting and mellowing all hearts. Thus the Lord will take away the stony heart and give to all who under the New Covenant shall become *His people* (typified by Israel) a heart of flesh, according to His promise. (Ezek. 36. 22-28.)

In some instances a portion of the reaping is experienced in the present life; and in some it will be in the life to come, as the Apostle intimates in 1 Tim. 5. 24, 25. So also good works are sometimes manifest now, and rightly appreciated and rewarded. But whether now or hereafter, our Lord's assurance is that even the gift of a cup of cold water to one of His disciples, *because he is His disciple*, shall have its reward (Matt. 10. 40-42); so minute will be the Lord's cognisance of character and works, and His rewards therefor; and they will be none the less *His* rewards because accomplished in the natural operation of retributive laws.

A murderer may be one who has little or no knowledge of God, whose hereditary disadvantages

may be great and whose environment may be very unfavourable. He may meet with a just recompense for his crime at the hands of his fellow men, and yet in due time come forth from his grave unto (the privileges and opportunities of) a resurrection (lifting up—all the way up) by judgment (trial, discipline). If obedient, he may reach the height of perfection and life everlasting, although the sins of his past life may have made mountains of difficulties in his character for him to clamber over during that Judgment Age.

On the other hand, one may be a moral man, who has "tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the Age to come" and who has been made a partaker of the spirit of holiness through faith in Christ; yet he may permit envy and strife to take possession of his heart; and he may *hate his brother*, though he outwardly violates no law and is esteemed among men. Such a one is a *murderer at heart* (1 John 3. 15), though restrained from outward violence by respect for the opinions of others or by fear of the consequences. Who will deny that such a one, because of light enjoyed, may have even greater difficulties to overcome in the reformation of his character than the grosser, but ignorant, murderer? To whom much is given in the way of knowledge, opportunity, etc., of him much will be required. (Luke 12. 48.) That judgment will be according to knowledge and ability to do right—a just recompense of reward.

When Christ came, He "brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel". (2 Tim. 1. 10.) Since then, proportionately as men have come directly or indirectly in contact with that Gospel, their responsibility has been increased, whether they accepted or rejected, opposed or ignored it. As it is written, "*This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil*". (John 3. 19.)

The Divine arrangement regarding retribution seems generally to be that of *sequence*, so that under it rewards and punishments follow naturally, as the results of obedience or disobedience to law. Yet in the cases both of rewards and of penalties God sometimes steps beyond this order; as for instance, when He exalts the Church with Christ, their Head, to the Divine nature, Kingdom and glory; and when He brings upon Satan and his followers *swift destruction at the end of the Millennial Age*. His extraordinary methods have also been occasionally manifested in the past; viz., in the destruction of the world by the flood, in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, in the confusion of tongues at Babel, and other instances of minor note. But these are

special and exceptional exhibitions both of His wrath and of His grace.

A just estimate of the Lord's dealings in the future judgment of the repentant of the world may be approximated by a careful observance of His dealings with His justified and consecrated children now. Though justified, we are not liberated from all the consequences of our past ignorance or waywardness. If in youthful ignorance and waywardness bad habits were contracted which have impaired health and weakened moral and physical powers, we have all the difficulties to struggle against now,

though we realise the Divine forgiveness and assistance.

This is our judgment day; and the judgment of the world will proceed upon the same general principles. They will first be brought to a knowledge of the Truth, and will then be judged according to their use or abuse of that knowledge after they receive it, as worthy or unworthy of life. The good and bad actions of their first life, previous to their knowledge of the Truth, will enter into this judgment only in the natural order of the retributive character of moral Law.

BOOK REVIEWS

"*Continuous Creation*" (Branfield) Routledge & Kegan Paul, 120 pp. 8/6 (9/6 or \$1.50 by post).

If the author of this book is right in his deductions, we have at last a completely scientific basis for the Biblical doctrine of the everlasting earth. We are all familiar with the nineteenth century belief that the universe is "running down" and that life on earth must one day end by being "frozen out". During the last two decades there has been a groping after certain clues which indicate to scientists that all is not well with the old theory; that while the universe is "breaking down" in some parts it is being correspondingly "built up" in others. Now Mr. Branfield sets out to show that this earth is not just a ball of dead material which sustains life only until it has cooled down to freezing point but that its whole fabric has been and is being built up by the interaction of life and living things upon it with the solar radiation that reaches it from the sun. Even the primitive rocks, the basalts and the granites, are the remains of once living organisms. The idea that matter came before life is wrong; it was life that existed before matter, and life that produced matter. That brings the author into line with the Bible. The Genesis account commences with the Spirit of God setting up a "wave-motion" on the face of the abyss, goes on to the impact of light, and after that there comes into being the orderly sequence of air, sea and land, the vegetable and the animal forms of the world we know. The book is an important one to us for it lays down what might prove to be the physical principles which will govern everlasting human life upon earth. Of necessity there are technical terms used which would be unfamiliar to the general reader, but all our "student" friends ought to read the book and apply its suggestions to their studies. It suggests things that might well advance our own understanding of the Divine Plan.

"*The Letters of Saint Paul*" (Translated by Arthur S. Way) Marshall, Morgan & Scott. 228 pp. 7/6 (8/6 or \$1.25 by post).

A book that all of our readers would find most enjoyable and helpful. Many brethren experience difficulty in following the reasoning of the Apostle Paul; so much appears rather disconnected and obscure. In this book Mr. Way has made a new translation, in a very fine and emphatic style, in present-day English, of all the Pauline Epistles and the Book of Hebrews, adding such short connecting words and links as will render the arguments easy to follow and understand. He tells us that he has tried to give the same impression as was made upon the early Christians to whom these epistles were first read. The result is certainly a book that can be recommended to all our friends without exception, a most helpful and understandable presentation of the Apostle's writings. There is a chronology of the life and order of writings of St. Paul, and the Epistles, which are arranged in the order in which they were written, are each prefaced with a short account of the circumstances under which they were written. Only two examples of the style can be given here: Take Rom. 12. 1 so familiar to us all. "*I appeal to you, then, by all these compassions of God, O my brothers—bring your lives, and set them by the altar, as a sacrifice, a living one, a hallowed one, acceptable to God*". For the other, one of the most obscure passages we know, Col. 2. 23, where the A.V. has "*Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship . . . not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh*" and which this book renders "*These restrictions do indeed involve an assumption of religious enlightenment with their self-imposed ceremonialism . . . but they have no real value even as checks to sensual self-indulgence*". In these days of high prices this book is unusually reasonable at 7/6 for a well-produced volume of 228 pages.

A Word with the Critics

A Comment on the Difficulties Confronting Historians

It is a common occurrence to come across a writer of the "modern scholarship" school who makes much of occasional discrepancies in parallel Bible narratives relating to the same person or incident. Such writers rarely make allowance for that divergence in the minor details of a story that does take place in transmission and repetition. Many examples could be cited. Here is an up-to-date one which was recently observed.

About one hundred years ago Henry Rawlinson scaled the Behistun rock in Western Persia and copied the famous inscription, an act which paved the way to modern understanding of the Babylonian and Assyrian languages. The story of his exploit has been repeated in numerous publications since that time. One would think that in this modern age, with its permanent records of books in libraries and the like, there would be no dispute as to the details of such a happening; but no

"*The Stones Cry Out*" published ten years or so ago, designates him Sir Henry Rawlinson and says he climbed the rock in 1833.

The *Harmsworth Encyclopedia* (1902) does not agree. It gives his title as Major-General Rawlinson and that his exploit was in 1837—adding that the inscription is 300 feet up the precipice from ground level.

"*Wonders of the Past*" makes him plain Henry Rawlinson, a young soldier of 25 years of age; agrees with Harmsworth in fixing the date as 1837, but makes the height 100 feet above ground.

The British Museum *Handbook on Babylonian Antiquities*, which should be authoritative, ranks the explorer as Major General and places the inscription at 100 feet high, but advances the date ten years to 1847.

"*Thrilling Voices of the Past*", about fifteen years ago, plays for safety by making the hero Major-General Sir Henry Rawlinson, Bart., the height of the inscription 500 feet, avoiding the issue of the date by giving it as during the period of the climber's life, 1810-1895.

"*Stones Crying Out*", a much earlier book, goes the whole hog by promoting the intrepid Henry to a full Colonel, the date to 1857, and the climb accomplished to a height of 500 feet not only by himself but by his troop as well!

Here are six accounts of a well-known incident

in the life of a well-known man within three generations of our own time; and of these six published accounts no two agree. Is it not reasonable to accept the fact that ancient writers experienced the same difficulties when framing their narratives? The marvel is that in a book such as the Bible, embracing so wide a variety of subjects and coming from the pens of so many different writers, the stories are so wonderfully consistent. There has, without any doubt, been a wonderful overruling of the Holy Spirit in so co-ordinating the work of those various writers that the Word of God has been to all generations, and is to us today, what it claims for itself, sufficient "that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work".

(For the benefit of those who may now wish to know which of the above statements is the true one, it appears that Sir Henry Rawlinson, born 1810, died 1895, was British Consul at Baghdad 1844, Minister to Persia 1859, Member of Parliament 1865, President Royal Geographical Society 1871. In his earlier days he was in the service of the East India Company and in 1835 was posted at Kermanshah, near Behistun. He first scaled the rock, and copied the *Persian* inscription only, in 1837. He went again and copied the *Median* version in 1844 and the *Babylonian* version in 1847. In this latter year he published his translation of the Persian version copied ten years previously. The complete translation of all three versions was not published until several years later. The inscription can be seen, in photographs of the cliff which are to be found in various publications, to be evidently not more than 100 feet from the ground. Some of the additional military titles found in some accounts are probably due to confusion with another Henry Rawlinson, born 1864 died 1925, professional soldier, who held commands in the South African war and the European war of 1914, and in 1920 became Commander-in-Chief of British forces in India.

The difficulties confronting the writer of history, even when dealing with events within a century of his own time, are immense. Some of the Bible historians had to deal with events much more remote from their own days. That fact should be borne in mind by would-be critics of Scriptural narratives.)

The Three Epistles of John

Comments on the writings
of the "Beloved Apostle"

Part VIII. I John 2. 18-19.

"Little children it is the last time; and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time" (chap. 2 vs. 18).

This consciousness, that the last day is at hand seems to overshadow all John's thoughts in his epistle and colour his words. But it is not a dark shadow, a gloomy prognostication of doom such as is so often indulged in by fanatics who want to see the destruction of all things terrestrial in a holocaust of fire. It is, rather, a bright cloud of promise illumining the trenchant words with the sunlight of the Divine Presence. John sees the coming of Heaven to the rescue of Earth, not as God rising up from Mount Paran with all the phenomena of storm and earthquake and fire, advancing in terror and wrath across the face of the land, bringing tumult and destruction in his train, but as the rising of the Sun of Righteousness, a beneficent and radiant effulgence that sweeps over the sky and embraces all the earth, with healing in its wings. John knows full well, of course, that the day of the Lord is to bring trouble and distress, that the evil institutions of man will not go down without a struggle, but in the sight of his brethren the Last Day is to be a day of rejoicing rather than of terror, of assured peace rather than anxious apprehension, a day when the oncoming King shall be welcomed rather than shunned. "When ye see these things begin to come to pass, look up, lift up your heads, for your deliverance draweth nigh." That is the spirit in which John uses this expression "the last time".

It would come as a very familiar thought to his readers. They, for at least one complete generation, had been accustomed to the thought that the day spoken of by Isaiah, and Joel, and others of the prophets, when God should set His hand to make an end of iniquity and bring in everlasting righteousness, had dawned. The early Christians did not make the rigid distinction between the Gospel and the Millennial Ages, with the great Time of Trouble to mark the transition, that we do. How could they? In their day the vision of the future was still very vague and shadowy. They had only just come to realise, by the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit, that God was not going to complete this marvellous work in their own generation. The old idea had been that Messiah would come but once, and would,

at that coming, set up His Kingdom on earth and fulfil the entire Divine Plan there and then. They knew now, that there was more to it than that. They knew that a period of time, perhaps short, perhaps long, was to elapse and that only at its end would their Lord return and commence His reign, the *chilia*, the thousand years. Dimly they perceived an epoch characterised by wars, famines, pestilences and persecutions, culminating in another Time of Trouble such as that which they then were experiencing, only more intense. Nevertheless they looked upon it all as one Age, the Age which, beginning at Pentecost, marked the turning of God to reconcile men to Himself through Jesus Christ. Peter saw the dispensational aspects of the Plan more clearly; he did differentiate between the time before the Second Advent and the "Times of Restitution of all things" which must wait for that Advent, but even so Peter, alike with John, insisted that he and his were even then living in the "last time". They looked back over the long ages of Old Testament history, telling one long story of the continued descent of men into hopelessness, and they looked forward into one grand age of Jesus Christ, in which, first of all the Church, the devoted and dedicated disciples of Jesus would be selected and trained for their future work, and only after that the world as a whole be brought into the purposes of God and receive a full opportunity of everlasting life.

Now John turns to the darker subject of antichrist. His readers already know something about it. "Ye have heard that antichrist shall come." One wonders where or how they heard. Perhaps something of Paul's teaching, recorded in 2 Thess. 2, had reached them, and they already had some idea of the part yet to be played by the "mystery of iniquity" when it should come into the world. Behind any such knowledge, behind Paul's own words, probably, lay the older belief, derived from the book of Daniel, that before the time of the Kingdom could come there would be an "abomination of desolation" that would defile all that is sacred and holy upon earth, and relentlessly persecute God's true people. The Jews indeed looked upon that as having been fulfilled when the heathen king Antiochus Epiphanes, nearly two centuries before Christ, profaned the Temple and inflicted savage atrocities upon the faithful of Jewry.

Paul and John knew, now, that the real fulfilment still lay in the future, and they ceased not to warn their brethren night and day that they might be strong to stand when the day of trial should come.

"Even now is it in the world" said Paul. "Even now there are many antichrists" says John. The great persecuting power which was to emerge and be consumed by the spirit of the Lord's mouth and destroyed by the radiance of His presence was not in their day in existence but the forces which were to give rise to it were already in operation. "*The mystery of iniquity doth already work.*" It is necessary for us, as it was necessary for the Christians of the First Century, to be very clear in our minds as to the form in which this Antichrist will appear to us, that we be not taken unawares and ensnared, and so unable to play our part in the great battle between Right and Wrong, Truth and Error, Good and Evil, with which this age is to close.

The essence of Antichrist is that it is a denial of Christ, and that it backs up that denial by means of brute force. It is not content only to deny the truth of Christ and the power of his life and message, but it also denies the right to honour and serve Christ, and restrains Christians in the exercise of their faith. In John's day this was only the beginning, as he says here. There were Judaising brethren who sought to bring Christians into bondage to the Mosaic Law, and Gnostics who sought to impose upon them the mysticism and philosophies of the East, and others who brought in specious heresies pandering to the vices and desires of the flesh under plea that Christians enjoyed a law of liberty and could do as they pleased provided they retained purity of mind, and behind them all the ever-present Roman pagan power insisting on the worship of Cæsar as a god. All these were the "many antichrists" of whom John spake and all these became snares and tests to the infant Church, against which they had to strive with might and main if they were to be accounted faithful.

Later in the Age, although the "many antichrists" still persisted in a local sense, the mystery of iniquity became consolidated in the form of a mighty ecclesiastical, pseudo-religious system that arrogated to itself all the rights and privileges belonging to the Christian church and the Christian ministry and claimed to be the only channel of salvation. But it is a mistake to suppose that the Antichrist was a purely ecclesiastical institution. It was a temporal power as well. Men were ruled, in secular affairs as well as in religious matters, by an iron hand that demanded absolute and unconditional obedience. Only those who were absolute in their loyalty to God and faithfulness to the Lord

Jesus Christ resisted the demand, and many such suffered persecution or martyrdom in consequence of the stand they took. Here was a power that did indeed "wear out the saints of the Most High", a combination of rulers, temporal and spiritual alike, who both denied the name and power of Christ for themselves and endeavoured by all means within their reach to destroy the true worship of God from the earth.

In our own days the power of that great system has waned; but the spirit of Antichrist lives still. The rulers of the earth are still of a mind to "take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying 'Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us'". Because the people of the world are, in the main, no longer amenable to religious authority, having become unbelievers, and by virtue of the progress of education and general diffusion of scientific knowledge no longer terrified by ecclesiastical threats of judgment to come, the modern manifestation of Antichrist is, and will be, of much more secular a nature than it has been in the past. But it will still be as much a determined denial of Christ and all for which He stands as it was in past days. That is shown very clearly in the visions of Revelation, where the last of all the anti-Christian powers to rise in the world, the "two-horned beast" which in the end leads men back to a worship and obedience identical with that which they previously accorded the "seven-headed beast", causes all men to receive a mark in the right hand or in the forehead; only those who are determined in their faithfulness to Christ fail to receive the mark. We must conclude therefore that in the end of the Age there will be a more potent manifestation of the Antichrist than ever there has been before, a combination of great civil ruling powers into a world system based fully and frankly on materialism, having no place or use for religion except as an aid and adjunct to its own plans and schemes, and demanding of all independent thinking Christians something very much akin to the Cæsar worship of the First Century. If we in our day should see such a thing come to maturity, we may take courage from the reflection that it is just such a power that is to be consumed by the Lord Jesus when He is revealed in the flaming fire of His judgments, when the Rider on the white horse, and his attendant armies, descend to do battle with the beasts of the earth and their armies—and the forces of evil are overthrown for ever.

Now for a while John restricts his thoughts and his words to the brethren and the church affairs of his own day. Thinking still of those local antichrists, the Judaisers and the Gnostics and the false teachers of one kind and another, who had joined

the church and attempted to lead away disciples after them rather than enter into a true and fruitful ministry for Christ, he says "they went out from us but they were not of us; for had they been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be manifest that they were not of us."

Christians at all periods in the history of the Church have been familiar with this sad feature of Church life; the coming into their midst of men whose motives are not the edification and upbuilding of the flock and the giving of honour and glory to Jesus Christ, but, on the contrary, their own aggrandisement and self-glory, the receiving honour and power in the Church that they might be counted great in their own eyes. Poor fools! As if the Lord of all the heavens could be deceived for a moment by such paltry hypocrisy—for these men are not, for the most part, unbelievers. They believe in God and in Christ, but they conceive of them in their own image and likeness, and even while they

deceive the flock as to their true standing, they deceive themselves. "Deceiving and being deceived"! What an apt expression it is! Apprehending nothing, or next to nothing, of the true principles of Christianity, they ply their miserable policies and devise their contemptible schemes that they may win a few followers whom they may call their own. Sooner or later they are shown up before the Church in their true light, and they "go out". But what sorrow and heartache they often cause, sorrow and heartache that might well have been avoided had the members of the "flock" been more adept in spiritual discernment and more uncompromising with all that gives evidence of not being of the spirit of Christ. We do well to apply these words to our own fellowship and realise that "even now there are many anti-christs" and that everyone who by his actions and teaching is denying the true spirit and the true message of Christ is, whether the sentence seems a harsh one or not, an antichrist.

To be continued.

GERMAN BRETHREN ASSISTANCE FUND Report for Year ending 11th April, 1950

It is indeed a great privilege and pleasure once again to draw up a report in regard to the above work, which has been so whole-heartedly supported by brethren throughout the British Isles.

The total donations from the many classes and individual brethren amounted during the year to £254 10s. 7d. and as a result some 440 parcels of food, clothes and medicines, and books, have been despatched during the period. Of equal importance has been the frequent gifts of food, clothes, medicines and books from so many sources, which alone have made it possible for the work to be continued so effectively. The medicines included halibut oil capsules, vitamin capsules, nerve food, ointments, etc., and in many cases specially prescribed medicines.

We are mindful, too, of those few classes which have maintained a supply of food and clothing direct to German brethren throughout the year.

We were privileged to be at the Annual Convention of German brethren at Kirchlegern last Whitsun, (1949) when some 750 brethren assembled, and it was noted that they had one hymnbook to every five or ten of them. A copy of their hymnbook was brought home, and by the initiative and love of a brother 4,000 copies have been produced by photo-print and are at the moment in course of despatch to Germany. The entire cost of this production has been borne outside this Fund. Concerning this work Brother Trippler writes as follows:

"The brethren have accepted this gift of love with great joy and heartfelt gratitude, and now through that which has been made possible, many little classes in Germany are able to sing again with the sound of the old, and so often sung, songs. It is a gift to the brethren that will not stand as a souvenir in a cupboard, but will really be of constant use. That in itself makes the value."

Meanwhile evidences of the Lord's will and desire regarding the continuation of the work or otherwise have been carefully and prayerfully watched and sought. These evidences at the moment shew beyond any doubt His continued approval, and whilst that remains the work will continue. Rumours and other reports have suggested that the conditions in Germany are almost in advance of this country. With the exception of a few isolated cases, the reports of the German brethren indicate that their conditions leave much to be desired, it being difficult to obtain the necessities of life owing to the prices ruling now.

H. E. NADAL.

When we are told of anything that we are to be or do in the Eternal future, it is that we may go in for being or doing that very thing *now*.

* * *

The attention of American and Canadian friends is drawn to the revised prices of publications on last page, consequent upon devaluation. Remittances are best sent by dollar notes.

Out of the Ivory Palaces

*"Blow upon my garden
that the spices thereof
may flow out"*

THE WAITING ONES

There are some among the faithful,
Waiting, watching every day,
Peering through the misty shadows
To the clear and lighted way;
Listening in the dusky twilight,
Waiting even in the night,
"Mid the toil and heat of noonday"
Bending forward to the light.

And they speak in eager whispers—
"Can we see His chariot yet?"
"Will the Master come this evening?"
"Will the Heavenly Friend forget?"
So they stand, these earnest servants,
Waiting, watching evermore
For the clouds to part asunder,
And reveal the open door,

There are troubled ones among them,
Looking through the weary night;
Some are God's dear little children
Watching for the dawning light;
Some are aged pilgrims, longing
For the Master's spoken word;
There are some in every country
Waiting, watching for the Lord.

So they take their daily duties,
And perform them as for him;
And they read His living message
When their eyes are tired and dim.
They are living lives of blessing—
Lives of love for His dear sake,
While they wait with eager longing
For the morn of joy to break.

Now He doth no longer tarry;
Soon He'll fold them to His breast;
He will make His watchers happy
In this everlasting rest.
He will give them satisfaction
For their days of waiting here;
And their joy shall be unceasing
When they shall His glory share.

THY WILL BE DONE

We see not, know not; all our way
Is night; with Thee alone is day.
From out the torrent's troubled drift,
Above the storm our prayer we lift,
Thy will be done!

The flesh may fail, the heart may faint:
But who are we to make complaint,
Or dare to plead in times like these
The weakness of our love of ease?
Thy will be done!

We take with solemn thankfulness
Our burden up, nor ask it less,
And count it joy that even we
May suffer, serve, or wait on Thee,
Whose will be done!

Though dim as yet in tint and line,
We trace Thy picture's wise design,
And thank Thee that our age supplies
The dark relief of sacrifice,
Thy will be done!

And if in our unworthiness
The sacrificial wine we press,
If from Thy ordeal's heated bars
Our feet are seamed with crimson scars,
Thy will be done!

If, for the age to come, this hour
Of trial hath vicarious power,
And, blest by Thee, our present pain
Be liberty's eternal gain,
Thy will be done!

Strike, thou the Master, we Thy keys,
The anthem of Thy destinies!
The minor of Thy loftier strain,
Our hearts shall beat the old refrain,
Thy will be done!

(Whittier.)

WHITSUN CONVENTION AT BIRMINGHAM

The fine tradition of the annual assembly of Bible Students in the Digbeth Institute, Birmingham, sponsored by the Midlands brethren, was maintained by an edifying and encouraging gathering at Whitsuntide. Over two hundred brethren from all parts of the land must have attended various sessions. Provision of material needs and comforts for the friends was, as usual, ample in every respect. The large, well appointed hall is far enough from the main street to be immune from the noise and bustle of the city.

The Convention opened on Saturday afternoon with a Word of Welcome from Brother T. Allen (*Leicester*), Chairman of the Convention. His remarks centred in Psa. 133, and he exhorted the friends to exercise the spirit of love and righteousness that had existed in all previous gatherings such as this.

Brother Musk (*Rosendale*) gave the first discourse, entitled "Take Heed". From his text in Deut. 4. 7-9 the speaker drew a lesson in which he suggested that the graven images of long ago well depicted the desire to-day, for organisation and sectarianism. Notable among a number of Scriptural citations exhorting us to "take heed" was the instruction of our Lord to have a sure foundation, and to build with the precious things contained in the Word. In these "last days" we more especially needed "to take heed unto the sure word of prophecy".

Brother W. F. Fox (*Yeovil*) addressed the brethren in the evening upon the "Promises of God". Using Rom. 4. 20 and 2 Cor. 1. 20 it was shown how the promise given to Abraham was fulfilled in Christ. The promises of God were then traced from the beginning of Creation until their grand fulfilment in the ages of glory. The promises made to God's children in this age were emphasised, particularly "the boundless stores of grace" which are ours if we wait upon Him.

On Sunday morning, following an uplifting period of grace, Brother Chrimmes (*Manchester*) spoke to an attentive audience concerning the theme "Trial by the Word". His thoughts were based upon Psa. 105. 19-22 and were centred around the life of Joseph. From the story of that faithful servant of God, many practical and inspiring lessons were drawn. Had Joseph not been sold as a slave into Egypt he would have remained unnoticed in his father's home. He might have continued in

Potiphar's house or have been released from prison when he wanted to, but then he would have missed the great opportunities of his life. By the fires of affliction he was prepared for God's work and by faith in God's promises he was highly favoured.

After lunch, three short addresses were given by Brothers John Shepherd (*London*), John Thompson (*London*) and Derrick Nadal (*Welling*), upon Paul's words in Phil. 3. 10. The theme of the first phrase "To know Him", clearly pointed out the need of an intimate knowledge and personal relationship with the Lord. The "power of His resurrection" was then discussed, and it was shown that the Christian ideal could only be reached in the strength and power of God. Finally, the "fellowship of His sufferings" emphasised the need to be willing to lose everything of this life in order that we might share His glory in the Kingdom.

Then came a further stimulating session of praise in which many brethren were able to select a verse from a favourite hymn. For the remainder of the afternoon the brethren listened to Brother R. G. Barratt (*Ilford*) on the elevating theme of "Centred in Christ". Linking the phases of God's power through Christ in three texts, Gen. 1. 2, Acts 2. 1-4 and Rev. 22. 17, brother took the minds of the audience through God's purpose from the time when the "Word" created all things in heaven and earth, until that time when everything will be subject to Him. The great climax of God's purpose was shown in Christ's First Advent when He lived and died for all mankind.

In the concluding discourse, Brother Lodge (*London*) described a pastoral scene. He showed how natural Israel, individually and collectively, had been shepherded by God. Later, he pointed to Jesus as the Shepherd of the Church and how His care was manifested by feeding, protecting and healing His sheep. He concluded by pointing out that the sheep-like characteristics of meekness and docility were essential for us to be rightly led of the Lord (Heb. 12. 20-21).

Another time of great happiness drew to its close with the singing of "God be with you till we meet again". The prayer and praise, the discourses and exhortations, the fellowship throughout the gathering had been wonderfully uplifting and has renewed us to go once more into the world of men to reflect something of the glory to them, which He had shed into our hearts.

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).

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FREE TRACTS

The following tracts are supplied free on request, stating quantity that can usefully be distributed. The Tract Fund is supported entirely by voluntary offerings.

Millennial Message 4-page, 11½ in. x 8½ in. when folded. This is an illustrated "Truth" newspaper, each issue containing articles on current events and daily news in the light of the coming Kingdom, and upon Biblical subjects calculated to interest the public.

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107 The Son of God. 115 Satan.

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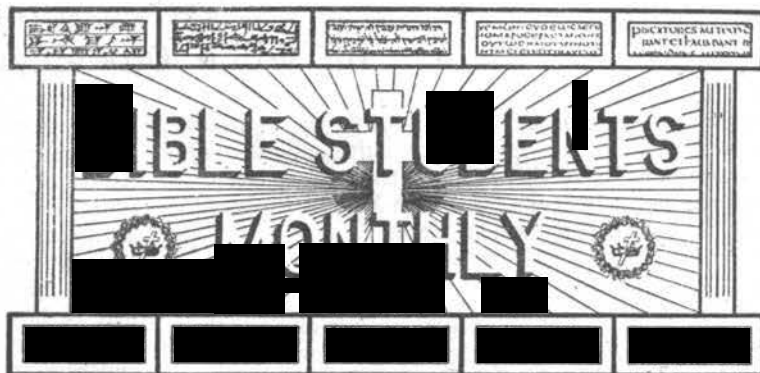
202 The Dawn of a New Era.

203 Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand.

204 Sure Word of Prophecy.



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



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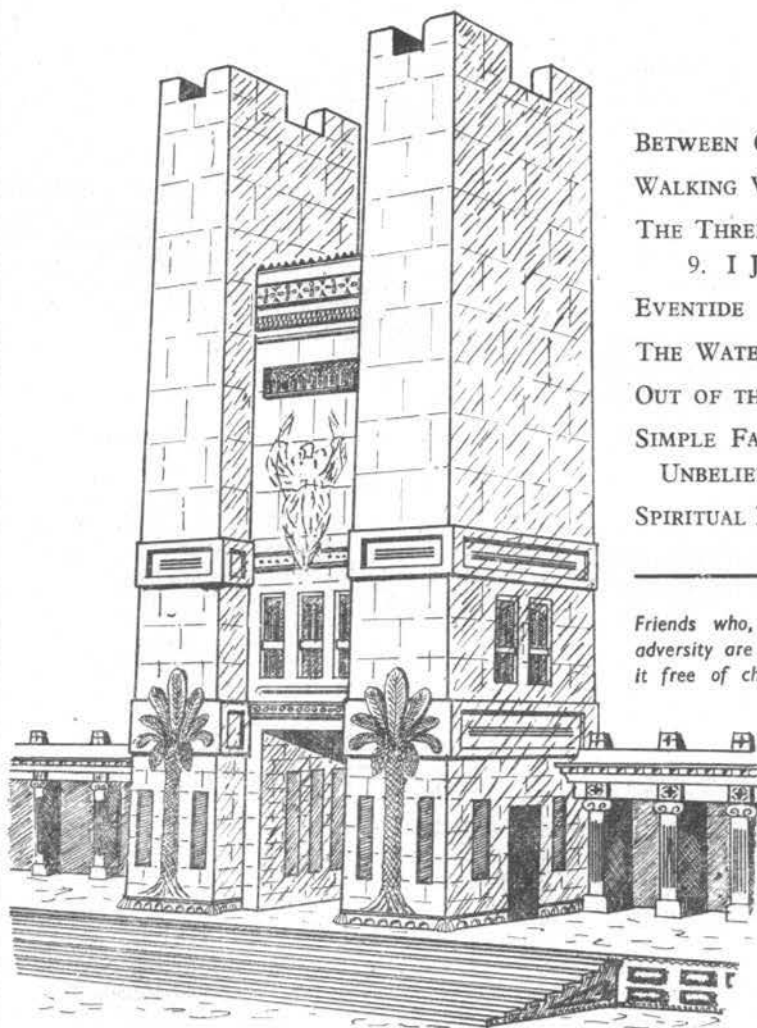
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Melbourne, Australia.



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

BETWEEN OURSELVES

The brethren at Dewsbury announce a week-end Home Gathering on October 7th-8th in the Central Liberal Club, Bond Street, Dewsbury, and extend a warm welcome to all who can attend. Details and programmes may be obtained from Miss A. Rothery, 139, Westgate, Cleckheaton, Yorks.

* * *

We would acknowledge with very sincere appreciation the receipt of an anonymous gift of £5 with the message attached "A few pounds towards the good work". The brother or sister who sent this gift may be assured that it will be used for the furtherance of the message which means so much to all of us.

* * *

The hymn sheets which have served the interests of our public meetings in various parts of the country have at last been exhausted and a few new ones to meet immediate requirements have been printed. The new sheet is, like its predecessor, a folded card having space for name and address of anyone interested at the meeting, and includes a new selection of sixteen of our hymns most suitable for such meetings. The price is higher than of old; that is only to be expected since our previous sheet was printed before the war. We can supply these sheets at 8/6 per 100 post free for those who would wish to pay for them; for others who would find this too much of a burden on top of their other expenses we shall be glad to send them either free of all charge or to accept such contribution as it is possible to send.

* * *

Bagster's pocket Greek-English and Hebrew-English Lexicons are now available and we can send either if desired at 7/- each post free or 13/6 the pair, post free.

* * *

The friends are reminded of the Home Gathering planned by the Cardiff brethren, to be held on September 23rd-24th, at 35, Windsor Place, Cardiff (23rd), and at Pavilion Cafe, St. Mary Street, Cardiff (24th), and at which Bros. Fox (Yeovil), French (London), and Pritchard (Bristol) are expected to speak. Lunch and tea on Sunday are provided, and tea on Saturday can easily be obtained locally. Friends desiring accommodation, or wishing for further details, are desired to write to the secretary of the gathering, Bro. L. Shephard, Flat B, 1, Walter Road, Swansea, South Wales. If no programme is enclosed with this copy of the "Monthly" one can be obtained upon application to Bro. Shephard.

A programme of the "Assembly of Witness" to be conducted on September 16th-17th by the Manchester and district brethren at Queen's Hall, Albert Square, Manchester, will be found enclosed in this issue of the "Monthly". Full details of the arrangements are shown on the programme; it remains only for us to express what we feel sure will be the prayer of many hearts, that the gathering may be blessed by our Master to the good of those who attend and all who are in any way concerned, and that the message to be spoken may be given with zeal according to knowledge, and be the means of furthering the interests of God's Kingdom in the earth.

* * *

From time to time friends have enquired if we can supply the Masoretic translation (alternatively known as "Margolis"). This is a translation of the Old Testament prepared by a committee of Jewish scholars and first published in 1917. It was intended to become the standard translation for English speaking Jews and to supersede that of Leeser, which is fairly well-known amongst us. For some time it has been unobtainable but we are now able to supply a new edition from Welling upon request, at 13/6 post free. The book is a handsome and well-produced volume and contains a most useful introduction dealing with the origin and the various translations of the Hebrew Bible.

Gone from Us

Bro. W. Rayson (*Leamington*)
Sis. B. Morris (*Warwick*)
Sis. Darvell (*Egremont*)

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

LONDON
MONTHLY MEETING
Saturday, 16th September, 1950
6.30—8.30 p.m.

In the Tudor Hall
CAXTON HALL
Caxton Street, Westminster, S.W.1
5 mins. St. James Park Station and Victoria Street

Speaker: Bro. H. C. Thackway.

WALKING WITH GOD

An example from a
very ancient age

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

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

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

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

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

to some that his conception of walking in the light is elementary. John begins his epistle by declaring that he is pursuing no myth, no supposition, no uncertainty (just as Peter had said early in his epistle that they were not following cunningly devised fables) and on that basis urges his readers to join in fellowship with God and His Son and other believers (v. 3). Having said that much, he announces his great message which as an apostle, he has to declare. It is just this (v. 5) that God is light and in him is no darkness at all. What would be the thoughts of the church to-day were they to receive a message from an apostle couched in these words, and with that as its dominant message? Some might say that they expected something up-to-date, something about the signs of the times, or some remarkable unveiling of Revelation that only the true people of God would be able to fathom. Let it be said now, that the message from John is up-to-date, for it is one of the truths which are without thought of time, without horizon. It was one of the first truths (if not the first) of creation and will certainly be the last (if there is any last). And here we meet face to face the purpose of Bible truth. This is the message if we wish to walk in the light (of fellowship), but not the message if we wish to walk in the light (of information). Let us in our minds turn back to the example of Enoch. Did he not turn away from the darkened world believing in faith this very truth—that God is light and in him is no darkness at all? And he found the truth of the words later spoken by James "Draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to you". Being met halfway, he walked with his God in the light of fellowship receiving the reward of those who diligently seek him. The Christian is similarly blessed, and here we may remember the words of Jesus. John 6. 45, 46, 37 "*And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and learned of the Father, cometh unto me. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and he that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out*". But as the Christian approaches in faith he will surely feel himself to be a man of unclean lips; especially if he compares himself with the source of all light. He could then be despondent, but providentially for him the apostle John has foreseen these thoughts within his heart and has given the answer before he speaks. In the seventh verse he tells that the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. There is therefore no hindrance to continual fellowship, the only possible barrier being removed by Him with whom we would walk. And so John's message is most appropriate to them in his day and to us—that God is light, and freed by Him of all sense of unworthiness we may

fellowship with Him and His Son. It was true of Enoch, that being justified by faith and therefore judicially free of fault, he could walk with Him ; and the standing of justification has added blessing now that the darkness is past and the true light shineth. And not that the light of the world has come, as the representative of Him who is light, to walk in the light means also to have fellowship with Him, or in the words of Jesus himself to his disciples "Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light. . . . While ye have the light believe in the light, that ye may be children of the light".

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

We may now be assured that in receiving the cleansing from Him with whom we walk there can be no other barrier to us continuing in the light of his countenance. But how shall we travel further in the walk of companionship ? We may obtain an answer by recalling the walk to Emmaus. The fellowship of the two disciples was disturbed even to the point of dismay because for them the light had gone out, for they had trusted that it would have been he in whom they believed who would redeem Israel. They were not at that moment walking in the light of assurance ; but they were willing enough to tell their woe to the stranger who drew near asking "What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad ?" Let us learn from them. They told him all that was in their hearts and He replied with telling them of the Scriptures, the light of truth.

And soon the threescore furlongs walk from Jerusalem became a walk in fellowship with Him and His Father who of old had caused holy men to write the scriptures in which they trusted. All that was needed to turn the sad journey into communion was their teachers' reminding them and linking the words of the prophets of God. And it is just there, in the word of God, that we may continually have fellowship with God and His Son. There is revealed His will and plan for all of us ; there are the words of comfort and consolation we need ; there is the advice to help us to walk in the Spirit, in newness of life, and to walk worthily of our calling, there also is that assistance we need whereby we may pray aright, (for prayer is another means of walking with God in fellowship), and there is the story which satisfies our longing as nothing else could do. We shall then rejoice in his word as one that findeth great spoil, and as the years of fellowship go by we shall find how much truer and grander are John's words "God is light and in him is no darkness at all".

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

As a Christian group, we have been blessed with a wonderful increase of light upon God's Word. Prophecy and type have been made clear, and the great mystery of God has been understood more fully, perhaps, than ever before, with the possible exception of the early Church. We have had pointed out to us evidence that indicates we are living in the time of the Lord's second presence and kingdom. Has all this blessed light humbled us and filled our hearts with gratitude ? Or has there been a tendency to glory in our knowledge—to flaunt our superior wisdom ? Doubtless, we ourselves are ignorant as to what extent we may have been guilty of these things and of how far we may have gone in despising less favoured groups. The tendency toward Babylonish characteristics of bondage and organisation became so marked that God's call of "Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues", became again the test of true discipleship. And again we have been made to realise that no strong earthly organisation can retain the spirit of humility and Christlikeness.

(*"Herald of Christ's Kingdom"*.)

The Three Epistles of John

Comments on the writings
of the "Beloved Apostle"

Part IX. I John 2. 20-29.

"But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." (vs. 20.)

Coming just after John's stern warnings against Antichrist this word is one of comfort and assurance. We have an anointing—the word "unction" means "anointing"—an anointing of the Holy Spirit, and that anointing is our safeguard and protection against all the assaults of the Adversary. Those who come under the anointing thereby come under the protection of God Himself. *"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty"* (Psa. 91. 1). There is no need to fear the power of Antichrist even at those periods of the Age when his oppressive persecutions bear most hardly upon the faithful Church. We have an unction, an anointing, from the Holy Spirit, and that anointing is all-sufficient and all-powerful for our safety, if we but remain under it. That is a great truth, says John, which we all know, of which we all ought continually to be aware. It is a pity that the A.V. has rendered the phrase "ye know all things", for that distorts the meaning of the entire text and makes it say that our possession of the Holy Spirit's anointing automatically gives us all knowledge. So many of the Lord's little ones, realising their own deficiencies in the matter of knowledge, have puzzled over this verse and wondered if, because they manifestly do not "know all things", they have not really been anointed with the Holy Spirit. We do well to remember that Paul said quite plainly that he and those with him had knowledge only "in part" (I Cor. 13. 9-12) and would not be complete in knowledge until beyond the Veil. Paul surely was anointed of the Holy Spirit! We are told, too, that it is because of belief that we are sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise (Eph. 1. 13). It is our faith and our consecration, not our knowledge, that ensures our anointing. The text is badly translated. Ancient authorities give it "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye all know", and modern translators put it in the same way. What John is really saying is that his readers are all recipients of the Holy Spirit and they all know that they are, and in that knowledge they can rest secure. *"I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth"* he says *"but because ye know it, and that no lie of the truth"* (vs. 21). Let no one think that

John has so little confidence in his disciples that he fears their defection from the truth through ignorance. He knows full well how firmly grounded they have been in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and how they are standing fast in the traditions in which they have been taught (2 Thess. 2. 15). He has no fears for their present position; what he does fear is for their future, when he and those of his generation will have passed into death and the disintegrating influence of time made its inroads into the faith and hope of the still waiting believers. He knows that the power of Antichrist will wax stronger in the next generation and stronger still in the generation after that, and he is striving with all his might to impress the minds of his brethren with the necessity not only of receiving and knowing the Truth, but of holding to it tenaciously throughout life despite all the opposition and misrepresentation that will be brought to bear against it.

The Apostle's train of thought carries him now to a fierce denunciation. It is his deep concern for the purity of the faith and the clear understanding of Christian truth so necessary to spiritual life that makes him thus emphatic. *"Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son"* (vs. 22). This is a much more serious matter than may appear at first sight. It is serious for believers, much more so than for the world. For an unbelieving Jew to deny that the man Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah of prophecy can be understandable and might even be excusable if the unbelieving one has his mind so saturated and dazzled by the glory of the Old Testament Messianic prophecies that he cannot possibly reconcile their *hero with the Man of sorrows Who died upon a cross*. Such an attitude is admittedly a refusal or failure to believe in Christ for one's self, but it is *not necessarily antichrist*. The condemnation passed by John in this verse is against the man who in his denial is deliberately fighting against the cause of Christ, and the setting of the denunciation seems almost to point to the apostasy of some within the Christian community rather than to those who are admittedly outside it. For professing Christians to deny that Jesus is the Christ means in effect that God, the Father, has not after all revealed Himself

to man. It is only through the Person and work of Jesus Christ that God has thus revealed and manifested Himself. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared (manifested) him" (John 1. 18). When Philip desired this same manifestation Jesus had to explain to him "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?" (John 14. 7-9). To the Jews Jesus said "He that seeth me seeth him that sent me" (John 12. 45). If Jesus is not the Messiah, then God has not spoken; and if God has not spoken, then our faith is misplaced and in vain and we are of all men the most miserable. John certainly triumphs above all such foreboding but he states quite positively that there can be no Christianity without Christ and moreover without the Christ he preached, the One Who is a redeemer from sin and an advocate for the sinner, and Whose death was necessary before man could be released from the sentence of death passed upon the race and an opportunity granted them to become reconciled to God. Any other gospel, says John, is the gospel of antichrist and the preacher thereof a liar.

We need to halt at this point and apply this to our own day. In our own time and generation, more so even than in the Apostle's day, there is this denial of Jesus Christ as a suffering Messiah Who must needs die for the sins of the people before coming in glory to lead them into eternal happiness. The existence of "original sin" is denied and the Bible philosophy of redemption belittled and dismissed as of no importance or consequence to the present generation. The effect of worldly wisdom infiltrating into theological education has been to introduce something which is quite definitely the modern counterpart of what John is condemning here. The person of Jesus of Nazareth is accepted; He is looked upon and worshipped as the Second Person in the Trinity, but the Messianic work and office of the One Who died upon the Cross is either ignored or else openly repudiated. It would be quite wrong and unjust to accuse the Christian clergy as a whole of this fault; happily the pulpits still contain many faithful men of God; but that a considerable body of ecclesiastical opinion does reject Christ as Messiah whilst retaining Him as a distant object of veneration and worship is true, and without any hesitation at all we ought to say, as did John, that those who thus deny that Jesus is the Christ are both liars and antichrists.

"Whosoever denieth the Son hath not the Father; but he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also" (vs. 23). The second phrase, although appearing in italics in the A.V., rests on good textual authority and should be quoted. It is just

one of the many statements which show how deeply and accurately the "beloved disciple" had grasped the truth regarding the relationship existing between Jesus Christ and the Father. The one cannot be accepted or rejected without accepting or rejecting the other. The one cannot be imagined as receiving or possessing anything without the other sharing in the same. Since His resurrection our Lord has been "set down with my Father in his throne" (Rev. 3. 21). The Father has committed judicial power equivalent to His own, to the Son. "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (John 5. 22). There is sometimes a question raised as to whether it is right or proper to offer worship and prayer to the Son as distinct from the Father. The question really need not arise, for it is not possible so to separate them. All the consecration and adoration and heart's best endeavour of all the disciples of Jesus which ascends heavenward into the presence of God is shared by the Father and Son. In that mystic oneness which we try to define but can never hope, in this life, fully to comprehend, neither can hold anything back from other. "I and my Father are one" (John 10. 30). The Trinitarians tried to define that oneness and failed, creating only an incomprehensible jargon that nobody has ever understood. We may try to define it, following more closely the Scriptural terms that are used, but we can never hope while in the flesh to understand it fully. All that we do know is that all our lives, and all we have in life, is yielded up willingly both to Father and Son, and that in their keeping we are safe.

"Let that therefore abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son and in the Father" (vs. 24).

It might almost seem as if there is a somewhat wearisome repetition of thought in John's exhortation. This constant stressing of the need to abide in those things which we have heard from the beginning is a theme that has been worked out to its extreme in later days and in our own day by far less able and spiritual men than John. But it is the true abiding in Christ of which John speaks, and he knew full well the absolute necessity of stressing that theme time and time again. These two things, the abiding in that which we have heard from the beginning, and the abiding in the Son and the Father, are those things to which we must hold fast throughout our days if we would receive the promise. Appropriately enough therefore, he comes in here with that reminder of a truth we already know full well. "This is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life" (vs. 25).

It is at this point that we have one of the most charming expressions of confidence in his pupils by a teacher that is found anywhere in the Scriptures. After all this long catalogue of deceptions and snares and enticements that may beset the path of the Christian, and all the grave warnings against being overtaken by the wiles of the Adversary, John expresses his complete confidence in his disciples and tells them of the basis of that confidence. "These things" he says "have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you. But as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him" (vs. 26-27).

Some have taken this text as excuse for claiming that they need receive no instruction or help in spiritual things from any man; that the Holy Spirit will teach them inwardly in a kind of mystic supernatural way. They need not and will not that any man shall teach them. It is a dangerous condition of mind to get into—or would be dangerous if our Lord took them seriously. Probably He does not. Probably there are many fanatics of various kinds who name the name of Christ and spend all their lives exploring and practising some fantastic philosophy or theory upon the basis of some such misinterpretation of a text, whom our Lord simply ignores. The thousand years reign will be time enough to deal with them. And it wants plainly to be said that this idea, that God will take an individual and give him special instruction apart from all his fellows and without their proffered help in the Christian way, savours of spiritual pride and certainly betokens blindness as respects the Divine method of building up the Church in knowledge and faith. God has set the members in the body as it hath pleased Him and given to each member a place to fill and a duty to perform for the building of the entire body. Neither hand, nor foot, nor any other member, can escape its obligation to serve to the edification of the whole, nor its need of that help "which every joint supplieth" (Eph. 4. 16). God has set pastors, teachers, ministers of all kinds, in the Church, and empowered them in various ways to minister to every one of His little ones that they might increase and abound in every spiritual gift and every necessary item of knowledge, and as an anointed company eventually attain the "full stature of a man in Christ" (Eph. 4. 13), so becoming fitted for His future purpose.

That which we "have no need that any man teach you" is quite evidently the truth that John had stated in the same breath. The anointing that we

have received abides in us. That is a self-evident truth. We have no need that any man teach us *that*. We have the witness of the Spirit within ourselves and no man can ever take that confidence away from us. That is John's faith, and ours.

So he comes to what is perhaps the end of one letter, now appearing as the first two chapters of this his First Epistle. The final verses appear to partake of the nature of a closing exhortation; it may well be that we have more than one letter in the First Epistle of John and that vs. 28-29 represent the closing injunction of the first of such letters. "And now, little children, abide in him, that, when he may appear, ye may be comforted and not be ashamed before him at his coming. If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him."

The abiding, then, is to be until He appears. The hope of the Second Coming burned very brightly in John's heart. He knew it was going to be a long time. That did not trouble him. He was concerned only that his flock should not be confounded or ashamed before the Lord at that great day. Here is a solemn thought for us. If it is true, as so many of us believe, that we are already living in the days of our Lord's Second Presence and that we live our lives as it were before His very face, how necessary it is that we abide in Him, in His love and manifesting His spirit, that we be not of those who are "ashamed before him at his presence". There were times when the twelve disciples quarrelled between themselves by the wayside, with Jesus perhaps, as they thought, just out of earshot; and He must many a time have gently reproved them for their lack of brotherly love and understanding, and made them feel ashamed of themselves. So it is with us. Whether we believe that our Lord is now present or whether we hold, as do some, that the time of His arrival is not yet although it is imminent, we must realise that in this crisis of the ages we do stand very closely before Him and that He is very near, and we do well to watch every point of our life's conduct, and particularly our relations with our brethren, lest we fail so to abide that we come short of His standards at the last. If with our fallible human judgment and imperfect reasoning any of us *has* made a mistake of a few years, one way or the other, regarding the time of our Lord's coming, He is surely not going to attach great importance to *that*, if we have at any rate continued earnestly waiting for His appearing. But if we have manifested a wrong spirit, have failed to abide in Him, have smitten our fellow-servants, then the case is very different. How can we expect our Lord to accept us in such case for

His great work of the future? If we cannot manifest His spirit and His standards in our contacts with our own brethren *now*, how can we expect to do it toward the world *then*? How can Jesus conscientiously, as it were, present us before the presence

of the Father as one who has proved himself worthy of the Father's love? The exhortation comes to us with keen, penetrating force, "abide in him, that, when he shall appear, ye may not be ashamed before him".

Eventide

"So he bringeth them unto their desired haven"



"Lord, if . . ." so spake two pairs of quivering lips in Bethany as Jesus came, at length, to wake "our friend Lazarus" out of sleep. ". . . if Thou hadst been here" how different the situation would have been! How sorrowfully, yet chidingly, spoken the words "my brother had not died"! That the gentle reflective Mary should re-echo Martha's opening words goes most clearly to indicate how frequently, amid paroxysms of grief they had reiterated these sentiments each to each. And very naturally too! Had He not sent by the lips of their messengers the most comforting assurance that "this sickness was not unto death"? Yet during His tarrying Lazarus *had* died! Notwithstanding His word of assurance Lazarus was dead, and had been laid in the tomb! Why had He not taken more seriously the tidings concerning the illness of His friend? Why had He not accompanied, with speed, the return of their messengers? Why . . .? Why . . .? Why . . .? "If . . ." "If . . ." "If . . ." "If . . ." "If Thou hadst been here my brother had not died"!

It is so easy, and almost inevitable, in times of sorrow or suffering for puny man to question the ways of higher Providence, and to assert that if this or that had been done when we thought it should how different the outcome would have been!

Things had been moving to a climax in Israel. Sign after sign, testifying to the Messiahship of Jesus, had fallen on unseeing eyes. One last witness—a sign of surpassing magnitude—was put into motion by Divine Providence. Lazarus, Martha, Mary, and Jesus had their parts to play therein—Lazarus to die, Martha and Mary to weep, and Jesus to weep, then to restore. A man, four days dead, was to be awakened, revived and returned to his home and place in life, as if decomposition had not laid its destructive hand upon his person.

A like happening had occurred before in Galilee, when Jesus halted the cortege and restored to a widowed mother's care her only son. But that had

taken place in Galilee, and malicious tongues could talk it down and rob it of significance. Something must be staged, enacted and exhibited in Jerusalem, for only in Jerusalem were prophets and righteous men fated to perish, and the culminating sequel to this final sign was to be the death, in Jerusalem, of the latest and greatest of God's messengers—His holy and Well-beloved Son. The enacted "sign" must therefore be set in old Jerusalem, and forced home with decisive impact upon the Council of the nation assembled there.

Let us not think of this tragic episode, therefore, as merely casual, or that it "just happened—so". Jesus knew from its very onset that it was intended, in some unmistakable way, to enhance the glory of God, and hence the fuller content of His reply to and through the messengers "*This sickness is not unto death but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby*". Also to Martha Jesus said "*Said I not unto thee that if thou wouldst believe thou shouldst see the glory of God?*" And so she did when the tomb gave up its dead and the semblance of the great resurrection truth which Jesus had previously taught her was bodied forth before her astonished eyes!

Let us now recapitulate. Events were moving to a crisis in Jerusalem and Israel. Many former signs had been of no avail to convince the nation of Jesus' claim to Messiahship. In the ordering of a higher Providence one last and vital witness to this heedless people was ordained and the home of Lazarus, Martha and Mary selected for its setting. Lazarus in particular was greatly honoured as Heaven's choice of victim for the seeming tragedy, to be compensated later by an unparalleled act of deliverance from death and the tomb. And Jesus, though weeping in sympathy with those that wept, had hither come as the finger of God (see Luke 11. 20) to demonstrate resurrection power and to kindle to a brighter flame a resurrection hope.

Truly "God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform".

Divine Providence! Mysterious, wonderful oversight in human life. Yet as with Martha and Mary, so little comprehended, so little understood! And why? To draw out faith, to develop trust, to encourage assurance! to persuade that it is better to

*"walk in the dark with God,
Than go alone in the light,
To rather walk by faith with Him
Than go alone by sight".*

How often has this mysterious oversight touched down into our little lives to shape our "means" and "ends". That otherwise unaccountably strange first contact with the Truth; that seemingly chance meeting with this brother or that; that fitly spoken word in that address; that presumed loss or bitter disappointment; that enfeebling sickness and tardy restoration; and a hundred other inexplicable incidents of life! How much easier to reproduce the two sisters' chiding words and reiterate their "ifs" and "whys", than bow submissive to the over-ruling Hand. How much easier to chafe and fret than to rest in His Love and trust to His care!

Providence is a great and effective teacher; its lessons are ever new and fresh, based ever on the little episodes of life, but governed always by the great principles. How do we react to it?

Perhaps it may be well to change the terms, for Providence is Omnipotence, Omniscience, Universality—it is high and deep, it is wide and broad, and we are but frail and weak and small and insignificant. But Providence is my Father and I am His child! That relationship is more to the level of my mind, for behind it I know is a Father's Love which seeks ever the best interest of His child.

But my Father is that Providence which rules the world, the sun, the moon, and stars, and all things that exist! Happy child with such a Providence to shape its ends!

Even, "*behind a frowning Providence
He hides a smiling face*".

*"Thou great and good, Thou wise and true,
Thou art my Father and my God;
And I am Thine, by sacred ties,
Thy son, thy servant, bought with blood."*

"The Waters of Shiloah"

*A natural fact and
a spiritual truth*

"Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son; now therefore, behold, the Lord will bring up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory, and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks." (Isa. 8. 6-7.)

Deep down beneath Jerusalem there is a strata of hard, impervious rock, sloping very gently towards the south-east. All the rain that falls upon the city and percolates into the ground gathers at last upon that unyielding shelf and forms underground streams which emerge at length as springs upon the hillsides outside the city. By far the most important of these springs is that known as the Virgin's fountain, halfway down the steep sides of the valley of Jehoshaphat. This spring never fails; the underground reservoirs feed it constantly and from time immemorial it has formed Jerusalem's most reliable water supply. The Jebusites, long before Joshua invaded the Promised Land with his hosts, had bored a tunnel from the fountain into the mountainous mass upon which their stronghold was built and

had then made a vertical shaft to the surface so that they could descend and draw water in times of siege without having to venture outside their walls. In much later times the Israelites—probably in the period between David and Ahaz—had built a covered aqueduct just under the ground to convey the water from the Virgin's Fountain to the Pool of Siloam, with the same purpose in mind. When Sennacherib invaded Judah in the reign of Hezekiah the son of Ahaz it would seem that this aqueduct had been blocked up and knowledge of its course lost, for Hezekiah set to work and excavated another tunnel through the mountain to convey the water to the Pool of Siloam, which was by then inside the city walls. In our days both Hezekiah's tunnel and the remains of the earlier aqueduct have been found, the latter buried far underneath the soil and rubbish which has accumulated in the Valley of Jehoshaphat since the days of Isaiah.

It was this lost aqueduct to which Isaiah referred in the text. That overflowing water coming out from the heart of the mountain below the city and the Temple, never failing, always fresh and clear,

was a very real Divine provision for the people. It was a kind of literal counterpart of the spiritual provision—sustenance, refreshment, protection—which God had made for His chosen. Quietly, unobtrusively, safe from all attack by enemies, the waters of Shiloah “flowed softly” to meet the needs of the dwellers in the city, and in just the same way God’s provision for His people was always there and always effective to meet all their needs and shield them from all harm, provided they would but exercise the faith necessary to avail themselves of its benefits.

But the people would not. They turned away from the gentle, pure, life giving stream and fastened their covetous eyes upon other waters, waters that were outwardly more spectacular and more pleasing to the natural senses: but waters that, had they but realised the fact, were not waters of life at all. They were waters which in the end brought trouble and disaster and death.

Away across the desert, in the land of Assyria, there was a mighty river. Men to-day call it the Tigris, but the Assyrians gave it a name which meant “shining water”. They had built their capital city of Nineveh upon that river and from there they had set out to conquer the world. The Assyrians are known chiefly to students of the Old Testament for their military skill and their ruthlessness, but they were also an industrious and an artistic people, and they had harnessed their great river so that it became the principal support of their economy. The river and its tributaries had been dammed at various places to create artificial lakes, great reservoirs which stored up the water that came down from the highlands in abundance in spring-time, when the winter snows melted. From these lakes they had cut canals, leading in every direction through the desert, and irrigated the soil so that it became one of the most fertile countries in the world. The children of Israel knew of this lovely country, so different from their own rugged, austere Judea—many of them visited Assyria as merchants and brought back tales of its grandeur; Jonah had preached in Nineveh only a century or so before Isaiah’s day—and as they compared the earthly beauty and the man-made efficiency of that widespread network of rivers and canals with their own modest, quiet, hidden stream of Shiloah, they turned away from the living waters and gave preference to the waters of the great river. They forgot that their own stream had never failed them and had always sufficed for their needs, and turned instead to embrace the appeal of a worldly creation the continuance of which depended upon the will and the whim of imperfect men.

To-day, the great dams are in ruins, the canals choked up with silt and sand, the one-time fertile fields returned to desert. The river, once alive with boats and teeming with activity, now winds sluggishly through marshes choked with reeds and rushes. The work of man has utterly failed and all the glories of yesterday have become as a fading flower. But the waters of Shiloah flow still, as abundant and as fresh and pure as in the days of Isaiah. The women of Jerusalem still draw water from the Pool, and the gardens around the south-east corner of the city are still watered from its overflow.

Assyria was the undoing of Israel eventually. Because the people had refused the waters of Shiloah, God told the prophet, He Himself would bring upon them the waters of the great river to overflow and submerge them in a great destruction. And so it came to pass. In the midst of their unbelief and wilfulness and apostasy the Assyrian hosts overran their land and took them away into captivity. Thus was fulfilled the word of the Lord “*I will bring upon them the waters of the river, even the king of Assyria and all his glory, and he shall come up over all his channels and go over all his banks*”. That is always the fate of the people that turns away from the Lord’s guidance and leading and permits itself to be dazzled by the more spectacular attraction of worldly things and methods. Doubtless the scientifically arranged canals of Assyria were technically much more efficient in watering the land than that quietly flowing underground stream emerging from the rocky hillside outside Jerusalem, but those canals could only be kept in operation by a prodigious amount of labour, and when the labour failed, as all human effort and organisation must eventually fail, the wonderful channels with their sluice gates and regulators and mechanical contrivances quickly went out of action and the water ceased to flow and the land dried up and became a desert. The stream that was the river of God has always remained full of water and has always made glad the city of God. Jeremiah saw this very clearly, and under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit he cried out aloud “*My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water*” (Jer. 2. 13). How often, in the days that have passed since Jeremiah, have God’s people repeated that tragic mistake! And it is not as though there had been no warning, no entreaty. “*O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments*” comes the voice of the Most High, regretful, sad, pleading. “*Then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea.*” (Isa. 48. 18.) Impossible

not to see in that eloquent appeal the picture of the waters of Shiloah, flowing softly, quietly, steadily, surely, through their narrow channel, to supply all the needs of the people of God in the holy city. We may enjoy those waters, in a spiritual sense, if we but rely upon them and turn our backs upon the shining waters that have been gathered together and remain held together by the mind and power of man. David in the twenty-third psalm sings of his being led by the Lord beside the still waters, where his soul became restored and where he found the quiet pathways of righteousness. Perhaps he too had followed the course of that crystal stream and seen in it a fit symbol of the Divine sustenance which he knew his soul needed.

This is a great truth, enshrined in this vivid picture. Divine provision for all our needs! The lesson is as necessary to us as it was to Israel after the flesh—perhaps more so, for we live in a day that offers far more in the way of distraction and attraction. There are more theories abroad, more subtle reasonings that tend to turn our minds away from the "truth as it is in Jesus". Especially is it so in this latter day, the day of the world's trouble and world's judgment, when the keenest and brightest of human minds are busy devising plans and schemes to restore the balance of the world without calling upon the aid of God, and the constantly deferred expectations of the "saints" tempt more than a few to give some ear to the alternatives suggested by man. Is that why the forty-sixth Psalm, in the midst of its description of world judgment, reminds us once more of the river of God that will supply all our needs? "Though the earth be removed . . . though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea . . . though the waters thereof rage and swell . . . though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. . . ." Yet, for all this . . . "there is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God." In the midst of the din and clash of earth's kingdoms, locked in deadly conflict, falling and disintegrating into irretrievable ruin, the waters of Shiloah flow softly still, yielding refreshment and strength to all who continue to put their faith in them. "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength."

It is only to be expected that this Divine provision for the people of God should evoke a response of praise to God. That at any rate is the theme of the Psalmist's words in the sixty-fifth psalm. The whole psalm is one of praise. It opens with the well-known words "Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion: and unto thee shall the vow be performed" and in verses 9 and 10 the singer seems clearly to have brought the underground "river of God" into the scope of his song, "Thou visitest the earth, and

waterest it; thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water". Now this could be a poetic phrase with no intentional application to any particular river, just a rapturous acknowledgment of the blessings of rain and water wherewith the land could bring forth its increase. On the other hand, the expression "the river of God" is significant, and the phraseology of the next verse does seem to indicate that David had the waters of Shiloah very specially in mind when he composed this noble psalm. "Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly; thou settlest the furrows thereof." The word for "furrow" is *geled*, meaning a man-made channel or a mechanical excavation. It is used to describe the aqueducts which were made all over the land to convey the precious water without risking its loss by evaporation. "Settlest" means to descend, to go down, or to deepen. There is the thought here of the life-giving water descending or flowing down an excavation in the course of its beneficent work, an apt description of the stream from the Virgin's Fountain flowing through the underground aqueduct to the Pool of Shiloah. In his joy at the continued providence of God thus manifested David cries "thou crownest the year with thy goodness . . . the valleys are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing." A continuous song of praise is pictured as rising to God from all things in the land, animate and inanimate, because the living water is flowing and does not fail.

In a spiritual sense our lives should be like that. In all our circumstances and in all our activities the background of praise should always be evident. We may not at all times see the river flowing; our ears may not continuously hear the murmur of its waters; the outward evidence of its presence may become for a while hard to discern or appreciate, but the river is always there. The waters of Shiloah will never fail, they can never fail, for they come forth from God. And while the waters flow our welfare is assured and we can—and should—continue to give praise to God. Like the sunlit valleys in David's psalm, we can shout for joy; we can also sing!

Isaiah, too, rises to this high plane of praise for the blessings of the river of God, but true to his character as the "Millennial prophet" he wants to bring all men into the picture and extend his view far beyond the Gospel Age and the Church, into the Millennial Age and the world of men. Neither has he yet finished with those Assyrian canals on which he poured such scorn previously, even though knowing, and declaring, that the great river would triumph temporarily over the river of God insofar as unfaithful Israel was concerned. But Isaiah knew that the great river would be rolled back and the

river of God come into its own again, in due time, and by a bold reversal of imagery he sees the quiet waters of Shiloah expand and increase and invade the territory of the great river and reach, with its life giving waters, all the world.

"Look upon Zion" he cries "the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken. But there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams, wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby." (Isa. 33. 20-21.) These "broad rivers and streams" are the ship canals and irrigation channels of Assyria, intersecting the level fields of that almost completely flat country in all directions, used both for agriculture and the transport of men and goods. Shipping of all kinds, from tiny coracles made of wicker-work and covered with bitumen, to boats capable of carrying a hundred tons of goods, crowded those waterways continually. Isaiah looked at all that in the spirit of his mind, then at the quiet little stream bubbling out of the hillside below the Temple, and said, in effect "In that day when Jerusalem is pronounced holy to the Lord, He will cause those quiet waters of Shiloah to become great rivers and canals overspreading all the land and bringing life wheresoever they come. But there will be no ships"; the "galleys with oars" and "gallant ships" were the merchant vessels and the war vessels, for the Assyrians had battleships suited to their day and age; and Isaiah made it plain then and there that the evils of commercialism and militarism will have no place in that new land of living waters which the Lord God is to introduce when the "broken cisterns" of men have passed away.

The waters of Shiloah will not always flow in secret, hidden from sight, disesteemed of men and precious only in the sight of God and those who trust in God. Men will not always look to the shining waters of Assyria for their needs and put their trust in that which is man-made to the ignoring of that which is God-made. The waters of Shiloah will one day flow forth to meet the needs of all the world. It is Ezekiel who makes that so very plain. In his vision of the Millennial Temple he sees waters emerging from underneath the sanctuary, at the south side of the altar, flowing eastward and emerging again under the outer wall at the south side of the east gate. It is an interesting fact that the literal stream that has its source in some undiscovered subterranean recess deep down below the place where Solomon's Temple stood does emerge below the city wall, half way

down the side of the valley, on the south of the Eastern Gate, from thence flowing into the Virgin's Fountain and onward to the Pool of Siloam. Ezekiel's description is really a poetic replica of the stream that actually exists at Jerusalem. It is impossible to avoid the thought that he had that well-known stream in mind when he saw the vision. And he saw it going outward into the country, growing wider and deeper all the time, until at last as a mighty torrent it reached the eastern sea, the Dead Sea, and healed those salt-laden waters so that they too became fresh and pure. "Everything shall live whither the river cometh" he said. (Ezek. 47. 9.) And as he looked, he saw trees, trees on both sides, growing rapidly and coming to maturity, evergreen trees whose leaves never faded and whose fruit was borne continually. That fruit, he said, was to be for the food of man, and those leaves for medicine, for the healing of the nations, and the source of the virtue that resided in both fruit and leaves was the river of life in which the trees were rooted, a mighty flood that will encompass all the world and will reach every man, the waters of Shiloah, flowing out from the sanctuary, becoming a river of water of life to which all are invited to come, and of which all are urged to partake. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Rev. 22. 17.)

The waters of Shiloah will flow to all eternity, for life can only be sustained by the continuing power of God. Through all the long cycles of the endless ages of glory, man will depend upon God for life and will look to Him for life, and that life will come ceaselessly, surely, enduringly, out of the sanctuary where God dwells, and reach to the farthest bounds of His material creation. The waters will never cease, for man himself will never cease to be, and in God, the Father of all, men will live, and move, and have their being.

If the life which you have chosen is really worthy of you, it involves self-sacrifice and pain. Shall you flinch and draw back? Shall you ask for yourself another life? Oh no, not another life, but another self! Ask God to fill you with Himself, and then calmly look up and go on.

* * *

Face the work of every day with the influence of a few thoughtful, quiet moments. Do not meet other people, even those of your own home, until you have first met the great Guest and honoured Companion of your life—Jesus Christ.

Out of the Ivory Palaces

*"Blow upon my garden
that the spices thereof
may flow out"*

"TRANSFORMED"

Through a cloud of earthly senses
Bursts upon my raptured sight
Such a vision of my Father
In his glory and his might,
In his justice and his wisdom,
In his tender, watchful care,
Manifested in my Saviour,
Rich in blessings everywhere.

Oh, it thrills with love and longing
Every fibre of my soul,
To be with thee, in thy presence,
While the countless ages roll.
Then a voice, "This be thy pattern,
See that thou in all thy ways
Make according to the pattern,
To my glory and my praise."

Thou the pattern, blessed Saviour,
How can I a copy be
Of that gracious, sweet perfection
Manifested, Lord, in thee?
"Keep thine eyes upon the pattern,
Look not thou aside, behind,
And beholding but my glory,
Thou shalt be transformed in mind."

Oh, my Father, in thy mercy
As I gaze with unveiled face,
Let me see, as in a mirror,
All thy brightness, all thy grace.
So in looking, so in longing,
Shall my homely features glow
With the radiance of thy glory,
And thy matchless beauty show;

All my days be crowned with gladness,
From the centre of my heart,
Praise to thee that in the blessing
Thou wilt let me have a part.
So then, in a faithful service,
For the loving service' sake,
Changed from glory unto glory,
I shall in thy likeness wake.

I shall see thee in thy beauty,
I shall in thy beauty shine,
All the loving, all the longing,
Merged in purest love Divine.
Satisfied with the full sweetness
Of the bliss of heaven above,
All my future spent in blessing,
All my being lost in love.

(C.B.)

ALL THINGS ARE YOURS

For me, O mighty Saviour,
What wonders Thou hast wrought!
My debt for sin was owing,
My pardon Thou hast bought;
Thy life for me Thou gavest,
Thy Cross did victory win;
Thy precious blood doth cleanse me
From every stain of sin.

With me, O loving Saviour,
Thy promise is to stay!
Thou never wilt forsake me
Through all the pilgrim way.
There may be tribulation,
Some burdens hard to bear,
Rough places may be met with,
Still I shall have Thy care.

In me, O wondrous Saviour,
My very life art Thou!
How great Thy condescension;
So humbly I must bow;
The self-life disappearing,
The life of faith be mine,
In all things undertaking,
Thought, word, and deed be Thine.

So for me, with me, in me,
A story all of grace;
And forward I am looking
To see Thee face to face;
For I have Thy sure promise
Of greater things to come,
A place for me in glory,
Prepared by Thee—a home.

(Unknown.)

SIMPLE FAITH AND EDUCATED UNBELIEF

A Comment upon a Present-day Tendency

In a recent book review published in "The Expository Times" (a religious magazine run by ministers mainly for ministers), a reviewer gave expression to certain compassionate sentiments which show how, at times, the deep currents of the human heart can be diverted or frustrated by the theological training which has made the ministerial mind what it is to-day. It should be remembered that most of these reviewers are the experts and intellectual giants of their profession, and that the words they speak not only make or mar the prospects of the book's success, but also constitute the forces which mould the intellectual trends of the day, for the up-and-coming generation which is following them. Consequently when confessions of futility and frustration in the religious world are made by these reverend gentlemen we may take these words and thoughts as an indication of the training which the young aspirant to the ministry is likely to receive to-day. If therefore, as Jesus said, there is a ditch awaiting the blind who are led by the blind, so surely must there be a "slough of despond" awaiting the "frustrated" when led by the frustrated!

It ought certainly to be to the comfort and advantage of the less educated reader of these pages to learn something of the ordained ministry's dilemma as they ponder on the ill-success of their attempts to evangelise the world, and of the deep fore-bodings which haunt some of them as they view the shape of things to come. Not that we would glory over their failure to do this great work, but because, in that failure, we find our grounds of assurance that a task of such colossal proportions was not committed by our Lord to the Church of this Gospel Age. It may also help us to see and understand that the conviction arising from full assurance of faith does not necessarily flow in orthodoxy's doubtful streams, whether ministerial or lay, and that, given simple faith, the country rustic or common artisan may experience the unceasing joys of faith, springing from a knowledge of the deeper secrets of God, far more satisfyingly and delightfully than the over-educated conviction-lacking modern college graduate.

The particular book under review contained the substance (revised and amplified) of a series of lectures delivered on what is called a College Foundation—an arrangement, based on the terms of

some donor's will, that such series of lectures shall be given at a certain time and place, and paid for out of certain monies left by him to meet the cost.

The theme of both the lectures and the book was entitled "*The Emergence of a World-Christian Community*". Apparently the lecturer had greatly stressed the ominous fact that dark forces are at work within the framework of our present structure of society, tending ever to disrupt and disintegrate the supposedly unifying influences of international science, of world-wide intercommunication and of intercontinental trade, and which, if not counter-balanced or neutralised by better things, seem calculated, almost inevitably, to bring our present civilised structure crashing to the ground.

Although the lecturer was a minister himself and of considerable standing in his denomination, he had had most reluctantly to confess that the modern rigid structure of the whole category of long-established Churches give rise, in him, to feelings of despair as to their suitability for the counter-acting task. They had all become too old and too inflexible for modern needs—too out-dated, and stiff, too much confined to their groove to be of service for the requirements of to-day. He had deprecated the fact that though the world-structure was cracking at its every joint Rome still stood unmoved and adamant, demanding Protestant capitulation and return to her fold ere co-operation on the great task could begin. Likewise it was a further cause of misgiving to the lecturer that the Anglican Episcopacy still requires Dissenting clergymen to accept re-ordination at her hands ere the ranks could be fully closed in readiness for the attack. And perhaps worst of all, Non-conformity is so hopelessly divided against itself that only by suppression of all vital questions of denominational difference can they ever hope to qualify either for defence or attack.

That was not a very pleasant picture for the lecturer to survey, for to him, unless there was a change more drastic than anyone really could expect, it betokened the fact that historic Christianity had had its day and was likely to be swept aside (if not swept away) before the onrush of the impetuous irreligious forces when they come to break loose from their present slender restraints.

Yet amid all this out-dated rigidity the lecturer claimed to see signs of a new world-wide unity in Christian fellowship slowly springing up, accom-

panied by a closer cohesion of Christian activity, animated by a growing consciousness that it is of the essence of Christianity to coalesce and form one single undivided community, thus to make sure that the Church is made equal to the missionary task entrusted to her care.

The lecturer's hope and expectation sprang not from reunion of the older elements, but from the fusion of the many smaller movements operating in many lands, such as the Y.M.C.A., the Y.W.C.A., the Christian Endeavour movement, the Sunday Schools, the various Guilds and Brotherhoods, operating more or less independently of the parent organisations all over Christendom, and which, because unfettered by the legal enactments of earlier days, are more free to coalesce and constitute some new and bigger thing. Exactly what its form and constitution would be, he could not predict, but ventured only to say that it would grow according to its needs and requirements, each kind of movement constituting it contributing by suggestion and experience, its quota to the complex whole.

Even now, so the lecturer claimed, this World-Christian Community is emerging clear and sharp from the chaotic sea of thought and as it rises more clearly into sight will be seen to be an entirely new edifice, of an up-to-date modern kind, fitted and equipped to meet modern needs, no stone for its erection being taken from the crumbling structures of the former days. All the old denominational landmarks will be left behind, and only what is new built on the virgin ground.

Consequent upon the wider union of the Christian Community a rise in the standard of Christian virtue would come to pass, so the lecturer claimed. This rise in the spiritual level of the World-Church will be, in part, due to the changed and improved conditions of human society, though even then perfection is not to be looked for, owing to the brevity of human life. Indeed the lecturer's idea seemed to be that the only chance for men to become really saintly would be if their years were as Methusaleh's! It is strange that this statement, intended only as a quip, should be so near an approximation to a truth. "... if their years were as Methusaleh's"! Exactly so! that is precisely the length of the period God has arranged for the uplift of man—"the years of Methusaleh" and a bit! One thousand years, and with Christ on the throne. . . . But it is far better to hold this truth as an article of faith than as a theme for a jest! So runs, in outline, the lecturer's dreams—his hopes and expectations for coming days.

The book (and lectures) stand on record as a sad but trenchant commentary upon the failure of the Churches in the historic past, and it is a thing not

to be overlooked that the criticism comes from within the Church. It is to be expected that the outside unfriendly critic would say that Christianity has had its day, but when the stricture comes from within it is surely time that Churchmen began to take time to think!

But then, is the new suggested outlook really better than the old? Is it reasonable to think that the Y.M.C.A. can succeed where the Anglican Church has failed? Can the Sunday Schools or Mother's Guild achieve what the whole batch of Free Churches have failed to achieve? Is the future prospect really as bright with hope as the reverend lecturer seemed to think?

The independent student of the Word, who has come to see that the modern awakening of those darker forces betokens the end of the Age, will be under no illusions about the nature of the immediate outlook in Christendom. He has learned that in the last days (of the Age) perilous times would come for the whole Christian institution; men becoming more and more lovers of their own selves, and most definitely greater "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God" (see 2 Tim. 3. 1-4). And as Jesus ventured to predict, "the love of the many" has waxed cold (Matt. 24. 12) while "the faith" is scarcely to be found in all the earth (Luke 18. 8). And, sad to say for the lecturer's expectation, those very movements on which his hopes are built are infected by decay and loss of power exactly like the rest.

That is not to say, however, that some sort of religious structure, more or less along the lines of the lecturer's dream, though not wholly new in all its parts, may not be constructed. But it will be exactly what the title of the book implies—a World-Church organisation, with its emphasis on the worldly side of it—a church toned down and well adapted to the level of the world it is intended to serve, and may be thrown up, not exactly willingly or even voluntarily, but by the drift and stress of the times. Then (if and when it comes), it will constitute a great step forward towards the great apostasy with which the Age will reach its ultimate end. And in that great apostasy the new organisations, as well as the old, will meet their final doom. The only hope for distracted fallen man is not the Y.M.C.A., or its many modern counterparts, but the Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

It is, however, rather the reviewer's sentiments than the hopeful lecturer's expectations which have prompted these comments. Here we find a man, charged with the kindest sympathies for all his fellow-men, fettered and handicapped by his theological chains. He says "While these are most impressive lectures they leave two questions in the

mind, not indeed about the soundness of their general contention (about the Churches of the past) or the truth of their forecasts, but about how far any historical treatment can do much to illuminate or satisfy the mind in connection with the essentially eschatological problems concerning the coming of God's Kingdom. One question is just the simple obvious one—How far any reckoning of present day statistics of nominal Christianity can yield valid spiritual data? . . . What is the value of such surveys in estimating the situation or making forecasts?"

Here he is on good and safe ground. The statistics of one generation have rarely ever been of valid service in forecasting the needs of the next. The Church has lived in a general state of change, advancing now, retreating then; improving now, deteriorating then—the course of one generation rarely being a criterion for the next. But the one thing this gentleman omits to count upon in his outlook is the return of Jesus Christ our Lord. That only, not the Church's unity, nor the Church's activity, is the one great eschatological factor that marks the coming of God's Kingdom in the earth. Jesus does not tarry in the heavens awaiting the establishment of that kingdom by the Church—He comes to accomplish the establishment Himself (Acts 3. 19-21).

Continuing he says "The other problem is how to bring into one focus the prospect of a victorious culmination (eventually) and the contemplation of the failure and defeat that goes on while generations perish. What do we really mean by the final triumph of the Gospel?". In other words how can the failure and defeat of the Church in former and present days be reconciled with the idea of any victorious culmination of Gospel service or with any thought of the final triumph of the Gospel? Where is the new incentive and the new fighting power to come from to bring success at last? From the drive of the Y.M.C.A., the Y.W.C.A., the Sunday Schools, etc., etc.?

Proceeding, he then says, "The characteristic of our time is not the certainty of the value or permanence of any earthly ideal . . . it is rather a widespread sense of the futility and frustration and waste in human existence". What a bleak confession this! Futility, frustration, and waste in human existence! And yet the Church of which this reviewer is an ordained member—and a spokesman at that—is the Church which, in theory, is powered by the Spirit of the Living God—Omnipotence! Is it becoming for the reverend gentleman to throw all the blame for the futility, the frustration, and the waste in human existence on God, and on the Great

Shepherd of the Flock? Is it true that human existence is but "waste" and of no purpose at all? Is creation a blunder and mistake? Or is the mistake with the theologian? What a tragedy when over-education in the seminary results in this! Better far that simple faith which takes God at His Word and looks forward from this vale of tears to that happy day when all shall know the Lord from the least to the greatest!

It was to call attention to the reviewer's final words that pen was put to paper in these remarks. His conclusion was "The solution the heart craves is some consummation in which all tears shall be dried, and every sacrifice justified, and tragedy turn to triumph for everyone who has participated in the struggle; a solution not capable of being stated in historic terms. . . ." Here speaks the man, not the theologian; the sympathetic heart, not the educated head! A solution in which all tears shall be dried, in which every sacrifice shall be justified and every human tragedy turn to triumph? Who among us would not say Amen to that? But note further, all this compensation and triumph is to be "for everyone who has participated in the struggle"—the living and the dead—the unwitting sufferers of every generation back and back to the point where the long struggle began! Here is something deeper than all the formulated creeds; something that rises from the deepest springs in the heart of man! Is it just the lack of the assurance that "these things shall be" that prompted our theologian to speak of futility, frustration, and the waste in human existence?

There are some students of the Word of God who do see all these things written there, backed by a "Thus saith the Lord"; who see that the dead of every generation, back to the first, are included with the living generation in the "all" for whom Christ died, and for whom "life" will yet bring its compensations. And they agree with the reverend gentleman that this is the solution indeed which the heart really craves! It satisfies the longing as nothing else could do!

Considerations such as these pose, for us, another problem; why do we see in the Word of God what the reverend gentleman does not? Ah, thereby hangs a tale, and a long one too—too long for elucidation and explanation here and now! Its origin goes back to the early Christian centuries when it came to be accounted too naive and simple for the subtle Greek theologians to continue to believe in a millennium yet to come, in which God's kingdom would be established, and men restored to life and peace and purity.

Instead they formulated the doctrine that the

Kingdom was already here in principle, and that it was the mission of the Church to compel men to come into it.

Through the centuries this conception has grown thick as an elephant's hide round the theological mind, resulting first in the Holy Roman Empire with its universal claims, and then later, among Protestants, in the national Churches of many lands. The ensuing result is that the adjustment of relations between God and man, reserved for the attention of Christ Jesus our Lord in the age near at hand, has been attempted in this present age, and has failed in consequence. In a life long as that of Methusaleh God has arranged for man to become indeed a "saint", a thing which, as ministerially confessed herein, is now an impossibility, because the material sanctifying power is not available, nor

can it be till the Spirit is poured out on all flesh.

Perhaps when we have thought these matters out the space hereby taken will not seem to have been wasted by this review of a review, if thereby we have been led to appreciate the great boon of a simple faith—a faith that is free from the trammels of ancient creeds, and free to take hold of the Word of God in that naive, direct and simple sense so utterly scorned and derided by the ministerial mind. 'Tis they who have the doubts and difficulties, the futilities and the frustrations; 'tis we who have the assurance, the confidence and the peace of heart, because the Millennial conception makes all the difference to the solution craved by the heart of man. Give God the thanks, brethren, for that Millennial outlook and expectation—it is the solution of many problems for both living and dead.

SPIRITUAL DROUGHT

*A Lesson from
the Life of King David*

According to the heading given to it in our Bible by the translators, the fifty-first Psalm is the expression of David's sorrow and penitence after his double sin of adultery and murder. In trying to arrive at a proper understanding of this penitential Psalm, we should not forget that prior to writing it David had been in an impenitent attitude for many months. It was after the Prophet Nathan's visit and the enormity of his guilt had been brought home to him that his pent up, deliberately repressed feelings found vent in this spate of self-condemnatory words—words which have been the medium of repentance for countless thousands of men and women, in more recent times, when throwing themselves upon the mercy of Almighty God.

Scoffers have ridiculed the Bible, and the God of the Bible, for setting forth before men such stories as this from the life of David. "This," they say, "is a fine specimen of a man to be a man after God's own heart—an adulterer and a murderer. If this was living after God's own heart, well, such a God might have been all right for those far off, barbaric times, but He is no God for these enlightened days."

This black spot, the blackest spot in his whole life, shows us that David was a man of like passions with other men, and that in unguarded moments the black depths of his heart showed how even the best of human kind was fallen in sin. It shows the truth of Paul's dictum that "there is none righteous". The inclusion of such a story in Holy Writ only

tends to show that the Divine Author has drawn a true picture of man when He said that the heart of man was desperately wicked and deceitful above all things. It is included, not because God approved of the sin, but for the very opposite reason, because God disapproved and strongly condemned it, and that it might serve as a model of God's clemency and grace to the thousands who should later be overtaken by their sins and should repent and confess their weaknesses and shortcomings. It stands on record as a permanent testimony that man's life is barren and cheerless when earth-born clouds intervene between God and His earthly creatures, and illustrates the truth of Jesus' (and Moses') words that "man does not live by bread alone" but only when in touch with the words of the Lord.

It was after the birth of Bathsheba's child that Nathan came to David, to tell him that the death of the child was to be part of the punishment for his sin. The better part of a year must therefore have elapsed between the sin and the deep repentance for it of which this Psalm is the expression. What had been going on during this time? What had David been doing all this while? The Scriptures do not say directly, but certain hints are given which help somewhat. We may form some conception from our own particular experiences of sin not immediately repented of—of sin never honestly faced, never dragged out into the light of God's presence and there confessed. David was trifling with his better self; playing tricks with his con-

science. He was substituting diligence in his duties as king and magistrate—his duty to man—for his duty to God. He heard and settled the disputes and grievances which came before him as Israel's chief judge (as did Solomon later when asked by the two women to decide whose child was living and whose dead); he received petitions addressed to the throne; he went up to the House of God to worship; he endeavoured, no doubt, to conform to and administer the law with even greater diligence. This we realise from his hot anger against the rich man who took the poor man's one ewe lamb to feed his visitor, as Nathan unfolded the parable.

It is likely that he had reasoned within himself again and again that he had done nothing more than Eastern monarchs did at any time they pleased. Was it not the commonest thing for an Oriental despot (and was not David a despot within limits) to send for any woman they pleased to become a member of their harem, and to get rid of any man who stood in their way either by violence or strategy or both? "What more have I done than is done every day by my fellow sovereigns?" David might say and think, and would he not make recompense for it by more attention to the administration of the law in coming days, throwing his protection over the weak and oppressed; the rich man should smart for his theft of the ewe lamb when brought before his tribunal, etc.

David had lulled his conscience to sleep so much that he did not recognise his own portrait in the parable of the prophet while it was being narrated to him. Not for an instant did he realise that his own conduct had been much more reprehensible, wicked and hard-hearted than the rich man. All these months he had been hushing up his sin, trying to silence his conscience by his activities (his war with the Ammonites for instance) until the Spirit of God winged those four words, "*Thou art the man*" to his guilty, restless heart. It was with David as it must be with all who leave their misdeeds unconfessed, he was restless and wretched. Listen to his own words in Psalm 32. 3 and 4, written also about this time, "*When I kept silence my bones waxed old. . . . Day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me, and my moisture is like the drought in summer.*" There was such a hard, dry, stiff, formal life all these months, so unlike the constant play and uprush of spiritual emotions in his earlier and happier days. His conscience was asleep, his soul was in chains, his creative genius was stifled, his life was like a summer's drought.

Oh! how many others, like David, have played tricks with their conscience over some unconfessed sin or weakness, and have carried their burden for

days and weeks and months until the drought of summer has come over them too. All the joy of the Truth has gradually disappeared; all the gladness of soul has evaporated, the songs have turned to sighs and perhaps an attempt has been made to substitute service for repentance, and the longer the fight has been attempted against the voice of the Lord within, the cooler the Altar fires have become until love has waxed cold.

Dearly beloved, if the joys of the Lord which once you knew have been lost; if your soul is in chains, will you not ask yourself the reason why? Is there some dread spectre in your life, some weakness unconfessed, unrepented of? Is there some earthborn cloud intercepting a Father's smile and blotting out the sunshine of His love?

Read the story of David, and profit thereby, for God was very gracious to him though He left him not unpunished. It is not necessary that there should have been anything so flagrant as David's sin to shut the windows of heaven over one. Spiritual dryness and lethargy can come about by sheer neglect, or it can be the result of some little "incident" where we could not have our own way, and hence we have failed to assemble together, and slowly the drought has crept over our souls. No stimulus from fellowship, no iron sharpening iron, no occasional songs of praise to lighten the load on one's shoulders, and later on, no joy of exultation in the morning and evening prayer, till we shrink from the bending of the knee—and then, all the little weaknesses unconfessed and unforgiven. Then the heaven becomes as brass and there is no rain for us. So David's experience became our experience. Spiritual dryness, spiritual lethargy, spiritual deadness, the loss of "the first love," the loss of the response to the things that once stirred the soul. How tragically sad and how prevalent!

God grant to all such a message from some faithful Nathan, which may start the tears of repentance flowing and bring down the showers of blessing to end the drought and cause the blooms and fragrance of restored verdure to shoot forth again in the heart.

Cities fall, empires come to nothing, kingdoms fade away as smoke. . . . But that this book no tyrant should have been able to consume, no tradition to choke, no heretic maliciously to corrupt; that it should stand to this day, amid the wreck of all that was human, without the alteration of one sentence so as to change the doctrine taught therein—surely this is a very singular providence, claiming our attention in a most remarkable manner.

Bishop Jewel (1522-1571).

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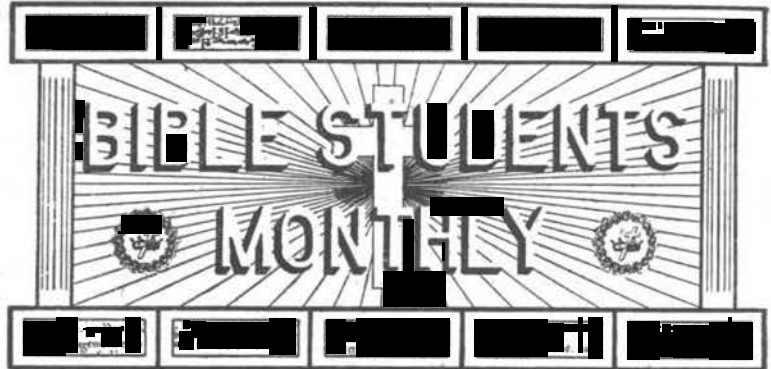
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Thou, therefore, endure
hardness as a good
soldier of Jesus Christ.



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OCTOBER, 1950

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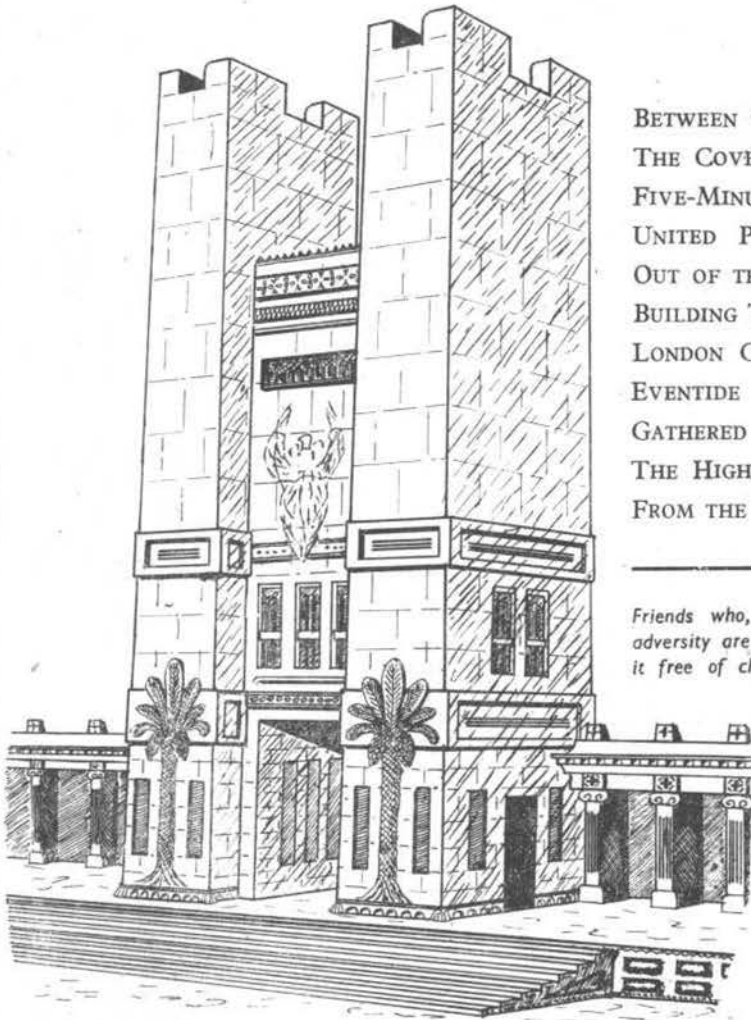
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Lift up your heads, O ye gates.
And bc ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

The brethren organising the Lake Webster Convention have sent us the following short report, which is reproduced (abbreviated) herewith in the belief that many of our readers will be interested. "We submit this brief report on the recently held First Unity Convention. Over 250 friends from 22 states, 3 Canadian Provinces and also England, gathered on the shores of beautiful Lake Webster in Indiana and for 8 days, in Christian fellowship. In harmony with Psalm 133 (verse one of which was the theme text) the Lord graciously poured out a rich blessing upon His waiting children, and the expressions of appreciation were constantly manifest. The Gathering unanimously voted another such fellowship assembly for next year. Regretfully we parted, but rejoicing in the prospect (D.V.) of renewing our fellowship in Christ on the scriptural basis of unity in 1951."

* * * *

Attention is drawn to the arrangements for the October meeting at Caxton Hall, at which Bros. Jennings and Lodge, who have just returned from a short pilgrimage among our brethren in America, in addition to their ministry at the Lake Webster Convention, will tell of their experiences and impressions. The very real interest that we all have in the welfare of those of like faith on the other side of the Atlantic should ensure that the meeting will be one of unusual interest.

* * * *

A copy of a new issue of "Millennial Message"—No. 4—will be found enclosed in this number. "Millennial Message No. 3" achieved a record circulation and replies to the distribution of same have been received from places as far away as New Zealand and South America. Now the opportunity is yours to continue the work of proclaiming the message of the Kingdom. Once again the papers will be supplied free of charge; the Lord has provided; and all who are concerned with this further effort to make possible the wider circulation of the message wish for nothing more than that all the copies that have been printed will go out quickly and to good effect. Please write in as soon as you can, saying how many you can use and we will gladly despatch at once. Those who responded to the notice two months ago stating their desires should have received their copies by now; if any such have not, please notify us to that effect.

* * * *

From time to time we draw attention to one or another of our long-established booklets for the benefit of new readers who may be interested but

have not particularly noticed them before. One such booklet is "The Promise of His Presence", the object of which is to show the Scriptural reasonableness of the conclusion that we are now living in the days of our Lord's Second Presence, that the first stage of His long-promised Second Advent has become an accomplished fact and the later stages cannot be long delayed. The booklet, based upon a series of addresses upon the subject given by Bro. A. O. Hudson in 1937, and then published as a series in the "Monthly", has been reprinted in two editions since then, the second having been issued in 1943. The number of copies sold since 1939 exceeds the number of brethren known to exist in this country, and although it is realised that many of our brethren do not hold this conclusion regarding our Lord's Second Presence it is thought that most are familiar with the booklet. Nevertheless if any, reading these lines and not having read the "Promise of His Presence", and having a desire so to do, will make request, we shall be very pleased to send a free copy to the "Lord's Poor", and at 9d. each to others.

Gone From Us

—*—
 Sis. F. Elwell (Mansfield)
 Sis. E. Kittridge (London)
 Bro. F. Caldwell (Arundel)
 Sis. F. Guillemard (Birmingham)

—*—

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

LONDON MONTHLY MEETING

Saturday, October 21st, 1950
6.30—8.30 p.m.

In the Tudor Hall
CAXTON HALL

Caxton Street, Westminster, S.W.1
5 mins. St. James Park Station and Victoria Street

Speakers: Bro. G. H. Jennings.
 Bro. A. J. Lodge.
 on their American visit

The Covenant of Noah

*God's promise to all
the earth*

The Covenant made between God Most High and the patriarch Noah immediately after the Flood is noteworthy as being the first of a series of covenants entered into by the Creator on the one hand and His creatures on the other. In a very important although restricted sense it is the basis upon which the three great Covenants of the Bible, the Abrahamic, the Law, and the New, have their standing. Without the carrying into effect of the provisions of the Noachic Covenant the other three would not have been possible of fulfilment. The ninth chapter of Genesis, which records the making of this covenant, is therefore a most important document for the study of doctrinal truth.

Take a glance, first, at the "background" of the narrative, the conditions existing at the time. The great Deluge, darkly prophesied by the saintly Enoch several centuries earlier and plainly preached by Noah for a hundred and twenty years, had come and gone. A wide expanse of the earth's surface—how wide we do not definitely know, but certainly including all the lands surrounding what is now the Persian Gulf and the lands of the Middle East—had been completely desolated by that mighty convulsion of Nature. In all the vast area affected, no animal life and no human life had survived, save those few who, drifting in the Ark, at the mercy of waters, found themselves at length in the fastnesses of the Armenian mountains. They came out to a new world, a world from which, at least, the shadow of fear had flown. The *Nephilim*, those terrible oppressors of men, were no more. The angels of Lucifer, who had misused their celestial powers for rapine and cruelty and murder, had been overthrown in the spiritual sphere at the same time as Divine judgment was executed on this material world, and were no more able to interfere with the normal lives of human beings upon earth. The catastrophe had affected a complete elimination of evil and evil-doers from the earth, and restored the remaining human family to something like the position obtaining at the time of man's creation. But as Noah and his sons looked down from the mountain slopes upon the ruined and devastated earth which they must perforce rebuild and restore if life was to continue, the thought must have come to them; at what terrible cost had the deliverance been achieved! We in our day know little of conditions in antediluvian times; probably the population of the world was small in comparison to that

of to-day. That a high order of civilisation, of knowledge of the arts and sciences, existed we must conclude from the evidence that we have, scanty as it is. And all that, all the material achievement of something like two thousand years, had been swept away in one irrevocable act that blotted out all that men had created upon the earth as though it had never been. The thought must have come to Noah, musing upon the desolation before him; will it always be thus, and must God periodically blot out all earth's achievements and make a fresh start in order to preserve righteousness and truth from absolute extinction in the earth? And if so, what becomes of the promise, made to Mother Eve and cherished through the centuries in the family of which Noah himself was an honoured descendant, that the seed of the woman was to bruise the serpent's head? What guarantee could there ever be, after this, that all the striving after righteousness and godliness, all the worship of an Enos or the walking with God of an Enoch, all the quiet faith of a Lamech or the militant evangelism of a Noah, would not be nullified and made of no avail in another general destruction which must from its very nature blot out the victories of righteousness in the world at the same time as the works of evil?

It was to answer questions such as these, and to commence the definition of God's gracious purposes, and the principles of His Plan, that the covenant with Noah was promulgated and concluded.

The covenant with Noah is like the Abrahamic Covenant which followed it a thousand years later; it is an unconditional covenant. It is an expression of something that God undertakes to do without attaching an "if" as in the case of the Law Covenant at Sinai. It was made with Noah as the chief opposite contracting party not on account of anything he undertook to do in the future, but on account of the faith and loyalty he had manifested in the past, just as in the case of Abraham. The great difference is that whereas the Abrahamic Covenant is the formal guarantee of God's intention to bring into being a "seed" and through that seed to bless all the families of the earth, the Noachic Covenant is the formal guarantee of His intention to preserve the earth and all its processes and amenities from any further destruction in order that it may remain to all perpetuity a suitable and fitting scene for the operations of that "seed" and

a home for the blessed families of the earth. The fulfilment of the Abrahamic Covenant requires a perpetually fertile and replete earth for those blessed under the Covenant. The Noachic Covenant guarantees such an everlasting earth. The Scriptural basis for our belief that the earth "abideth forever" is rooted in this ninth chapter of Genesis and this covenant with Noah. The surest argument we have against the mediæval idea that the earth is to be destroyed and burned up is founded upon it also; this too ought to weigh as a powerful consideration with those who, normally in general agreement with Millennial hopes, tend in consequence of recent developments in atomic science to think that, after all, there may be some kind of literal annihilation in store for the order of things on this earth, before the Kingdom of God shall come. Any such belief is really a retrogression to the "crack of doom" theology of the Dark Ages and is by no means a "walking in the light". The Covenant with Noah, rightly understood, defines for us the physical principles upon which "this present evil world" will pass into and become "the world to come, wherein dwelleth righteousness".

Now it was when Noah, after his safe deliverance from the destruction that had engulfed the world, built an altar and offered burnt offerings upon it that God enunciated and ratified the Covenant. It was a solemn and important occasion, for a new world was about to be born, a world that was to witness all the strange events associated with the Divine Plan of salvation, and the whole future of that world rested with those four men gathered around that altar.

"And God spake unto Noah and to his sons with him, saying

'And I, behold, I establish my covenant.

with you;

And with your seed after you;

And with every living creature that is with you;

Of the fowl,

Of the cattle

And of every beast of the earth with you;

From all that go out of the ark;

To every beast of the earth'."

(Gen. 9. 9-10).

Note especially that this covenant is made, not only with Noah and his three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth, and their children, but with the lower creation also. The great God and Creator of all things here pledged faith with the birds of the air, the cattle of the pasture land and the wild beasts of the jungle. It is a sobering thought; God has respect to, and regard for, the dumb animals which His own hand made and this covenant contains a

promise to them. This is not the only place in the Bible where Divine care for the animal life of the earth is declared. All Christians are familiar with the words of Jesus about the sparrows. "*Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?*" (Luke 12. 6) Jesus may have had this very covenant in mind when He spoke those words. Jonah, sitting sulkily under his booth outside Nineveh, heard the Lord say "*Should not I spare Nineveh, that great city wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons AND ALSO MUCH CATTLE?*" (Jon. 4. 11) Surely God must have remembered His Covenant with Noah at that moment! Fourteen verses of the one hundred and fourth Psalm are given to a rhapsody on God's care for the animals and the fact of their dependence upon Him for life. It is an important thing to notice, therefore, that this covenant is made between God and all earthly creatures, of whatsoever kind they be.

What was its purpose? The Covenant of Noah was established to record in formal fashion the Divine pledge that never again would the earth be destroyed. Man and beast alike might go about their respective commissions, to multiply and fill the earth, make use of its bounty, and fulfil their places in creation without fear that their activities would be brought to an untimely end by another universal catastrophe. Here are the terms of the pledge; they might well be said to constitute the charter of the Millennial earth. On the basis of these words rests our whole fabric of Millennial belief. "*I will not again curse (destroy) the ground any more for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more everything living, as I have done.*"

"While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease.

"I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there be any more a flood to destroy the earth.

"This is . . . the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations. And I will . . . remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth" (Gen. 8. 21-22 and 9. 11-16)

In these present dark days, when the hearts of men are failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming upon the earth (Luke 21. 26), and the world's leading men are proclaiming their belief that atomic warfare will lead eventually to the extinction of the human race and

the desolation and perhaps annihilation of the planet itself, it is comforting to remember God's Covenant with Noah. Here is Divine assurance that such a dreadful climax to human history will never be reached; God will not allow His creation to be hopelessly marred. In His own due time and in the exercise of His supreme power He will intervene and restrain the forces of evil before they can destroy humanity and the earth. "Except those days be shortened" said Jesus, speaking of this same time "there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (Matt. 24. 22)

For a long time must Noah and his sons have knelt around that altar, listening to the voice of God. The terms of the covenant had been recited and the little group had accepted their commission, marked out for them in the Divine Plan, to be the progenitors of a new race of men out from whom should be taken, in after days, the future ministers of reconciliation between God and men. But that could not be until a later and greater covenant, the Abrahamic, had been made. The smoke of the sacrifice curled lazily upward, symbol of God's acceptance of the four men gathered around the offering, and as their eyes followed it up into the heavens, their gaze fell upon the sign!

In order that future generations should not be without witness of this first of all covenants, God appointed a sign, a token, of His faithfulness, a sign that should be observed in times of rain and give assurance. The graceful arch of the rainbow gleamed down upon them from heaven. "And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make . . . I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth . . . and the bow shall be in the cloud; I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant . . ." (Gen. 9. 12-16)

The impression made on the minds of those watchers must have been tremendous, for not only the Genesis record, but every mutilated and distorted tradition of the Flood, lingering among all peoples of the earth, gives prominence to the incident of the rainbow. As men divided and spread over the face of the earth, despite their increasing forgetfulness of God and apostasy from His ways, they took with them the fixed idea that the rainbow was the sign and assurance of security and of faithfulness. Without any doubt it has become the symbol of Divine faithfulness and deliverance in the Scriptures. "Thy faithfulness" says the Psalmist "shalt thou establish in the very heavens" (Psa. 89. 2) It is difficult to resist the conclusion that David was thinking of the rainbow and the covenant of Noah when he uttered that sentiment.

Isaiah, later on, caught a word from the Lord, when under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit he cried, a spokesman for God "As I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I will not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For . . . my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord." (Isa. 54. 9-10) In all such words there is an evident connection of thought between the covenant made with Noah and the much later fulfilment of Divine promises in the protection and salvation of His people.

Ezekiel, beholding the glory of God advancing to the deliverance of His people captive in Babylon, saw the sign of the rainbow again. "As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was . . . the likeness of the glory of the Lord." (Ezek. 1. 28.) There was yet much tribulation for Israel to undergo, but protection was theirs, and deliverance in due time; and Ezekiel saw at the end the glorious vision of the restored Temple. Centuries later, John the Apostle, filling in New Testament days the position that Ezekiel occupied in the Old Testament, saw also the vision of God upon His throne, and of the Divine Plan about to move into action, as it were, for the overthrow of evil, and once again there was the rainbow, the sign (Rev. 4. 3.). More gloriously still, at the last, the great Deliverer comes to earth finally to deliver the whole creation from the bondage of corruption and usher them into the glorious liberty of the children of God, and John sees Him as One having a rainbow upon His head. (Rev. 10. 1.) The mighty angel comes down from heaven, enshrouded with clouds, unseen of men, but the eye of faith perceives the rainbow and takes courage, knowing, as did Noah so many millenniums ago that the word of God is sure and that what He has promised will surely come to pass. Says Ferrar Fenton, translating Gen. 9. 16, "the rainbow shall be in the cloud, and appear as an eternal record of the covenant between God and all animal life existing upon the earth."

The Covenant of Noah has no place in the arrangements whereby God is developing the instruments of His purpose for the reconciliation of man and the cancellation of sin. That was left to later times, the time of Abraham and his Covenant, and of Moses and his Covenant, and of Christ and the Covenant of which He is Mediator and under which mankind in the next Age will have their hearts of stone converted into hearts of flesh. But the Covenant with Noah was a necessary preliminary. It provided the necessary guarantee that this good earth, with all its wealth of mineral and vegetable and animal life, is to continue un-

interruptedly upon its course into the perpetual ages of glory of the infinite future. All who give themselves to God, whether in this Age under the Abrahamic Covenant or in the next Age under the New Covenant, can do so in full assurance that

their whole-hearted devotion and consecration to the Divine ways will not be lost, that having become reconciled to God they will go on into all eternity resting in the faithfulness of God and the integrity of His eternal purpose.

FIVE MINUTE PARABLE

It was a summer evening in 1937. Several friends sat watching two small boys busily engaged in digging themselves a paddling pool at the edge of the sea. With youthful enthusiasm they excavated a shallow depression and banked it round with walls of sand; then came the task of making a channel to lead the waters of the incoming tide to their excavation. The work was at length finished, and with excited shouts the two youngsters splashed and paddled as the sea came rushing into their pool, a swirling, muddy stream. For a while their contentment was complete, but then with alarm one noticed that the rising tide was threatening their walls. The sand was giving way—there was danger of all their work being ruined; and so with tremendous energy they sought to repair the damage with fresh shovelfuls of sand. To no avail, the remorseless sea came on. Then, with the necessity for desperate measures becoming evident, they fetched great stones, dug out of the beach, to reinforce the bulwarks. Still the waves battered down the defences, washing over the sandy rocks and leaving them clean and white, until at length, with cries of defeat, the two small boys abandoned their stronghold and made for the wider spaces of the open sea.

The watchers looked again, and now there was nothing to be seen of the fenced pool with its muddy water, but in its place a broad expanse of billowing waves sweeping ever forward and upward.

A parable in action. How many a time and oft have the angels looked down upon just such a scene as this. We who come to the feet of Him to learn stand aghast at the limitless expanse of the sea of Divine Truth, and in our littleness feel inspired at once to build ourselves a little enclosure where the revelation of Truth can be kept within bounds and the waters be calm and still; and in our inexperience we discern not and care not that those imprisoned waters cannot but be muddied with some effects of human tradition and misconceptions inherited from the past. And perhaps it may well

be that in such a placid and circumscribed place we are enabled as babes in Christ to learn to keep our balance in the water and become adapted to this strange new medium of life . . . It is when the onward sweep of "Truth now due" demands that "traditions of men" be swept away and that we enter into a "cleansed sanctuary" that fear comes in to say we have not confidence or strength to receive this Divine revelation; or love for the work of our hands proves stronger than our love for the Truth which it was built to serve. And then with impetuous haste there comes that frantic effort to build up the walls in order to keep out that very life-giving influence which they were first erected to admit and retain. Even as the small boys dug rocks from the sand to reinforce their structure so do some worthy souls resurrect the partial truths of past ages to buttress their already tottering defences, not realising that the light of Present Truth sweeps over and reveals those same teachings in nobler guise.

And it is all of no avail. As soon endeavour to emulate King Canute and command the tide to come no farther than to try and stem the power of Divine Truth. All our little castles, our mediums of service and organisations, can be only used in the service of God whilst they are acting as inlets for the waters of Truth. When once that purpose has ceased, and the seas are attacking their ramparts, we but beat the air in defying the influence which is at work "teaching all things, yea, the deep things of God."

The scope of the Divine Plan and depth of its teaching are, like the sea, immeasurable. We do well to build with our hands booths, temporary abiding places, where in quietness and in fellowship we can learn of each other—but we must expect the pillar of fire to be lifted up ever and again from the Tabernacle, that we may proceed stage upon stage in our journey, ever through new experiences, that we may at last, appear before God in Zion.

UNITED PRAYER

A word of exhortation

It is evident from the Gospel records that our Lord spent many hours in praying to His Father, often at the cost of personal rest and comfort. There is no doubt that it was from constant communion with His Father that He derived wisdom and strength for His active life of preaching and healing. Many of His discourses were directed to this feature of the Christian life, so that His followers might have a similar experience of prayer that He had enjoyed.

With the example of their Master before them the disciples of the early Church were not slow to adopt such an effective source of spiritual vitality for their communal life. Illustrations of their fervency in united prayer are clearly seen in the accounts given in the Book of Acts, as the early believers awaited the manifestation of the Holy Spirit (chap. 1. 14); and again at the release of Peter and John (chap. 4. 24-31).

Paul too perceived the power of prayer and in many of his writings urged the brethren to pray continually. He knew that if the children of God were to enjoy a real depth of understanding of the purpose of God, and if they would enter into the fulness of His love, they must be fervent and persistent in prayer.

The records of the history of the Church preserved through succeeding centuries make it plain that the strength of any Christian community could be measured by its ardour in prayer. Those congregations which met together in sweet concord to make supplication to their Father were always the most vigorous in His service although often few in number and persecuted for their righteousness. More numerous were the communities which failed to observe this privilege. These were inevitably spiritually sick.

The great reform movements of more recent centuries were largely built upon the fervent prayerful evangelising of the reformers with those who rallied to their cause. During the nineteenth century especially, prayer meetings became a regular feature of the many revivals. But with the advent of materialism and the tremendous apostasy from the faith, even those who still claimed to follow Jesus lost the zeal which had previously constrained so many to gather together for supplication and worship. So that during this century, in the movements where once the light of truth burned so brightly, this vital aspect of communal life has been neglected.

Even in our own fellowship there are but few ecclesias who gather regularly for the sole purpose

of prayer, yet with the evidences of the time of trouble about us, and the need to "watch", we cannot continue long without this feature of true worship, without experiencing a great loss in many respects. Too often the attention of the student of the word has been directed toward the doctrinal and prophetic aspects of Bible teaching, with a consequent lack of respect of the deeper union with our Father and with our Lord.

Perhaps the solution to the problems which have disturbed our activities and which have so often caused division among Christ's brethren, would be readily found if we came, united in Spirit as a family to the Father, in prayer. Difficulties too have beset us concerning our effort to proclaim the Gospel. We have tried many remedies and made many excuses as to why we get so little result from our literature and lectures. Why also have so many of our younger friends, Christian children, lost interest in the things of God? Is not the answer to these and many other problems to be found in the fact that we have tended to lose sight of the fundamentals of Christianity and neglected to seek the Lord together.

It is humbly suggested that the remedy will be found, in large measure for these difficulties, if each ecclesia or congregation could include in its regular programme of fellowship, a prayer meeting. Such meetings would be most effective if every member of the community is encouraged not only to attend but actively participate—whether it be brother or sister, old or young. Let us not be vague or reticent about this matter—it is of the utmost importance if our Christian faith is to remain strong and real; and if the other aspects of our communal life are to be really effective for Christ. Can we not hear the Master's voice still ringing through the ages:

*"Come ye yourselves apart and rest awhile,
Wearied, I know it, of the press and throng;
Wipe from your brow the sweat and dust of
toil,
And in My quiet strength again be strong.
Come tell Me all that ye have said and done,
Your victories and failures, hopes and fears:
I know how hardly souls are wooed and won;
My choicest wreaths are always wet with tears.
Then, fresh from converse with your Lord,
return
And work till daylight softens into even;
The brief hours are not lost in which ye learn
More of your Master and His rest in heaven.*

Out of the Ivory Palaces

*"Blow upon my garden
that the spices thereof
may flow out"*

THE TRIUMPH OF OUR KING

There's a light upon the mountains and the freshness
of the spring,
And by faith we see the beauty and the triumph
of our King.
Dark, dark hath been the night-time with its trail
of death and wrong,
But His triumph day is breaking and we hail it
with a song.

In the fading of the starlight we can see the breaking
morn,
And the lights of men are paling in the splendour
of the dawn:
For the eastern sky is glowing with the golden glory
fire,
And many a heart is stirring with a joy of right
desire.

There's a hum of expectation; yet a quiet in the air,
There's a cry of jubilation 'mid the sobs of dumb
despair,
While the kingdoms all are falling, ever loudly
rings the tone
That the suffering, dying Jesus is the King upon
His throne.

He is breaking down the barriers; He is setting up
the way,
He is calling forth His loved ones to proclaim the
break of day.
He is marching on to victory with the shining hosts
above,
And the drum-beats of His army are the heart-
beats of our love.

Hark! dost hear the distant music as it comes with
fuller swell?
The triumphant song of Jesus — our King
Emmanuel;
Let us journey on to meet Him, and, my soul, be
swift to bring
All thy fairest and thy choicest for the triumph
of our King.

GOD'S INHERITANCE

And can it be
That God designs with you and me
Forever more to dwell?
Can His great might
Secure for us the right
To be His Israel?
A people chosen to proclaim His worth,
To sound the praises of His glory forth,
To lead the van of an adoring earth?

This poor, weak clay
Can He transform in such a way
That it shall yield Divinity?
This sin-stained mind
So cleanse that He in us shall find
Affinity?
Th' abode of His eternal rest,
That habitation which He loveth best,
His chosen Zion? City ever blest?

If this be so,
Not all the wealth this world can know
Will me suffice:
Nor name, nor fame, nor power, nor pleasure here
below
My soul entice.
How poor these transitory things of earth
Beside this treasure of unending worth,
This Heavenly fellowship, this Royal birth!

And can it be
That down throughout succeeding ages He
With ardent longing waits
Th' eventful day
When—sin all purged away—
We'll sit within His gates?
Can we be subjects of our God's desire?
Doth He our loving fellowship require?
And to this height may such as we aspire?

How good to know
His never-failing Word proclaims it so!
Here, Lord, I give myself to Thee,
Work out Thy gracious purposes in me
Until in Heaven Thy blessed Face I see,
And dwell with Thee through all eternity.

BUILDING TOGETHER WITH GOD An old-time Convention address

"Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. But let every man take heed how he build thereupon. Now if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every man's work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire, and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." (I. Cor. 3. 11-15)

Every individual Christian who is striving to enter the Kingdom of God, is represented in the Scriptures as putting up a structure, a building, a faith structure, if you please, and upon the kind of material we use in that building depends our future, whether for happiness, peace, contentment and reward; or sorrow, chagrin, disappointment and loss.

The Apostle first counsels us as to the proper foundation for our faith structure, stating that no man can lay a foundation that can bring us eternal life, because no man can give a ransom for his brother. No man can lay a foundation that can give a hope of future blessings.

Therefore, *"Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."* (I Cor. 3. 11). This is in harmony with that other statement: *"There is no other name given under heaven, or among men, whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus only."* (Acts. 4. 12.)

But now, since Jesus is the proper foundation for our building, upon what does the foundation rest? What was it laid upon? All foundations must rest upon an underlying basis of some kind, and we reply by quoting our Lord's own words; He said He came not to do His own will but He came to do the will of His Father in heaven. And His Father's will was His Law, which is as eternal as God Himself, and therefore Christ, the Foundation Stone, was laid upon the eternal principles of the great Jehovah.

Next, the Apostle uses very powerful symbolisms to represent the material we use in the construction of these buildings, namely: gold, silver and precious stones. These symbolise those things in our faith that have the qualities of gold, silver and precious stones, qualities that are fireproof, qualities that fire will not burn. They are also rain and water-

proof. Water is a symbol of Truth, and water will not melt them, cause them to decay or wash them away. On the other hand, both fire and water will purify them and cause them to shine the more brightly, because they represent most beautiful truths. Gold represents Divine truths of the Kingdom; Silver represents heavenly or spiritual truths of the Kingdom; Precious Stones represent the human or earthly phase of the Kingdom.

On the other hand, Paul uses wood, hay, stubble, to represent the speculations, theories and opinions of men, which have qualities corresponding to the qualities of wood, hay and stubble. These are plentiful and cheap; they are neither fire-proof nor storm-proof, but are subject to decay and destruction by both fire and storm. Therefore, the Apostle urges, "Take heed" what kind of material you are using in these faith structures, for we ourselves have to do with the kind of material we are using in our buildings. It is our building in the sense that we individually are responsible for the material we use.

God permits us to select the material, and He further permits us to supervise and arrange our entire faith structure. Nothing is forced upon us by God. He does say, however, through His mouth-piece, the Apostle Paul, *"Let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon"*. But if we co-operate with Him, by using the materials he offers us, and His advice in the selection of material, and labour together with Him, then He is pleased to have us call it "God's building", for by so doing it gives us and our building a distinction and a reputation for first-class building and workmanship. *"For we are labourers together with God; ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building."* (Verse 9.)

The kind of building we erect depends on the kind of material we use in the building, for no building is better than the material in the building. A building built of wood, thatched with straw, and covered with paint, may look fairly well, and its builder and occupant may for a while feel reasonably secure and contented. However, in the time of fire, rain or storm, the building will be almost certain to be damaged, if not altogether ruined or lost, with only the foundation remaining.

Similarly, a faith structure made up of uncertain theories, opinions, guesses and speculations of men, may be put together quickly, cost but little, and when glossed over with oratory and fine speeches,

may look reasonably well so far as outward appearance is concerned, and its occupant may feel quite satisfied for a time. But when the fiery experiences and the storms and floods of life come, the weakness and undesirability of such a structure will be clearly manifest, resulting in sore disappointment and loss.

Therefore our future peace and happiness, or our chagrin and disappointment, will be in proportion as we have been wise in making use of the good materials for our building, or unwise in the use of the wrong material.

God has the *mine* and the *quarry* (the Bible) that contains all the materials for the best of buildings—the gold and silver and the precious stones. God freely offers these materials to us for our building, if we will only spend our time and labour to dig them out of His mine and quarry. And, for our helpfulness, God has provided the *tools* by giving us concordances, Bible dictionaries, histories, helps, teachers, etc., for we could not have all these if God had not given them to us. And still more, God has given us the *blueprints*, in the “types and shadows” of His Law. He has laid before us the plans and the specifications, and urges us to build well; and He assures us that if we do so our structure will stand the test of the fire and the storm which will try every man’s work. Whereas, the cheaper and destructible material will but feed the flames and result in utter disappointment and loss to its owner.

Now let us keep this in mind, that all who build their faith structure upon the proper foundation, Christ’s great redemptive sacrifice, are Christians, regardless of whether or not they are wise or unwise in the selection of materials for their faith structure. If part or all of our faith structure is composed of the wood, hay and stubble of men’s theories and speculations, we may be called very unwise or foolish virgins. The Apostle’s word further declares: “Every man’s work shall be revealed, for the day shall declare it, of what sort it is.”

God has arranged for trying experiences, symbolised by a fire and a great storm, which will be permitted to test the life-work of every man in the church, so that it is but a question of time until every vestige of the wood, hay and stubble—the opinions, theories and speculations of men—everything that is of man and not from God, shall be destroyed.

But why all the destruction? We answer: God is building a city called “The City of God”, “The Holy City”, “The New Jerusalem”, and all these buildings we are erecting, with their inhabitants who have passed the test of the fire and storm, shall become a part of that city, and that city will be

the Divine government. A city of gold, with streets of pure gold, with pearly gates and precious stones in its foundation, and its inhabitants having garments wrought with pure gold, is the Divine purpose. That which is represented by the wood, hay and stubble, can have no place in that city. Then how will all these tests be applied? Christ said, “I am the Light of the world” and light is the enemy of darkness. The coming of light dispels the darkness. Therefore, since we are now living in the “days of the presence of the Son of Man”, darkness of error, superstition and men’s opinion are giving way to light and Truth, and will so continue until the world is cleansed of all human philosophies and speculations, as we read: “His lightnings enlightened the world. The earth saw and trembled. A fire goeth before him and burneth up his enemies round about. The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord.” (Psalm 97. 3. 5.)

Paul further tells us that these unwise or foolish Christians, because of the poor material used, will in this time of fire suffer loss. But what will they lose? Why, of course, they will lose their buildings, their faith structures, their cherished opinions and conceptions, along one line or another, concerning the Lord and His Plan, upon which they may have spent many days of toil and labour to put together. All will be shown to be false, without a Scriptural basis. And all hopes and ambitions resting on these unsound teachings and principles must go down also. Yet so long as they continue to remain on the rock-foundation, *CHRIST*, so long as they are trusting in the precious blood, and give evidence of sincerity in the same, we are assured that they will be saved, yet “so as by fire.”

While it is true that the gold, silver and precious stones are scarce and difficult to obtain, they are of great value, because of their inherent qualities which endure the fire and the storm. Since these materials symbolise the Truth, we observe the significance of their scarcity, and the fact that they are difficult to obtain and the necessity of digging for them as for hidden treasures.

The Wise Man says we should “buy the Truth and sell it not”. To “buy” means to pay a price, not necessarily a corresponding price but it does mean that it must cost something to obtain.

God’s Truth, and the character which it serves to construct, can only be obtained at the expense of *time, labour, inconvenience and self-denial*. Also, to hold the Truth, after we have obtained it, is generally at the expense of reputation and the sacrifice of many earthly good things.

Those who build with the material symbolised by the gold, silver and precious stones are erecting a structure that will abide throughout all time; they

are using indestructible material, and proving themselves real overcomers of the world, the flesh and the Adversary; for it is the Truth, and the spirit of the Truth, that enables the true Christian to stand firmly against all the enemies of God. It is the revelation of Divine Truth that supports faith in the hour of trial and when all earthly friends forsake us. Such overcomers follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, and at last will be with Him, as the Bride of the Lamb, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ their Lord.

Those who build with the wrong material of wood, hay and stubble; of man's theories and speculations, though they are Christians and build upon the rock Jesus Christ, are most certain to be overcharged and overcome by the evil and worldly influences and forces all around them, because they have not a "Thus saith the Lord" for their faith. They depend upon the traditions of men; they lack the necessary protection from error, which Truth alone can give. Their strength is insufficient to overcome the world.

Again, there are some who build their hopes of acceptance with God, and of becoming heirs of the Kingdom, on the basis of their good works, or their wonderful works of service and outward activity, to the neglect of the character within, which should be godlikeness. Such are surely buildings with poor material; their structure will not stand the final test which the Lord will apply. The good works, and the service in the ministry of the Word, are all important enough, but Paul tells us that the Lord is pleased with all this only when it is the Love of God in our hearts that causes activity for Him, saying, "*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing*". And further, the Apostle Peter tells us to add to our faith structure Christian character, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and love; that, by so doing, we shall have granted unto us an abundant entrance into God's Kingdom. He says not a word about "service"; and while we do not want to minimise service, the Apostle emphasises the thought that Christian character is far more important and pleasing in God's sight than all the service we can render.

It is also interesting to observe the close connection between St. Paul's words on the subject of Christian work and the faith structure. Jesus, also, in the closing verses of His sermon on the mount said: "*Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which buildeth his house upon a rock. And the rain descended and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock. And everyone who heareth*

these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell; and great was the fall of it". (Matt. 7. 24-27.)

The lesson that Jesus intended to convey is that the truths He taught them were not merely to be heard, but to be put into practice in their everyday lives, if they would have the favour of God. These sayings of Jesus also included the great foundation truth, that He was to be the Ransomer of mankind.

So Paul speaks of the ransom when he speaks of Jesus as the foundation upon which we can build our faith. Our Lord, referring to Himself, said upon one occasion, "*Upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*". Evidently the Lord intended to convey the lesson that the truths He taught must be received into good and honest hearts, and incorporated into our lives, to the extent of consecration to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, and thereby build up a faith-structure on the Rock foundation, against which no storms can prevail, and such builders He likens unto wise men.

Our Lord warns us against the mere hearing of His words, and not obediently receiving them into our hearts, and not conforming our lives thereto, by making them a part of our faith-structure. Such, our Lord says, are building upon the sand; such are not acting in accordance with our Lord's instructions; such are unwise and certain to suffer loss in the time of storm.

We are reminded, in this connection, that while God has committed to each one of His children the work of constructing a faith building and has lent His aid and providential care in the same, yet in another and much larger sense God is constructing a glorious edifice, known as the "Temple of God", which was typified by Solomon's Temple. The Tabernacle in the Wilderness, with its rough covering of badger skins, typified the Church in her humiliation while on this side the veil, while the Temple, on the top of Mount Moriah, typed the Church in glory, and each individual child of God is referred to as a stone in preparation for that Temple. So, the Apostle says, Christians, as living stones, are built up into Him, a royal priesthood and a holy temple in the Lord. Following the various symbolism of the Bible that refer to this matter, we find that this Temple, which God is erecting, is, in other words, the Kingdom of God, the Divine Government, to which will be committed the responsibility of the world's future sovereignty.

That Kingdom Class in the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, which John saw coming down out of

heaven from God, is to be the place of mediation between God and man for the thousand-year judgment day.

As we have already seen, the Lord Jesus is referred to as being the foundation provided by God, upon whom all our hopes must be built. However, while here on earth, our Lord made selection of some who would occupy prominent places as foundation stones in God's Temple. For this reason the Book of Revelation refers to the twelve Apostles of the Lamb, as being twelve foundations in that City.

Therefore, throughout the Gospel Age, God's Building, or Temple, has been in process of preparation, in the sense that the material, the stones, etc., are being dug out of the quarry of this world, and are undergoing the hammering, chiselling, shaping and polishing of God's disciplinary providences, so that each one may take on the proper shape, and thus fit in the place designed for him by the Great Architect of that holy Temple.

Surely we are nearer the time for the finishing of this great Building of God, His holy Temple; surely we are close to the time when the last of the Temple stones are receiving their polishing and finishing touches, and soon the Temple will be raised in the first resurrection, without the sound of a hammer. We are living in close proximity to the setting up of the New Government; or, as we read in Revelation, to the coming down of the New Jerusalem, the Holy City.

It is manifest that the new King is already present, in the letting loose of the many influences and agencies that are having to do with the dissolving of the present condition.

The world's great luminary, the Sun of Righteousness, the Light of the World, is brightening the eastern horizon. The night is far spent, the day is at hand! May the light of God shine on and on increasingly until His Church, whose foundation is the "Rock of Ages", shall lift her meek and lowly head above the falling debris of these decaying systems and bid defiance to the storm which shall sweep the world of its vain schemes and traditions, —its houses of sand, its wood, hay and stubble, the fabrication of man—until the Church, now in the wilderness, shall be the Church in glory.

Brethren, how are we building? Are we building on the "Rock of Ages", by hearing and heeding our Lord's instruction; or, are we building on the shifting sands by hearing and not conforming our lives thereto? And with what are we building? Are we building with the gold, silver and precious stones; or are we building with the wood, hay and stubble of human speculation and sophistry?

Dearly beloved, let us consider well the material with which we are erecting our faith-structure, our character building, to-day! Are we certain we are building with the imperishable and eternal truths of God's Word; or are we at fault by permitting ourselves to delve into that which is human speculation, only to suffer loss, chagrin and disappointment?

LONDON CONVENTION, 1950

With radiant faces, expressive of loving hearts, many brethren gathered in the Conway Hall, London, for the General Convention of Bible Students at August Bank Holiday. The chief topics of discourse and conversation were the deeper aspects of God's Word, centred in our relationship to our Heavenly Father and our Lord. For three whole days matters concerning our earthly existence were replaced by spiritual interests. It was a time of refreshing when those of kindred minds were able to meditate upon and discuss the Holy Word.

The first session, on Saturday afternoon, commenced with a welcome from the Lord through Brother J. H. Sharman (Forest Gate). He said that while we came from many Christian communities in all parts of the land, we were, for the period of Convention, one big ecclesia in Christ. We were

joined in the unity of the Spirit in order that we might strengthen one another to witness more faithfully for Jesus in the coming days.

"An habitation of God" was the subject of a very helpful address given by Brother E. Allbon (Aldersbrook). Taking Ephesians 2. 19-22 as his text he showed how God was sanctifying, through His Spirit, willing souls of the human race in order that He might dwell in their hearts. Forcefully illustrating his point, the speaker showed that the important thing in the Christian life was not respectability nor formal Christianity but "living with Christ".

In the evening Brother W. F. Fox (Yeovil) delivered a semi-public lecture to an audience largely composed of brethren. The meeting had been advertised, but newly interested ones were

present mainly as a result of personal contact. Tracing the Divine Plan through the ages, it was shown that God had permitted evil in loving wisdom. Emphasis was placed upon the selection of the Church during the present era and the restoration from death of all mankind in the age to come through the redemptive work of Jesus.

On Sunday morning, while a part of the Convention gathered at Walthamstow to witness the baptism of nine brethren, the remainder of the friends assembled in Conway Hall to listen to an arresting discourse given by Brother H. Thackway (Central London) upon "Proof". Basing his theme upon the promises of God, he drew attention to the powerful ties which bind us to our Heavenly Father and to clear evidences in our lives of our sonship to Him. It was a timely exhortation to place our entire trust in Him who is ever faithful. Meanwhile at the Baptismal Service an impressive ceremony was conducted by Brother E. Bullard. His words of address, simple but gracious, clearly indicated the purpose of water immersion, as a symbol of heart consecration already in existence. During the service a number of brethren testified inspiringly to the Lord's watchcare during the years that they had followed Him.

An attentive audience listened to Brother Wilhelm Trippler of Kirchlegern, Germany, in the afternoon. Before he rose to speak in his native tongue, Brother Helmut Trippler, his son, conveyed warm greetings of Christian love from the brethren in Western Germany; then he proceeded to interpret his father's message. Speaking upon "The Mary-like Song of Praise", our brother drew attention to those characteristics of Mary which fitted her to be the mother of Jesus. The qualities of humility, faith and obedience of Mary were an example to us, and are necessary if the "New Creature" is to be begotten, developed and matured in our hearts.

An edifying sermon was given by Brother Alex. Guy (Forest Gate) upon the subject of "Growing up into Christ". Underlining the need to feed "babes in Christ" upon the simple truths, Brother Guy exhorted those who were responsible for ministering the "milk of the word" to encourage a balanced growth in those who were young in Christ. "New Creatures" could not be spoon fed forever, and must learn to masticate the strong meat—learn to study the Word and thereby grow into the image of Christ.

The evening discourse—"Into Heaven by a Whirlwind", given by Brother Alex. Kirkwood (Glasgow) was centred in 2. Kings 2. 1-18. From the passing of Elijah, lessons were drawn concerning the translation of those members of the Church who are "alive and remain" at the Second Advent.

Emphasis was placed upon the unexpected manner and hour. It was suggested that Elisha and the prophets represented certain sections of the Christian churches which would continue God's work when the Bride of the Lamb had gone.

Brother Ford (Luton) addressed the Convention on Monday morning, speaking upon "The cup of our Lord". Describing the events which led up to the crucifixion, he showed our Lord's example of meekness and love which his disciples must follow. He showed too how the experiences of joy and sorrow, while among His disciples, at the arrest and trial, on the cross and finally at the resurrection, were all part of the Father's purpose. And if we would share His glory then we must drink of that same cup, following Him faithfully unto death.

At the final session the brethren gathered to hear Brother T. Holmes (Melton Mowbray) draw together the threads of the Convention under the title of "Finally, brethren". Endeavouring to recall and impress the salient points of each discourse, he surveyed the week-end in helpful fashion, that each one might resume life's duties still meditating upon the Lord's spiritual food. His concluding thought was a plea that the last days of the Church's sojourn upon earth might be the very best yet.

The edifying addresses, the joyful praise and testimonies, the helpful provision of material needs by those responsible for the catering and general comfort of the friends, all contributed towards real spiritual fellowship, which was not least manifested in the conversation between sessions. Symbolic of the warm brotherly love was the "Love Feast" which concluded the Sunday evening session. It was a memorable scene as three hundred brethren, singing hymns, filed past to receive a morsel of bread and the right hand of fellowship from those who had addressed the Convention and the elders of the London Churches.

It was a great joy to have our two German brethren in our midst, not only for their uplifting words from the platform but for their personal contacts, which revealed something of what our Continental brethren had suffered as a result of their loyalty to the Lord.

At last the brethren began to disperse and the parting from loved ones who might not be seen again until the Kingdom had come, was indeed sad but warm. As we near the goal of our hopes, may these holy convocations of the Lord's people draw the bonds of Christian affection more closely around those whose hearts are turned to God and whose feet are pressing forward toward His Kingdom.

Eventide

"So he bringeth them unto their desired haven"



It is altogether impossible for us to realise the utter depth of bitter disappointment that swept through the Master's heart as He wept over a callous-hearted Jerusalem and resigned Himself to its inevitable fate. How repeatedly, but unsuccessfully, He had tried to gather it beneath His wings, and protect it from its own perverted self as well as from its enemies! Oh! the bitterness of that sad lament " I would but ye would not"! Had His coming and presentation to the nation not been the theme of psalm and prophecy over the many preceding centuries the situation for Him could not have been so tense, nor fraught with such tragic disappointment when, at last, He came to them. Had Scripture forecast not touched His life at so many points, down to the minutest detail, the nation might have been able to tender some excuse, (perhaps some valid reason) for rejecting Him, notwithstanding His many miracles! But seemingly, everything that could be done to prepare His way before Him, down to the minutest jot, had been done and yet notwithstanding all this preparation when He, the Heaven-sent subject of every type, psalm and prophecy, "came to His own, His own received Him not".

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

was gone " I would ye would not—henceforth" bitter sequence indeed!

But there was another side to that story. There are some better things to relate. It was not true to say of all "but ye would not". There had been a tiny few who had heard, as it were, the clucking call and had found shelter beneath His protecting "wings". As a brooding hen He had gathered them and had drawn them close to Himself, and when at last, the long-threatening storm broke destructively upon the ungathered nation, these cherished objects of His care were kept safely nestling close to His loving heart! The hour of opportunity, rightly taken by this few, had brought them to rest beneath the out-spread wings of heavenly love and care, so fitly represented by the golden cherubim above the sprinkled Mercy Seat!

Again, another hour of opportunity is with us to-day. A fuller, deeper call to consecration has been to us as a clucking call. Of many churches and peoples in many lands the Master will yet have to say " . . . I would but ye would not"! Again, a spirit of indifference, and of "little faith" prevails among those whom He expected to hear His call. The opportunity will pass—has almost passed, and few indeed have heard that entreating call. Again but a tiny few have heard the invitation to pass under His wings and find comfort and shelter there.

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

"Under His wings I am safely abiding,
Though the night deepens and the tempests
are wild,
I know I can trust Him, I know He will keep me,
He has redeemed me, and I am His child."

*"Under His wings; what a refuge in sorrow,
How the heart yearningly turns to His rest,
Often when earth has no balm for my healing,
There I find comfort and there I am blest."*

*"Under His wings, O, what precious enjoyment,
Here will I hide till life's trials are o'er,
Sheltered, protected, no evil can harm me,
Resting in Jesus, I'm safe evermore."*

GATHERED GRAIN

LOVING THE MEAN THINGS

It would indeed be easy to love the brethren and to lay down our lives for them if they were all like our dear Master and exemplar; but they are not. The inspired Apostle tells us that amongst the brethren are not many noble, not many great, not many wise, not many learned, not many rich. Again, he says that God hath chosen the mean things of the world. Are we astonished at this? Does it seem like a reflection on the Church of Christ? Do we ask why Divine grace has passed by some of the noblest of our race and accepted some of the meanest to discipleship? The answer of our Lord is, "*Even so, Father, for it seemed good in thy sight.*" The explanation is that many of the great, rich, learned, noble, have not sufficient humility to receive the Divine message in the proper manner. They realise themselves to be superior to the majority and think it but just to have this acknowledgment; and, failing to see the Divine arrangement they assure themselves that if anybody will be saved it will be themselves, for they are the finer and nobler specimens of the race. They see not that God looketh upon the heart instead of upon the outward man, and that however weak and ignoble and fallen a person, his heart, his will may be thoroughly turned into harmony with God and to the service of righteousness. They fail to see that in God's sight such a meek and quiet spirit, such a humble dependence upon the Redeemer for salvation, such a faithful looking to the Lord for grace to help in every time of need, is much more pleasing in the Divine sight than is the more proud attitude of the nobler ones; and that such humble, trustful, appreciative, faithful ones the Lord has designed shall be participants with Christ in His excellent glory, not because of the perfection of their flesh, but because of the perfection of their hearts, their wills, which continually strive to bring every thought and word and deed into harmony with the Divine will.

* * *

*"Paul, thou art beside thyself
Much learning doth make thee mad!"*

Truth is stranger than fiction and it is no wonder that some to-day, like Festus of old, find it hard to believe in the goodness and wonderful provision

of our Heavenly Father for His creatures. To-day, if some of our worldly friends note our enthusiasm for the Lord, His brethren and His truth, it all seems very different from any religious sentiments or feelings or hopes they have entertained, and they are inclined to say of us also that our heads are a little turned. They think it not strange if men become enthusiastic about politics or money making, because such enthusiasm is common to men; everybody is more or less excited and interested in that. But when it comes to religion, they say to themselves, No one knows anything about that; it is all pure speculation and these people must be crazy when they think of their religion as being tangible, worthy of self-denial and the enduring of persecutions. We admit that no romance of earth ever equalled this one of the Divine arrangement for man's salvation:— the fall; the calamity of death and disease, mental, physical and moral; the sending of God's own Son; His offering of Himself as the sin offering on our behalf; His resurrection and ascension to glory, honour and power; the gathering of a little flock to be His Bride and joint-heir in the Kingdom; and by and by, the establishment of a Kingdom for the enlightenment of all the families of the earth. No novel, no plot of human concoction, could ever equal this one. It is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. We cannot wonder if those who see from the outside—who do not see the strength and beauty and consistency and harmony from the inside standpoint—consider that we who see matters from the right standpoint are too much enthused. They cannot appreciate the fact that we accept gladly the privilege of self-sacrifice, in order thereby to attest our love and devotion to the Lord and to be accounted worthy a share with Him as members of His church, His Bride.

CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE

Through the whole community the influence of a Christian home spreads. The town seems purer, the birds sing more sweetly, the flowers bloom more radiantly. Joy sings its anthems in such a home as it sings in no other place. And if this blessedness is to continue, we must shut out all unkindness, bitterness and injustice.

The Higher Consecration

A talk about
solemn things

The call of God to the higher consecration came to us through the words of our dear Lord Jesus Christ. Himself devoted and consecrated to His Father's Will, Himself the highest embodiment of the self-denying life, Himself the bearer of the world's heaviest cross, He voices forth the invitation of the Holy One of Israel to those who will venture forth to follow in His steps. If any man desires to associate with Me (says the lonely Lamb of God) let him deny himself, let him take up his Cross; then let him follow Me! Let him deny himself! What does that mean? To appreciate it properly let its opposite thought be set out. It would then read, "Let a man permit himself" or "Let a man satisfy himself". And what would this mean? Here within the compass of a half-dozen words is set the whole course of unregenerate man.

Here is a miniature picture of a world in sin, of a world at variance, of the ruthless aggression of the tyrant, of a race in rebellion against God. "Satisfying himself" has been the cause of all the heartlessness and cruelty of man to man, of all the steep descent into the slime of sin, and of departure from the ways of God. "Permitting himself" has been the cause of the break-down of the human will, of the casting away of all righteous sanctions and restrictions, and of unholy riot in the heart and affections of man. Man has permitted himself to drift with the stream—to run with the crowd—to take the easy course; and the huge aggressive powers of the world to-day are the logical outcome of all the "permitting" and "satisfying" tendencies in fallen man, and have brought the terrific consequences which face fearful trembling men, in these dark days.

How vast a field of human experience is thus covered by the Lord's words, "Let him deny himself". Let a man deny his self-hood—his self-satisfying desire, his self-permitting desires, his self-permitting ways! That short statement drives right through the heart of things. It cuts its way to the very core of all self-acquisitiveness, self-possessiveness, and self-satiatedness. It strips man of all his exaggerated sense of self-ownership and proprietorship.

He who voiced this invitation on God's behalf, owned no place wherein to lay his head,—when required to pay the Temple dues, the coin was taken from the fish's mouth. He who had been rich in heavenly wealth had denied Himself to become

extremely poor on earth. How fittingly then, that He should say "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." Self-denial!—death to self!—self nailed to a cross to die! "And follow me!" Not through Palestine's pleasant land, but into death, by being baptised into Him and into His death. No wonder Jesus says "If any man will come after me!" Not every man would want to follow where He led. Not every one would want to end his life upon a cross!

The Apostle Paul also sets out the exacting nature of the consecration call in Romans six. He describes it as death to sin. The degree of a Christian's death to sin will depend entirely upon the measure of his death to self, for self has always been the citadel of sin. Paul's statement makes most remarkable doctrine. After enlarging upon God's abounding grace (Rom. 5. 17-21) he asks the question "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" "God forbid" is his reply. Then he continues "How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein!" "Dead to sin!" Dead TO sin! Further along, speaking of our beloved Lord, Paul makes a similar statement (v. 10.) "For in that He died, he died unto sin once." "He died unto sin once!" Here is no reference to the great Gospel fact that Jesus died on account of human sin. Though that blessed truth is asserted and attested in a score or more of other Scriptural statements, it is not the subject of Paul's discussion at this point of his letter to Rome. It is not Jesus' death FOR sin, but His death TO sin that is the Apostle's theme.

Thus he links his first query and answer concerning themselves with the tremendous fact in the Saviour's own life and experience. "We who have died unto sin" have had (or are having) exactly the same experience which He had when "He died unto sin once." It is for that reason that the faithful follower of the Lord, in being baptised into Christ, is being baptised into His death. "His death" was a death unto sin—therefore all who are baptised into "His death" likewise experience a "death unto sin," but at the same time that He was dead unto sin, He was intensely alive unto God, and for that reason the Apostle exhorts "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 11.)

This is an amazing point of doctrine, but it is the very doctrine that sets out Christian consecration at its proper value.

In what way did Jesus' "die unto sin"? Was He not always without sin? Was He not "holy, harmless and undefiled, separate from sinners"? How then could He die to sin?

It should not be thought because Jesus was sinless and remained sinless throughout all His life, that He was never subjected to temptation to sin. We have only to think of His temptation in the wilderness, and of Satan's subtle challenge to the verity of His Sonship, to realise that that was a temptation of very considerable magnitude. Nor was this the only occasion when He was assailed by the forces of evil, prior to the time of His cruel death; but from the very commencement of His ministry (yea, from His very boyhood) His mind was positively and resolutely set to do only His Father's Will. He had no ear for any other voice,—He had no response for any other "call".

The same two "magnet" forces of Holiness and Sin—of God and of Lucifer—which exercised their "pull" upon all the sons of men, also exerted their "pull" upon our beloved Lord. But our Lord had no affinity and made no response to the magnet of sin. To it, He was "dead". He had no self-satisfying desires to fulfil. He had not come to "get" for Himself but to "give" Himself. Thus, the ways and aims of sin found nothing in His heart to stir it into life; but our beloved Lord was no automaton in His response. Of Him it is written that He "loved" righteousness and "hated" iniquity (Heb. 1. 9.) Because of this He was anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows.

Thus the worthy Son's love for righteousness constituted an affinity for Righteousness and Truth. Likewise His vehement hatred of iniquity constituted a tremendous de-magnetising factor against the pull of the magnet of sin. This response came about by personal choice. Hence, of His own free will, He chose to be as dead to sin as though his body was devoid of life. Again, of His own free will, He chose to be alive—intensely and zealously alive—to the drawings and leadings of His Father's Will. Because, therefore, He was so completely dead TO sin, throughout all His days, He was able to offer Himself a perfect sacrifice FOR sin, and win redemption for fallen men.

It is an amazing point of doctrine enunciated by Paul when he associated us with our beloved Lord in this deadness to the power of sin. Like Him, we are desired by God to be also dead

to the "drawing" of sin, and alive (increasingly alive) to the drawing power of righteousness and holiness and truth. Is it possible for us to be like Him? Can we really live the sinless life? Unfortunately we cannot live free from sin. But God has made full provision for that. By accepting us in the beloved Son, all the excellencies of His life are attributed to us, to counter-balance our demerits, so long as we are striving daily to mortify our members which are in contact with the earth and the world of sin. We are not so free in the swing of our will as was our beloved Lord, and sometimes, if only for a moment, the pull of the sin magnet may draw us in that direction. But if we have learned to love righteousness and holiness we shall not stay with the sin. Our corresponding hatred for sin will interpose, and by the help of God, will break the connection with the sin. We shall confess our lapse to God, and in that subdued holy atmosphere, our heart will recover its free swing, and go right over to the other "pull"—the drawing power of God.

Thus Paul goes on to exhort his brethren not to YIELD their hearts to sin and unrighteousness, but to surrender themselves to God and righteousness which will lead on to holiness (Rom. 13. 22.)

This is where this whole experience corresponds with the life of consecration. As individuals and as a whole, the Church of Christ has devoted itself to the Will of God. First its human life was set before the Lord God (like the ram of Consecration) and the anointed Priest (the New Creature in Christ Jesus) stood with its hand upon the dedicated humanity, and pledged itself to do the Will of God at any cost.

Then, that humanity, which had been devoted to the Lord, was given back, as a sacred stewardship,—as a charge from the Lord, to be used only to His Praise. In every act of life, in every thought and word the offering should be "waved" before the Lord. The interference of the power of sin should grow weaker every day; the response to the Holy Power of God should become stronger every hour, and our yielding to our God should be more intensive and extensive with each succeeding act and thought. Thus will life become one continued and unbroken chain of consecrated experience—the yielding of each member—head, heart, hands and feet—fuller, deeper and readier every day.

Is there any wonder then, that when the theme on which the Apostle was engaged reaches its noble climax, that he should put all the hallowed fire of his own consecrated heart into that searching moving appeal of Chapter 12. 1 and 2. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of

God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God . . . your reasonable service".

Consecration, therefore, means "a living sacrifice"; a daily sacrifice; a complete unreserved sacrifice of all that in us is noblest and best. But there is another side of the consecrated life that tells of satisfaction too, of satisfaction too deep for words. The priestly life was not all sacrificing; there was more in it than that. Into that mysterious dark abode the white-robed priest went betimes, still with his "two hands full" to stand at that Altar adorned with gold, and there raise fragrant odours in the air. For whom were those precious spices burned? Who saw and noted the deep reverence of that ministrant priest, as the perfumed spiral rose aloft? Who watched the holy fire eat up the crumbled incense, as the "two hands full" were given to the flames? One eye alone saw all this service—the eye of that mysterious Light which hung between the Cherubim, just beyond that separating Vail.

What meant this lonely service before the Lord? Why were those odours released by burning flame?

This was communion sweet—soul-changing, transforming, sanctifying communion—at the place where the Holy One in Israel had promised to meet His chosen ones (Ex. 25. 22.). But there was even more than that. "Consecrate . . . and sanctify them that they may minister UNTO ME in the priest's office" said the Lord God concerning Aaron and his sons. (Ex. 28. 41.)

" . . . they shall minister unto Me!" That was the purpose of that fragrant ministry. It was no ornate ritual, nor was it waste of consecrated time to minister unto the Lord. The holy incense was not lost because it was eaten by the fire. The heart of the Eternal had been made glad. The Ministry brought satisfaction to the Holy One of Israel. He it was who saw, accepted and appreciated that holy ministration. Thus the white-robed priest was consecrated to perform sacrifice before the Lord, and also to hold "communion with the Lord". Consecrated to sacrifice! Consecrated to commune!! Consecrated to minister to the Lord! What a blessed privilege it was

to be chosen of the Lord for his threefold end!

The substance is far better than the "shadowy" thing. Participation in the "better things" is more satisfying to the "inward man" than all the glories of the type. Those who follow Jesus in the way of death, walk also in His steps along the way of life. It is not all renunciation in the consecrated life. "Self" must go. Sin must cease to charm; and the New Creature in Christ Jesus must yield his members as servants of God and righteousness, day by day, and act by act. But there is another side. There are depths of experience from which well-springs of satisfaction flow. "The spirit itself beareth witness with our Spirit" (Rom. 8. 16.) Yes! from the Shekinah Throne of grace comes that surging flow of Holy Power which floods our souls with joy and transforms the drabness of our earth-life into communion sweet. Each consecrated child of God can retire away from the busy throng of life into a "secret place" apart, and there enjoy a privilege such as Aaron did not know. The incense of his heart (Psa. 141. 2.) may rise morning, noon and night, as fragrance richer far than myrrh, or cassia, cinnamon, or calamus; and the Holy One of Israel will see and hear and appreciate the sacrifice of praise (Heb. 13. 15.) which thus will rise from the Altar of his heart—an Altar more precious than gold.

Each follower of the worthy Son has been called and justified that he might offer himself in sacrifice. To that end he is set apart. But his consecration vows bring opportunities more than this. He too, as Aaron was, but on higher ground, is consecrated "to commune"—consecrated to enter the chambers of his God, and "minister unto" Him who dwells therein, and there, in that secret place, feel within his heart that soul-transforming power that will attune him to his God, and to His universal purposes.

Brethren, beloved in the Lord, let us enter into our glorious privilege. Let our consecration be real and true; deep and abiding. Let there be no with-holding of this sacrifice. Let it be waved with diligence before the Lord, until it is time for it to be taken from our hands.

FROM THE WALLS OF THE CITY A look-out on the signs of the times

Arising from the present disturbed state of the world the Israel Government has issued a statement which, while declaring "Israel is aligned with those countries who see in the United Nations the first line of defence against world catastrophe"

includes an eloquent appeal for peace. Knowing as we do that the word of peace for a troubled world must one day go forth from Jerusalem at the instance of a converted and purified people, this portion of the statement is of intense interest.

It shows that the people now gathered there have some desire, even to-day, to speak peace to the nations. The statement runs:—

"Israel cannot be content with a mere determination of its own conviction. In this hour, charged with a peril which none knows but which may be seen in the future as the hour of destiny, she believes it incumbent on her—though fully aware of her minor position and limited experience—to raise her voice before the world. With all her might she craves the healing of the breach rending the soul of the world and threatening to engulf its body.

"From this city of Jerusalem, the eternal capital of the Jewish people, from the place hallowed by the tradition of religions, from the country where the wondrous vision of rectifying age-long injustice has become a reality for all to see—in the ingathering of the dispersed and the liberation of the creative spirit of an exiled scattered people—from this country the appeal goes out to all in whose power it rests to-day, to sheathe the sword in the Far East, lend each other assistance, and together strive for the restoration of peace and the salvation of mankind".

* * *

Dr. Donald Soper has shocked the Methodist Conference, in much the same way that our Master shocked the political and ecclesiastical leaders of His day, by declaring that he would "rather see the Communists come and take over—and take the consequences—than have a third world war." The Conference hurriedly dissociated itself from this forthright expression of opinion and a spokesman said "I believe we would rather see a world war than have the world overrun by Communists."

One of the factors—probably the greatest factor—leading to the rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ by his own nation was His refusal to use the powers He admittedly possessed for the violent overthrow of the Roman occupying power. He could have done it easily enough; He refused, and took the consequences. Out of that refusal has come the greatest power for good the world has ever known, a power which will yet overcome all evil and establish everlasting righteousness. Whether the onward progress of Communism is likely to be stopped by the military might of all the forces arraying against it is a matter on which we Christians are not qualified to express an opinion, but that the kingdom and power of Christ is ultimately going to purge out all that is evil in the masses of people who now march under the Communist banner and every other banner in the world, and leave only that which is good, we do know. The trouble is that only

Christians—and not all of them, by a long way—will understand what Dr. Soper meant by his remark; the rest must inevitably misunderstand it. Those who realise the meaning of the 53rd chapter of Isaiah and understand the words of Jesus to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus can appreciate that Dr. Soper touched upon the only true defence against the menace that overshadows us. That the Methodist Conference should have failed to realise that truth is sad indeed.

* * *

It is thought that the secret of King Zedekiah's escape from Jerusalem at the time of its capture by Nebuchadnezzar has been solved. Five hundred yards of a natural tunnel has been revealed near the Mount of Olives by recent earth subsidence and the archaeologists who are now exploring it believe that it connects with the tunnels and caves under the city and extends a long way in the direction of Jericho. Somehow or other Zedekiah and his courtiers and soldiers got through the besieging Babylonians and to Jericho before they were caught, and it is thought that they possibly traversed this tunnel and thus made their escape from the doomed city. A United States expedition under Prof. Kelso is now engaged in investigating this tunnel.

* * *

The United Nations' plan for the international control of the city of Jerusalem is officially dead and buried. The steadfast refusal of Israel to give any consideration or assent to the proposal has rendered further progress with the plan impossible. Jerusalem has been proclaimed the capital of Israel and remains such—at least that part of it which is in Israel hands. Part of the city is still under Arab control. "In that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all peoples; all that burden themselves with it shall be divided" (Zech. 12. 3). That text is associated with the time of the Ancient Worthies' return to take control of Israel, a time that is still future; but Jerusalem is already becoming the "burdensome stone" of which the prophet spoke.

However skilful man may become in textile manufacturing he can never produce satin as soft as a rose petal, or thread as fine as that which spiders weave, and the masterpieces of the world's greatest artists cannot compare with the delicate design of a snowflake or the wings of the tiniest insect creations of our Great Artist. "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

(Young Bible Students Messenger.)

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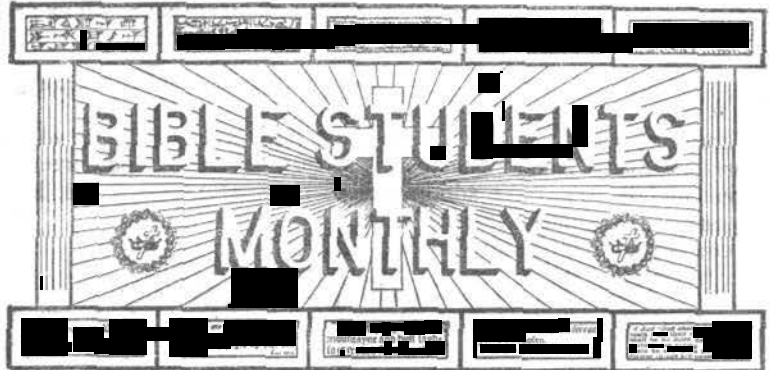
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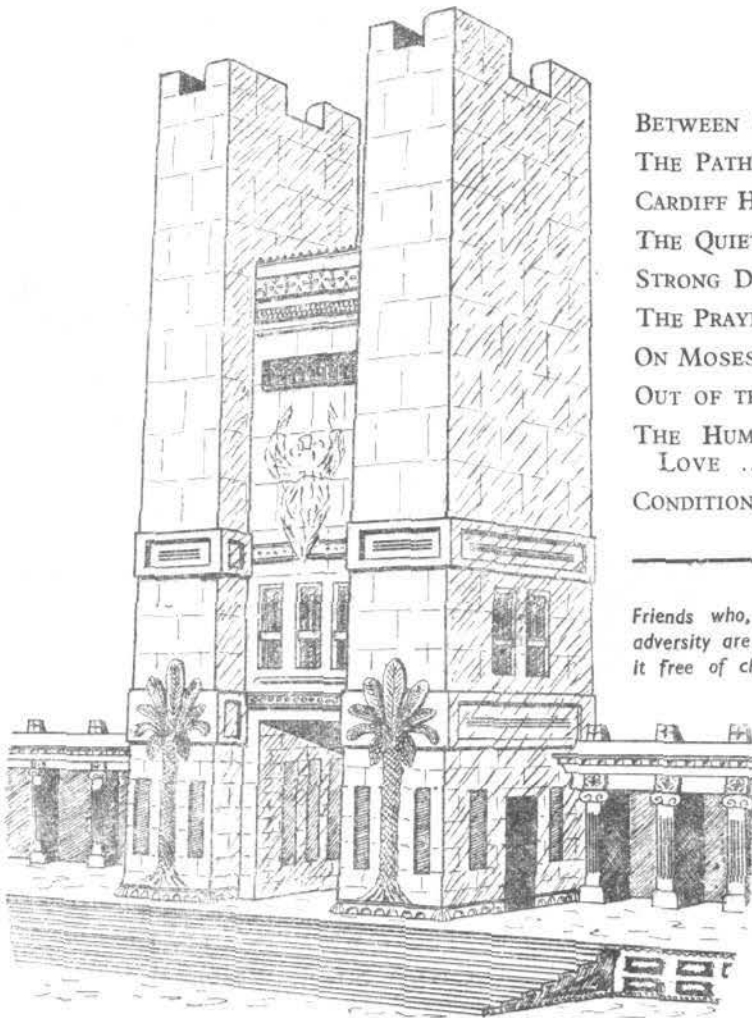


Thou, therefore, endure
hardness as a good
soldier of Jesus Christ.



Vol. 27, No. 11

NOVEMBER, 1950



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Friends who, through old age, infirmity or other
adversity are unable to pay for this journal may have
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Lift up your heads, O ye gates.
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

The Benevolent Fund, which has done such good work for many years, remains in the care of the three brethren who have administered its work for so long, and becomes a means of help and comfort to our needy brethren very specially at this time of the year. Bro. E. Allbon, 20, Sunnymede Drive, Ilford, Essex, is secretary to the Fund and is pleased to receive and answer all correspondence.

* * *

Several brethren interested in the idea of a home for aged brethren, where such may spend their last years in a congenial "Truth" atmosphere, would like to hear from others likewise interested who would be able and willing to assist either financially or by becoming one of the staff necessary to the conduct of such an enterprise. Letters should be addressed in the first instance to Bro. A. O. Hudson, 24, Darwin Road, Welling, Kent.

* * *

A considerable number of "Millennial Message No. 4" have already been sent out to the brethren and we trust that good work is already being done with this issue. There are still plenty more in stock and our friends are exhorted to ask for all that they can profitably use. A letter was recently received from someone who had picked up in the street just one half of the first issue of *Millennial Message* to be published (and that was four years ago) and wanted a new copy so that he could read the missing end of the article. There is no doubt that in casting our bread upon the waters it does even literally return unto us after many days.

* * *

Will brethren who are receiving the "Monthly" as one of the "Lord's Poor" please write to us between now and the end of the year stating their desire for its continuance? Whilst we are very desirous of the "Monthly" continuing to go to all who appreciate it, irrespective of their ability to pay for it or not, we do not want to go on sending where it is no longer needed or desired. We would therefore appreciate it if brethren to whom this notice applies will respond as desired. It is expected and assumed that none who are in a reasonable position to pay for the "Monthly" will take advantage of this provision which is intended for those to whom the 7/- per year subscription is a hardship or a matter of difficulty; but to these latter we are glad to send.

* * *

Bro. F. Lardent of 174, Forest Hill Road, London, S.E.23, is able as usual to supply the "Christian Home Calendar" for 1952. It measures 10ins. x 7ins. and has the usual monthly turnover

pages with coloured Scriptural pictures. Price 2/9 post free or three for 8/-. Please send orders direct to Bro. Lardent and not to Welling.

BOOKS FOR CHRISTMAS

A few suggestions for those who like to give books for Christmas gifts. All these are available from stock at Welling. For the children, the books shown on back of cover. The "Little Life of Jesus" is useful for older children at 6/9 and the "Ten Camels" at 6/6 for the little ones. For teen-agers, "The Man Who Did Not Sin" a story of the Millennial Age (5/6) or the "Mission of Jonah" (2/9) can be recommended. Devotional books include "Poems of Dawn" at 7/6 and "In Green Pastures" with a short reading for each day (4/6). Quite an acceptable little gift would be the *Bible Students Hymnal* bound in yapp rexine (in black, blue, red or green) at 3/3. Then for those interested in Palestine and prophecy we still have the handsome book "Palestine the Land of My Adoption" by Clapham with photos and coloured plates, (13/6).

For students there are the translations, *Septuagint* in Greek and English, parallel columns; this is the Old Testament in general use in our Lord's day and the one from which many of the apostles' quotations from the Old Testament are taken. This is 32/-. *Ferrar Fenton* in modern English, complete Bible, is 27/6 and *Margolis* Old Testament, translated by Jewish scholars, 13/6. Then there is Arthur Way's new modern English translation of Paul's Epistles and Hebrews "The Letters of St. Paul" (8/6). The "Treasury of Scripture Knowledge" containing literally thousands of cross-references to almost every text in the Bible is a useful book for Bible students—the price is 16/-.

LONDON MONTHLY MEETING

Saturday, November 18th, 1950
6.30—8.30 p.m.

In the Tudor Hall
CAXTON HALL

Caxton Street, Westminster, S.W.1
5 mins. St. James Park Station and Victoria Street

Speakers: To be notified.

THE PATH OF THE JUST

A discussion on the principles
of Christian Progress

"The path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."
(Prov. 4. 18.)

Admission to the privileges of Christian fellowship is limited by almost every religious community to those who will conform to certain standards of belief. Sometimes the set standard has a wide basis—nothing more than acceptance of Jesus Christ as a personal Saviour and belief that by that acceptance the believer has "received salvation"; has been "born again". Sometimes the standard set is almost inconceivably narrow, demanding rigid adherence to a comprehensive theology which purports to set out a detailed exposition of all God's dealings, past, present and future; a code of conduct which takes no account of the changing world around; insistence upon the absolute necessity of outward symbols, such as baptism, before the prospective believer can be counted as one of "the flock". Between these extremes there is represented in Christendom a varied range of standards, and to those who view their relationship to each other as dependent upon their relationship to the Lord Jesus and who desire to attain a correct perception of His Will, it becomes very necessary to have a clear view of the varied aspects and requirements of Christian discipleship. Only thus shall we be able to discern our own place in the Master's vineyard, and, discerning, labour acceptably in His service.

Among Christian disciples there are various outlooks and a differing understanding of the "call" to follow Christ. In the first place there are those who believe and cultivate the ethics of His teachings, the virtues described by James as the "fruits of the Spirit" (Gal. 6. 22), love, joy, peace, and so on, but who go through life without feeling the burning urge to become workers for Christ. The call to ambassadorship finds no responsive chord. The joy of converting the unbeliever, of assisting the first faltering steps of "babes in Christ" is one which is never theirs. The Christian life is to them a placid existence in which the calm enjoyment of saintly virtue is a shield and barrier against the ugly things of this world, and whilst they look up to the Lord Christ with reverence and adoration they do not see at His feet the bending figures of broken-hearted sinners who come to Him for healing.

In the second place, there are those who, having fully appreciated the essentially missionary spirit of

Christ's teaching, have found on the basis of a complete and whole-hearted surrender to Him an outlet for their love and zeal in one of two general directions. They either engage in some form of social service, applying practical Christianity to the immediate material needs of men's bodies, or they become evangelists and missionaries, seeking to satisfy the craving of men's minds for a sense of re-union with God. There is not much of an intellectual nature in this, for the majority who will listen to such a missionary need food for the heart and not for the head; hence "bright Gospel services", the preaching of "Jesus Christ, and Him crucified", fully satisfies the desire manifested by such for a sense of freedom from the power of sin and the certainty of ultimate salvation. The work of great revivalists like Dwight L. Moody was of this kind. No deep theology, no striking revelation of the purpose of God for man; yet a spiritual revival of such dimensions that without doubt it had much to do with the general ripening of Christian character which made the closing years of the nineteenth century the "Harvest of the Age".

Thirdly, there are those disciples, generally of a studious, reverent or mystic turn of mind, who seek to know God's plans for the future. Such a desire is a commendable one. "Surely the Lord will do nothing but He revealeth His secrets to His servants the prophets." (Amos. 3. 7). Here is clear indication that the Father does reveal His purposes to those who are in the proper frame of mind to listen. The constant reiteration of the command to "Watch—for ye know neither the day nor the hour." (Matt. 25. 13), to be as watchers on the walls of the city (Hab. 2. 1) and to seek as did Daniel to "know by books the number of years" (Dan. 9. 2), is sufficient to assure every earnest student that the study of Divine laws and purposes is fraught with blessing to the one who seeks.

This third class of disciples is that which will take the most intelligent interest in the whole Plan of God and is prepared to give time and thought and energy to the consideration of the underlying principles of Divine revelation. Such will have the clearest idea of the ultimate purpose of God's creation and can, more than any other, give a reasonable answer to the enquirer. Accused as they are of being "not practical" or of ignoring the opportunities of Christian social service or the winning of

unconverted ones to the standard of Christ, it is nevertheless true that the work they *are* doing is of vital importance in the further development of God's plan. "*God at the first did visit the Gentiles (nations) to take out of them a people for His name*" says James (Acts 15. 14), and much of the New Testament is occupied with exhortations to this class of believers to give heed to their continued growth in grace and knowledge, that in due time they may become the Divine ambassadors when God "returns" (Acts 15. 16) to convert the nations.

The administrative and uplift work of the Millennial Age will require a Ministry of Reconciliation (II Cor. 5. 18), the members of which are fitted in every respect for their work. They will have been "perfected through suffering" and in all the fruits and graces of the Holy Spirit; will have been made copy-likenesses of God's dear Son. That inward grace and heart harmony with God must be allied with a positive knowledge of God's laws and purposes so that they may be real instructors of the people. "*They that be wise*" said Daniel (12. 2), "*shall shine as the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever*". It was so with our Lord, for "*by His knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, when he shall bear away (Heb.) their iniquities*" (Isa. 53. 11) in the Millennial Age. Made "like unto his brethren" (Heb. 2. 17) it is by His positive knowledge of the evils of sin and of the beneficence of righteousness that our Lord becomes a "merciful and faithful High Priest", and so shall it be with His followers. It should be readily agreed then that of all the varied kinds of Christian disciples those who consecrate to do the Will of God and endeavour in the course of their consecrated life to attain a fair and true understanding of the Divine Plan are likely to be the best fitted for ultimate control—to reign with Christ. This is the purpose of the High Calling of this Gospel Age—to select a consecrated body of disciples who "know what their lord doeth" (Luke 12. 47), and so are ready to be used in His purposes when the time comes.

This is the reason that study of the Scriptures cannot be separated from our High Calling and our consecration. Some bemoan the fact that so much of our time is taken up with the study of the Word to the exclusion of more "practical" manifestations of Christianity. It is unfortunately only too true that the "students" are often the least practical of all Christians and sometimes tend to become "mystics" without any practical outlook in the world around them at all. A clear understanding of the Truth should point to a proper balance between mere studiousness, the accumulation of knowledge, and the practical outworking of that

knowledge. We need always to remember that the sincerity of our belief in the standards of the Millennial Age will be measured in large degree by our endeavour to put them into practice in this world to-day; and the learning we gather from the fountain of all Truth has failed in its purpose if we do not manifest forth the Word of life to others around us in some degree almost at once.

In order to preserve this proper balance between head and heart it is vital that the Divine way of imparting truth is clearly understood. There are two possible methods which God could have chosen. He could impart the knowledge of this Plan by direct revelation to each individual, in which case there would be no necessity for study and discussion, for thought and meditation, for pastors, teachers, evangelists, helpers. (Eph. 4. 11). On the other hand He could allow His truth to penetrate men's minds gradually as their powers of understanding developed, feeding upon that which had already been made known and had been assimilated. Which method has God adopted?

The laws of Nature point to the latter process as that which characterises all God's creation. Our Lord sketched a word picture when he likened His message to seed which was scattered and lay dormant, and then germinated, a man not knowing how, until at length it made its way through the earth "first the blade, then the ear" (Mark 4. 28). Another eloquent lesson lay concealed in His action when, taking a little child and setting him in the midst, He said to His disciples "Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven". The earth itself was not brought into existence in a moment of time. The splendour and variety of trees and plants, of animals and birds, did not appear in all their present glory at one word from the lips of the Almighty. The story of the rocks reveals how creation progressed in a logical and orderly manner. The bare, lifeless earth existed for countless ages before even the humblest forms of life appeared on its surface. Mosses and ferns appeared before the trees. Humble denizens of the oceans swarmed and multiplied long before any great air-breathing animal roamed the forests and prairies. Ungainly flying reptiles hovered uncertainly in the air before any of the brilliant chorus of birds made their songs heard above the tree-tops. Man himself, the glory and crown of earthly creation, was the last arrival of all upon our planet. All this is described with unparalleled simplicity and eloquence in the first chapter of Genesis.

So with the development of the promised "seed". At first but a hazy glimmer of hope, the seed of the woman was to bruise the serpent's head (Gen. 3. 15). Then a definite and detailed promise, given to Abraham the friend of God (Gen. 12. 3), a chosen

nation, to be the custodian of God's oracles (Rom. 3. 2), and a kingly line of whom should come that Seed (Jer. 23. 5), until finally in the person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus the promise became a reality. Even then a further development in this wondrous purpose came into view, for now we perceive that Christ has many members, and we, Christian disciples of this age, are those members (I Cor. 12. 27), and if we be Christ's then we also are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise (Gal. 3. 29).

We are often reluctant to admit this progressive and unfolding nature of Divine Truth. Human pride is much more flattered by the desire to believe that God has chosen us as specially favoured individuals to be granted a special and exclusive revelation which no one else can possibly receive, than it is to recognise the fact that our standing in Divine Truth at all is due to the labours of earlier disciples who laid the foundation of our present standing. In our natural reaction from those errors of doctrine which we have cast aside in the light of this day we oft times fail to give sufficient credit for the good work done by our predecessors in Christian service and ministry. Our Lord recognised that principle when he said "*I send you forth to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour. Other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours*". (Jno. 4. 38). Many believe that in this day they have seen a harvest work accomplished and perchance have taken a share in the reaping. Do we always realise as much as we should that that harvest was made possible by the labours of earnest Christian men in past centuries—yea, even those whom we sometimes criticise for too great a zeal in their service and not sufficient attention to a deeper doctrinal understanding of the Word of God.

This appreciation of the essentially progressive development of our understanding of Truth is the key to New Testament teaching. Paul's exposition of doctrine contained all the essentials, but he left it to each reader to interpret for himself in the light of his own generation and environment those expressions and figures which Paul adopted to convey his meaning to Christians of the first century. To a Church which had been brought up under the strict discipline of Judaism the message of Christ came expressed in types borrowed from the Tabernacle ceremonies, and much more easily understood therefore by Jews than by Gentiles. We in this day must study the Levitical ritual of Exodus and Leviticus before we can appreciate the deeper spiritual teaching of the Book of Hebrews. Paul expounded the truth regarding the "Ransom for All" in terms taken from Mithraism, a philosophy well known to his Gentile readers but almost un-

known to us to-day. To the illiterate and uneducated masses of Western Europe the "Passion plays" of the Middle Ages were the only effective means of teaching Scripture truth, and so it happened that men and women unable to read or hear the Bible in their own language, gazed upon the winged and white-robed angels, and horned and tailed devils, of those plays and built their conception of Heaven and Hell around the things which they saw. How deeply those things were impressed is shown by the fact that to-day, several centuries after reading has become almost universal in England, there are still many Christians who think of the spiritual world in those same terms. John Bunyan believed whole-heartedly in the things about which he wrote, yet who could doubt his fervent spirit was truly in tune with that Lord to whom he was given in complete surrender, even although we in this day could by no means endorse his theology!

Present Truth is built upon this foundation, and to remain and continue in Present Truth it is essential to hold that, first, the essential principles of Divine Truth were revealed to the Apostles and laid down by them for all time, and expressed in language fitted to the generation which first heard them; second, that in every age those principles need to be re-expressed in words and terms fitted to that age, that the spiritual truth behind the words may be truly appreciated. Luther believed in transubstantiation; that the bread and wine of the sacrament became in very truth the body and blood of our Lord. Wesley saw a deeper significance in the call to "eat of that bread and drink of that cup" and proclaimed the necessity for personal surrender to Christ. Later Christian leaders elaborated that understanding until in the nineteenth century, personal association with Christ, now and for ever, a complete and utter abandonment of ourselves to the service and instruction of the Good Shepherd, was seen to be the real participation in bread and cup which our Lord had in mind when first he said to the disciples "This cup is my blood of the new covenant. Drink ye all of it". And who shall say that there is not an even deeper understanding of this mystic association with Christ, awaiting us when we are ready to receive it, reconciling past perplexities and leading us still farther along the shining pathway of Truth?

Unless we realise and follow this principle there can be no progress in Truth. How true it is that attempts are often made to stop at some point to which Christian believers have attained and to discourage further research and progress. The tendency is always to rest satisfied with progress made and to withdraw from the constant struggle of pioneering. But the very nature of Christian thought is to burst

the bonds and grow, and if an outlet is not provided then the result will be that declared by the Master Himself in His story of the new wine in the old wine skins (Luke 5. 37). It is not often noticed that He did not condemn the old wine as bad, nor the old wineskins as useless. What he did say was that old wine is the right thing to keep in old wineskins, and that both are then preserved. New wine should go into new wineskins, and then both will adjust themselves to each other peaceably.

Our Lord knew that His teaching would take out from amongst the Jewish system a "remnant" who had already learned all that Judaism could teach them and were reaching out to further advances in the knowledge of God's Plan. He knew also that the vast majority were not yet ready for this further revelation of Divine Truth and in His wisdom left the old wine to the old wineskins. Now be it noted that there were certain essential doctrines which were common both to the old Jewish faith and to that new faith which was to supersede it. That there was only one God, and that men were sinners, unreconciled to God except a propitiary offering be made; that the Seed of Abraham was to bless all families of the earth and that God had appointed a chosen people through whom He would execute that purpose—all these things were held as truth alike by Jew and Christian. Nevertheless the Christian from his advanced standpoint held beliefs and expectations which the Jew never enjoyed. So with us in our own day. Whilst there is much that we hold in common with all Christian believers, there are also the things which are the heritage only of those who are "called to be saints" and who have been blessed with a deeper and more "up-to-date" knowledge of the Divine Plan.

We must learn therefore to respect the beliefs and convictions of our fellow believers whilst standing quite firmly by our own. More than ever does this become necessary in the case of our nearest brethren who differ on matters which may at first sight appear to be fundamental. It often occurs that, when misunderstandings are cleared up and care taken fully to appreciate each other's point of view, the seemingly irreconcilable opposites are perceived to be different ways of expressing the same fundamental truth. We must learn to draw a clear distinction between the truths of the faith which have never varied and can never vary, and the many methods of expressing those truths which do vary from age to age and between believer and believer. Thus, and thus only, will it be true that "we all, with open face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (II Cor. 3. 18).

There is a world of truth in Whittier's words:

*"The outworn rite, the old abuse,
The pious fraud transparent grown,
The good held captive in the use
Of wrong alone—*

*These wait their doom, from that great law
Which makes the past time serve to-day;
And fresher life the world shall draw
From their decay.*

*"But life shall on and upward go;
Th' eternal step of Progress beats
To that great anthem, calm and slow,
Which God repeats*

*God works in all things; all obey
His first propulsion from the night:
Wait thou and watch! the world is grey
With morning light!"*

CARDIFF HOME-GATHERING

"Together in Unity"

A happy and united gathering of brethren met together in fellowship at Cardiff, rather more in number than last year. The addresses were greatly appreciated, and the careful attention of the brethren to the subject matter inspired the speakers to give of their best. By a remarkable sequence of thoughtful attention was directed to the life, the death and the resurrection of our Saviour, and the after-resurrection utterances of Jesus. Exhortation to holiness and God-likeness evoked that atmosphere of devotion befitting the occasion. Another feature of interest related to the position of the Jew in this changing world. The friends enjoyed the careful presentation of this topic by Bro. French, who has obviously given much exhaustive study to this aspect of the Divine revelation. Bro. Pritchard showed the present application of the exhortation by Paul to love, and maturity of Christian development, as an experience to be acquired in this life, giving practical examples of personal experience in the Christian way, leading to the present enjoyment of present Truth, with its responsibilities and blessings.

The Home Gathering concluded with a reminder by Bro. Fox that the Lord "sees and hears." The consciousness that our unseen Guest is in the midst of every gathering of the Lord's people, and that Christ is present at every conversation in the house, proved to be a stimulating and solemn reminder how we ought to walk and talk! The tune of "Abide with Me", to words selected, finished the service, and we realised that another milestone or monument of praise might be set up in our hallowed memories. Truly it was pleasant and good to dwell together in unity!

THE QUIET TIME

"My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places."

"TEACH ME THY WAY"

*Teach me Thy way, O Lord;
Teach me Thy way.*

*Thy gracious aid afford,
Teach me Thy way.*

*Help me to walk aright;
More by faith—less by sight;*

*Lead me by Heavenly light.
Teach me Thy way.*

*When doubts and fear arise
Teach me Thy way.*

*When storms o'erspread the skies
Teach me Thy way.*

*Shine through the cloud and rain;
Through sorrow— toil and pain*

*Make Thou my pathway plain.
Teach me Thy way.*

*Long as my life shall last
Teach me Thy way.*

*Where'er my lot be cast
Teach me Thy way.*

*Until the race is won;
Until the journey's done;*

*Until the crown is won.
Teach me Thy way.*

(Unknown)

APPRECIATION

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

REALISM

Victories over sin and over self are fought out where no eye sees but God's. The killing of some secret affection, the bending of our will in submission, some carnal desire checked or some unholy imagination defeated, the Cross taken up gladly for His sake. If this be the daily experience, unseen by all save the Lord Himself, then we can be sure of power in our testimony and of being used by the Lord with whom we have come into close touch in secret. Is this not the price of real power?

DETERMINATION

I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air.—1 Cor. 9: 26.

What then is God seeking? To what has He called us? The Apostle Peter says that God has "called us to glory and virtue." (2 Peter 1. 33) Certain conditions God requires of those who will run in the race. He requires that none be proud, but that they possess humility. And He will have no one in the Kingdom of His Elect who is weak, vacillating, so far as his *mind* is concerned. He may not have a strong *intellect*; but he must manifest to God that he has strong *will* and *firm determination*, and that he has cut off everything in life in order to win the prize. He must demonstrate his *loyalty* to God.

REALITY

How few are able to speak of Christ as a living, bright reality, from the overflow of a heart full of unintermitting joy in the Lord! Yet this surely is our portion, and our duty. There is no such thing in nature as an intermitting communication of life—as from the vine to the branch, from the body to the members. Should there be in grace? Does not Christ give us His peace, His joy—Himself—to be our constant life?

"THOU KNOWEST"

*Lord Thou hast searched and seen us through
Thine eye commands with piercing view;
Our rising and our resting hours,
Our hearts and minds—with all their powers.*

*Our thoughts before they are our own,
Are all to Thee distinctly known.
Thou knowest the words we mean to speak,
Ere from our opening lips they break.*

*Within Thy circling power we stand.
On every side we see Thy hand.
Awake—asleep—at home—abroad,
We are surrounded still with God.*

*Amazing knowledge—vast and great!
What large extent! what lofty height!
Our souls with ALL the powers we boast,
Are in the boundless prospect lost.*

*Oh may these thoughts possess each breast
Where'er we rove—where'er we rest.
And since Thou dost Thy children see
May we be holy—like to Thee.*

Strong Delusions

A word of warning first
spoken twenty years ago

"Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved . . . God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned . . ." (2 Thess. 2. 10-12.)

It is a startling thought that God would delude or deceive anyone. He is "the God of Truth", He "cannot lie". What, then, does the Apostle mean by this statement?

When puzzled by a seemingly inconsistent statement of Scripture as rendered in the version authorised by the royal James, we learn to seek its meaning in the original text, by making use of the various critical translations available, and the Hebrew and Greek lexicons of Young and Strong.

So examining this text, we find that its first assertion "God shall send" is correctly translated, and indicates a deliberate and unequivocal purpose. We pause to ask, how does God "send" his message to men, and reply, through His Word, sole "channel" of his revelation to mankind.

Are we then to conclude that there is "strong delusion" in the Word of God? By no means! The critical translations give us the solution of the mystery. The original Greek words do not mean "strong delusion".

Rotherham translates these words "an inward working of error". The Emphatic Diaglott word-for-word reads, "strong working of deceit"; in the arranged translation, "an energy of delusion". A free rendering of this passage in harmony with the Greek original and the general teachings of the Scriptures might be as follows: "They shall receive a mistaken zeal, based on their own understanding of the Word of God."

The Scriptures themselves offer numerous examples of people so deceived.

(1) Fleshly Israel was deceived:—(Romans 9. 30-10. 3:) "I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge."

(2) Paul was deceived:—(Phil. 3. 6.) "As touching zeal, persecuting the church;" (1 Cor. 15. 9:) "I . . . am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God."

(3) Persecutors of Christians deceived:—(John 16. 2:) "The hour cometh, that whosoever killeth you shall think that he offereth service unto God."

(4) Honestly deceived:—(Prov. 16. 25:) "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

(5) Judas deceived:—(John 13. 21-30.) The

betrayal of our Lord by Judas Iscariot is one of the simplest and clearest illustrations of our text.

"Then entered Satan into him (Judas). Jesus therefore saith unto him, What thou doest, do quickly."

Judas had sold out to the High Priests. He had agreed to betray his Master. Satan "entered into his heart". But still he hesitated to commit the overt act of treason. Jesus, the living Word of God, spoke: "What thou doest, do quickly." It was the "zeal of error" Judas needed to spur him on. Without relieving him of responsibility, Jesus gave him the "mistaken zeal" to accomplish his nefarious purpose—because his heart was not right—he had not "received the truth in the love of it".

Thus everyone who concerns himself with holy things—the Scriptures, the Church, the ministry, without a dominant, a governing love of the truth, will inevitably draw mistaken zeal from the Scriptures, "that they may be judged" or distinguished. By the suggestion from Jesus, Judas was prompted to act; by the activating energising power of God's word, we are urged to do what we most desire to do quickly, that our true heart condition may be manifested and the decision in our case be made, and be approved by all the righteous in heaven and earth.

Since we may be perfectly sincere, and sure we are acting on the Word of God, and yet be wrong and by our actions be justifying our condemnation, it behoves us every one to obey the Apostle's injunction to "Examine yourselves, whether, ye be in the faith; prove your own selves" (2 Cor. 13. 5). Dare any of us say we are certain we are right—in no danger of judgment—we have no need of caution or self-examination; and that all who disagree with us either in doctrine or practice, are wrong? "Let him that thinketh he standeth, TAKE HEED lest he fall."

It is often extremely difficult to discriminate between good and evil, or to decide whether a course of conduct opened before us would be pleasing to the Lord or not.

Some may be inclined to question this statement; but the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews declares it to be true. He says (Heb. 5. 7-14) "When by reason of the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need again that some one teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God; and . . . have need of milk (for babes) and not of solid food . . . (which is) for full grown men . . . who by

reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil."

This writer emphasises his point here by a play on words—*paronomasia*, which is the use of two words of similar sound in juxtaposition, commonly for emphasising antithesis, or contrary meaning.

Paul frequently uses various forms of plays on words—puns, paronomasias, assonances and alliterations—always with the purpose of impressing his thought on his reader's mind. In Heb. 5. 14, out of more than a dozen Greek words meaning "good," and eight meaning "evil," the writer selects two which look and sound almost exactly alike—"Kalos" and "Kakos." It requires good eyesight to "discern" between Kalos and Kakos, and equally good and experienced spiritual eyesight always to discern between good and evil, in our conclusions drawn from the Word of God. A neat turn of language to impress a great truth!

Discernment—discrimination—is a rare and advanced fruit of true Wisdom.

Kalos or *kakos*! Good or evil! The fundamental error is in expecting that the Church will reign in the flesh, and that its ministers have earthly authority. The Scriptures are so written that the erroneous conclusion may be drawn, by those who do not love the truth concerning the church in the flesh—that her course is to be one of humility, poverty, self-sacrifice, suffering; her exaltation to be consequent upon her death in following her Lord. This is distasteful to those who love power, place, pride, authority. God sends a "zeal of error" to such—that their hearts may be manifested, their condemnation justified.

Strange it is that Bible students can see clearly how wrong was the course of some who made these great and swelling claims in past centuries, yet fail to recognise the same claims of over-lordship and authority when advanced by others to-day. Plausible arguments based upon texts and interpretations of God's Word, are presented in support of these claims; but the Apostle's solemn and portentous words apply to-day as ever; "God shall send them a zeal of error—because they loved not the truth—that they may be judged."

This particular self-deception is the most serious and dangerous of any into which we may fall. It is denounced by the risen Christ in his Revelation (2. 6, 15) as "*the doctrine and works of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.*" Nicolaus means "he who overcomes the people;" it is a cryptic reference to those who seek to become "lords over God's heritage"—who are "not holding the Head." "The vice-gerent of Christ on earth"; "the Channel of the Truth"; these and similar claims are all direct offences against him who has been appointed by

God the Father to be "*head over all things unto his body, which is the Church*" (Eph. 1. 22), and inevitably will bring on the condemnation forewarned, if persisted in.

Next in heinousness to the offence against the Head is the offence against his Body, the Church, in fomenting divisions among her members. The Apostle writes (1 Cor. 11. 19) "*There must be schisms among you that they that are approved may be made manifest among you.*" How manifest? Let Paul himself answer (Gal. 5. 19-21) "*Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, parties . . . which I forewarn you, even as I did in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.*" The divisions must come, in order that those who love and practice divisions may be manifested and condemned.

On the contrary, the same Apostle as clearly declares that those who practice unity shall inherit the Kingdom. He gives us a basis for the unity of the Church so clear, simple, and yet comprehensive as to leave no room for question, no danger of being either too exclusive or too inclusive if we adhere to it. It is indeed an authoritative "Apostle's Creed" for the Church. It is found in Ephesians 4. 1-16, which may be paraphrased with some freedom as follows. Note the play on the word "one":

"I urge you to live worthy of the Call that you have received; always humble and gentle, patient lovingly with one another and striving to maintain in the bond of peace the one-ness given by the Spirit. (For there are seven "one" things upon which this "oneness" is built:)

One Body,
One Spirit,
One Hope of our Calling,
One Lord,
One Faith,
One Baptism,
One God and Father over all."

"To this unified Body God has given gifts—Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers, to fit his people for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the Body of Christ. And (providing unity is maintained) this shall continue until we all attain unto—

- (1) The one-ness of the faith;
- (2) The full knowledge of the Son of God;
- (3) Full grown manhood—the full standard of the perfection of Christ;
- (4) Complete union with him who is our head—Christ himself. *But only if we are closely joined and knit together and so are being built up in a spirit of love.*"

The Apostle's extreme care in choosing words exactly to express his meaning is notable in the fact that in referring to five of the seven essential things he uses the cardinal "one"; in the cases of the other two, he uses the ordinary "first". The five cardinal "ones" are given to us—complete, perfect, the plan and workmanship of the Father and the Son, in which our part is only to receive, to occupy, to share, or to recognise and obey. These are: One Body, One Spirit, One Lord, One Baptism, One God and Father." The other two are: "First Hope of our Calling, First Faith." These are our contributions to the fellowship of the Body; while both are gifts from God in a sense, because the things which call them forth or incite them are from Him, yet in another sense they originate and grow in our minds in response to God's invitation and gracious promises.

Yet in stating these two requirements for membership in the Body he implies that we are not to expect or demand a fully developed hope or faith in those seeking our fellowship. This he puts in so many words in Romans 14.1: "*Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations*". Presently, as a result of the unity and fellowship of the Body, his faith will grow, "*until we all attain unto the unity (perfection) of the faith*".

How beautifully this platform covers every point—justification, consecration, sanctification, holy living, a sacrificial death! Anyone who professes these Seven Things, and gives no contrary evidence (such as living in open sin—1 Cor. 5 11; 2 Thess. 3. 6) is accepted and fellowshipped as a brother in Christ.

But, says one, any sectarian would accept this platform—providing he is allowed to define the "One Faith"! To this we reply, the Apostle does not leave this requirement to our individual opinions and preferences, but himself defines in unmistakable simplicity and completeness, the "Faith once delivered unto the Saints:" "*Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen.*" "*The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach: because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in thy heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved*" (Heb. 11. 6; Rom. 10. 8 & 9.) Is that all? Yes, according to Paul; but mistakenly zealous sectarians from the earliest age of the Church have been expanding and dilating and doctoring and patching their conceptions of "The Faith," to include this, that and the other doctrinal requirements, true or false; and they are still busy at it!

In fact, it has become so much a matter of

course to confuse "faith" with doctrine or belief, that when the facts come to our attention we are astonished, and sometimes find it difficult to adjust our minds to their implications.

The Greek word "*pistis*," the word usually translated "faith", carries no implication of a creed or system of belief. Strong's Greek Dictionary in his Concordance, after defining this word, adds: "*By extension, the system of religious (Gospel) truth itself.*" It is truly by an "extension" not authorised by the inspired writers nor justified by the meaning or usage of the Greek word, that it is so extended. And this "extension" has undoubtedly been the cause of more fanaticism, persecution, hatred, warfare and bloodshed, in the name of Christ, than all other fundamental errors combined.

As compared to the Seven fundamental Things stated by the Apostle as essential to membership in the Church, and the plain statements of Scripture directly concerning these Seven, all other doctrinal statements of Scripture are of secondary importance. And yet, the things that Christians dispute—yea, quarrel and divide about, are almost invariably the doctrinal questions of secondary importance.

Kalos or *Kakos*—good or evil—discern, O Israel! The Great Things should unite us ALL; shall we permit the lesser things to continue to separate us?

Paul places life and death before us—a theorem in Spiritual Proportion:

Unity: *Life*. Divisions: *Death*.

Unity—and a "completing of our course with joy"; an "ascertaining what is the good and acceptable and complete will of God concerning us"; an "abundant entrance ministered unto us into His Everlasting Kingdom".

Divisions—and loss; lost time, lost efficiency, lost opportunities, a lost crown and Kingdom.

Why is this subject of the Unity of the Body of such supreme importance?

(1) Because Jesus came into the world to establish unity (John. 11. 52)

(2) He commanded and prayed that his followers should be one (united): (John 15. 12, 17; 17. 11, 21-23.)

(3) We lose our liberty in Christ if we practice divisions.

"What," says one, "I thought we gained liberty by standing apart?"

The most important feature of our liberty in Christ is that spoken of in John 1.12: "*As many as received him, to them gave he power (marg. the right or privilege—i.e., liberty) to become the sons of God.*" "*He that saith he abideth in him*

ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked. Hereby perceive we love, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren . . . Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" (1 John 2. 6; 3. 16; 4. 11).

How can we love and lay down our lives for the brethren if we are divided—if we do not fellowship with them—assemble ourselves together with them? Only "with all saints" can we come to know "what is the breadth and length and height and depth . . . of the love of Christ, which passeth (individual or human) knowledge" (Eph. 3. 14-19). We can only attain the perfection of this knowledge when we are finally united with our Head and the members of his Body beyond the Veil; but our fitness for that ultimate and perfect unity will certainly be measured and judged by the earnestness, sincerity and self-sacrifice we display in seeking the fullest possible measure of it during this, our trial time.

We have considered the great Apostle's solemn admonitions and warnings; it remains for us only to examine their applicability to ourselves; to determine our own position and trend in the light of their significance; for "if we judge ourselves we shall not be judged".

Kalos or Kakos—good or evil—life or death!

The Laodicean Church has a high and holy mission. In most particulars it is identical with, in some it differs somewhat from, the mission of previous stages of the Church. It may be stated thus:

- (1) To "give diligence to make our own calling and election sure"—(2 Pet. 1. 3-11).
- (2) To "lay down our lives for the brethren" in assisting them to do likewise.—(1 John 3. 16.)
- (3) To discharge our ambassadorship to mankind: "As though God did beseech by us: we pray in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God"—(2 Cor. 5. 20).
- (4) To witness to the world of
 - (a) The End of the Age,
 - (b) The Presence of the Lord,
 - (c) The nearness of the Kingdom—(Matt. 24. 14).

This Mission can only be accomplished by Unity—or rather, those who practice unity will achieve personal success in this enterprise.

It requires both Faith and Works—but not specialists in Faith and specialists in Works, acting separately. We **MUST GET TOGETHER**, because our Head commands it, and because we need each other.

Kalos or Kakos—good or evil—discern, O Israel!

Shall we say Unity is impossible? Then we do not love sufficiently, for "Love hopeth ALL things"!

Unity impossible? Then we contradict the Prophet, who declares (Isa. 52. 8) "*Thy watchmen . . . together shall sing: for they shall see eye to eye when the Lord shall bring again Zion.*" Does this mean that if we are of the true watchmen we will agree on everything? Or, in other words, do we think that those who do not agree with us are not watchmen?

Ah, no, brethren—let us not be so narrow or so foolish!

If we see eye to eye that opinions do not matter—that unity on the basis of the Apostle's seven great essentials (upon which we all agree) is the all-important thing—then the PROPHECY IS FULFILLED—we can all get together, forget differences, practice unity, reap its blessed fruits "unto life eternal," and be ready to face our Lord and Head without the shame, confusion and regret we shall surely experience when we see him if we have "practiced divisions."

Kalos or Kakos—good or evil—discern, O Israel!

Surely the movement to "gather into unity the children of God who are scattered abroad," inaugurated by our Lord nineteen hundred years ago, is one worthy of our most earnest efforts as his followers. Surely it deserves our careful thought and planning, our time, our talents, the sacrifice of our human life itself! Surely it is a Holy Crusade to which we will do well to devote ourselves! Surely such a life and death would be well-pleasing to the Father and to our Head!

"We are a spectacle to angels and men." Are we giving a good witness, dear brethren—of Christian love, of unity, of zeal and devotion, of holy living?

Kalos or Kakos—good or evil. *Discern, O Israel!*

CHRISTMAS CARDS

For the first time since the war we are, in consequence of many requests, undertaking to supply Scriptural Christmas cards. A very suitable assortment is available in packets of ten, with envelopes, at post free prices as follows.

3/3 3/9 4/3 4/9

Friends are desired to send in their orders early; we cannot promise that the postal authorities will deliver packets asked for only a few days before Christmas.

THE PRAYER OF FAITH—A Suggestion

While reading the *Diaglott* it was noticed that the word translated "sick" in James 5. 14 was *astheneo*, a word derived from *a-sthenes*, meaning without strength (*a*, without; *sthenos*, strength). From this is derived *asthenia*, a word much used in medicine. From my knowledge of medicine I knew that a person might be asthenic without being diseased or sick, so I looked up the word rendered sick in the 15th verse, and this I found to be *kamno*, a word which occurs only three times, and means, "to labour, suffer from fatigue." The two other passages are Heb. 12. 3 and Rev. 2. 3, which Young's translation renders as follows: "For consider him who endured such gainsaying from the sinners to himself, that ye may not be wearied (*kamno*) in your souls — being faint." (Heb. 12. 3.) "And thou didst bear and hast endurance and because of my name hast toiled and not been weary (*kamno*)." (Rev. 2. 3.) These passages would indicate that it was the weary and weak in faith who was told to call for the elders, and not the one suffering from disease. There are other words which mean sick, such as *nosos*, meaning sickness, unsoundness, disease; *echo kakos*, meaning to be ill.

These two words are never used to denote moral or spiritual sickness, while *asthenos* in its various forms is so used, and while it is frequently rendered sick in the common version, it is never rendered sick in Young's translation, and the Revised Version has the number of times reduced.

There are three words rendered "healed," *viz.*, (1) *therapeuo*, meaning to attend to, heal, cure; *sozo*, to make sound or whole; *iaomai*, meaning to heal. This last word is the one used by James, and has also the significance of saved, as the following passage will show: Matt. 13. 15, "For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and should understand with their heart and should be converted and I should heal [*iaomai*] them." (See also Acts 28. 27, 28; Luke 4. 18.) "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal [*iaomai*] the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised." Jno. 12. 40. "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes nor understand

with their heart, and be converted and should heal [*iaomai*] them."

Acts 10. 38, "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, who went about doing good and healing [*iaomai*] all that were oppressed of the devil." 1 Pet. 2. 24, "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed [*iaomai*]."

These passages can be applied only in a moral or spiritual sense, while *therapeuo* is never applied in such a sense but always relates to a cure of a physical disease.

As examples of the use of *astheneo*, note the following: Matt. 8. 17, "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities [*astheneia*] and bare our sicknesses [*nosos*]." Matt. 26. 41, "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak [*astheneia*]." Rom. 4. 19, "And being not weak [*astheneo*] in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb." Rom. 5. 6, "For when we were yet without strength [*asthenes*] in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Rom. 6. 19, "I speak after the manner of men, because of the infirmity [*astheneia*] of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness." Rom. 8. 3, "For what the law could not do in that it was weak [*astheneo*] through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin condemned sin in the flesh." Rom. 8. 26, "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities [*astheneia*], for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Rom. 14. 1, 2, "Him that is weak [*astheneo*] in faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things; another who is weak [*astheneo*] eateth herbs." 1 Cor. 8. 11, 12, "And through thy knowledge shall the weak [*astheneo*] brother perish for whom Christ died? But when ye sin so against the brethren and wound their weak [*asthenes*] conscience ye sin against Christ." Heb. 4. 15, "For we have not an high priest which can-

not be touched with a feeling of our infirmities [*astheneia*], but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

Nosos is the word most commonly used to denote sickness or disease and occurs in the same verse in contrast to *astheneia*, viz., Matt. 8. 17, "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias, the prophet, Himself took our infirmities [*astheneia*] and bare our sicknesses [*nosos*]."

From the foregoing it is concluded that James referred to Christians who had become weak in faith, or, to use a common expression, had "backslidden." This is indicated in verse 16, the word "faults"

being translated from *paraptoma*, meaning a falling away.

The following is a more literal translation of Jas. 5. 14-16: "Is any weak among you, let him call for the elders of the Church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the wearied one. And the Lord shall raise him up, and though he have committed sins they shall be forgiven him. Confess your fallings away one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

ON MOSES

The Scriptures write down Moses as the meekest man, and history has written him down as one of the greatest of men.

When one hundred and twenty years old Moses' eye was not dim, his vigour had not fled! This is a remarkable statement in whatever light we view it. Forty years was he schooled in all the learning of the Egyptians, a member of the court and a general. Forty years more he was hidden from view in the desert region as a herder of sheep, learning, we may be sure, lessons of patience, endurance, self-control and humility. And now, finally, the last forty years of his life he was used mightily of God, and yet maintained humility and exemplified the wonderful qualities of a judge and lawgiver, and later a general, a prophet, a priest, a teacher. The poet has said of him:—

*"This was the truest warrior
That ever buckled sword;
This the most gifted poet
That ever breathed a word.
And never earth's philosopher
Traced with his golden pen
On the deathless page, truths half so sage
As he wrote down for men.
And had he not high honour?
The hillside for his pall,
To lie in state, while angels wait
With stars for tapers tall;
And the dark rock pines, like tossing plumes,
Over his bier to wave,
And God's own hand, in the lonely land,
To lay him in the grave."*

The Scriptures say of him that there has risen no prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, because not only was his birth and development specially under Divine blessing and guidance, but he fully submitted himself to the Lord in meekness, in humility, and was therefore specially used of Him

as a type or picture of the still greater Prophet, the Christ of glory. (Acts 3. 22, 23.) Let us use the words of others in describing this great servant of God:—

Moses, the Statesman: "Inspiration apart, Moses possessed all those endowments and qualities which form the consummate statesman and chief magistrate; an intellect of the highest order, perfect mastery of all the civil wisdom of the age; a penetrating, comprehensive and sagacious judgment; great promptness and energy in action; patriotism which neither ingratitude, ill treatment nor rebellion could quench or even cool; a commanding and persuasive eloquence; a hearty love of truth; an incorruptible virtue; an entire freedom from selfish ambition; an invincible hatred of tyranny and injustice; a patient endurance of toil; a courageous contempt of danger, and a greatness of soul in which he has never been surpassed by the most admired heroes of ancient and modern times. Comprehensiveness, grasp, force, sagacity, were the predominant characteristics of his mind; magnanimity, disinterestedness, an enthusiastic devotion to liberty and an ardent rational piety, were the leading qualities of his heart."

As a General: "Moses delivered his people from the most powerful people on earth; maintained them mid the perils of the desert for forty years, and led them in confidence against a country settled by fierce tribes, which they conquered."

As a Lawgiver: "However much may have been added by the development of the people, like the amendments to the Constitution and laws of modern states, yet through Moses was instituted the great system of civil and religious law."

As a Poet: "The two songs in Deut: 32 and 33 and Psalm 90."

As an Orator: "The great orations in Deuteronomy stand among the few greater masterpieces of eloquence in the world's history, if not at their head."

Out of the Ivory Palaces

"Blow upon my garden
that the spices thereof
may flow out"

AS UNKNOWN YET WELL KNOWN

Strangers here —
Not a link with earth unbroken,
Not a farewell to be spoken;
Waiting for their Lord to take them
To Himself, and like Him make them.

Strangers here —
With their hearts upon a treasure,
That has dimmed for them earth's pleasure
Lamps well trimmed, and brightly burning
Eyes forever upward turning.

Strangers here —
Earthly rank and riches losing,
Worldly ties and claims refusing.
On to Christ in glory passing.
All things there in Him possessing.

Strangers here —
But in Him their hearts are resting,
Faith looks up in days of testing,
Follows Him with true allegiance,
Loves to walk in His obedience.

Well known there —
Oh, what joy for Christ to take them
To the Father, who will make them
Welcome in His Mansions yonder,
Strangers here-to be no longer! — (Selected)

MY PRAYER

(Eph. 2: 10-11)

"That I may know Him," Father, grant the
longing
That burns within me as a quenchless fire;
For in these words what wondrous depths be
hidden,
Embracing all I need or can desire.

"That I may know Him," this is life eternal
Not to possess a gift apart from One,
Who is the fount from which all true life springeth
And Whom to know is heaven on earth begun.

"That I may know Him" not in name or theory
This brings no power to stand, amid earth's strife,
Nay, I would know Him as the living Saviour,
The very strength and centre of my life.

"That I may know Him," in His resurrection
Triumphant over sin and Satan's power;
May know Him as He ever intercedeth,
Upholding thus His saints through each dark hour.

"That I may know Him," Lord I would not shun it,
The drinking of that cup He drank for me,
The sacred fellowship with Him in suffering,
The dark night-vigil in Gethsemane.—(Selected.)

A LITTLE TALK WITH JESUS

A little talk with Jesus, —
How it smooths the rugged road!
How it seems to help me onward,
When I faint beneath my load!
When my heart is crushed with sorrow,
And my eyes with tears are dim,
There is naught can yield me comfort
Like a little talk with Him.

I tell Him I am weary,
And I fain would be at rest;
But I still will wait His bidding,
For His way is always best.
Then His promise ever cheers me
'Mid all the cares of life: —
"I am coming soon in glory
To end thy toil and strife."

Ah! that is what I'm wanting,
His lovely face to see —
And, I'm not afraid to say it,
I know He's wanting me.
He gave His life a ransom;
To make me all His own;
And He'll ne'er forget His promise
To me, His purchased one.

The way is sometimes weary,
To yonder nearing clime,
But a little talk with Jesus
Has helped me many a time.
The more I come to know Him,
And all His grace explore,
It sets me ever longing
To know Him more and more.—(Selected)

The Humility and Patience of Love

A Devotional Study

"God is love and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him" (1 John. 4. 16).

In the Scriptures the word love is used to express the complete whole of the grand and glorious qualities which make up the perfection of God. God is the personification of Love! To whatever extent any one possesses this quality of Love, to that extent he has character-likeness to God. Whoever is fully in God's likeness may be said to be Love; for Love is the great principle which represents most fully the Divine character.

"God is Love"; our Lord Jesus is Love; and when the Church is perfect, each member of the Body will also be Love. This great principle will have full control of all that we do and say, even as now it has control in the hearts of the Lord's people, despite the weaknesses of the flesh, which prevent its full expression. When all the imperfection is taken away, those who obtain the prize of our glorious High Calling will have the image of God, the image of the Lord. The hope of obtaining the likeness of the Divine character is the great ambition which inspires us to faithfulness of endeavour.

Incidentally, it may be remarked that faith, hope and love are fruits of the Holy Spirit. Although every good and perfect gift comes from the Father (James 1. 17), nevertheless, there is a difference between a "gift" and a "fruit". Possession of a gift may be acquired immediately, but a fruit requires time in which to develop. So with the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

Here we see displayed the Wisdom of God. Development is a gradual work. With those who have that earnest desire and determined zeal for righteousness which God wishes them to have, every word and every act has something to do with the development of this quality of Love. Our Heavenly Father does not expect us to acquire perfection of love in the flesh, for its weaknesses and imperfections will not permit us to do so; but He expects to find in those who will be members of the Body of Christ that earnestness of spirit and faithful endeavour which demonstrates that if they had perfect bodies they would always manifest love.

In order to reach this degree of development of character we must not live after the flesh, but must

train our lives to desire only those things which are true, pure, loving and good. In this sense of the word we are to be copies of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The followers of Christ have consecrated their own wills and have been begotten of the Holy Spirit, which is the Spirit of Love; for it is the Spirit of God who is Love. Therefore their sentiment towards one another must be of loving interest. Perhaps they are not always wise in knowing how to exercise loving-kindness; sometimes their fallen nature may lead them to think that a certain course of action would be the loving one, when it is the very reverse, the wrong course. Hence we need to be on the alert to perceive to what extent we are using the spirit of a sound mind in our conduct and in our dealings one with another.

The Christian's experience is a continual schooling. Daily we are learning more and more about ourselves and about the wisdom and justice of God. As we learn these lessons day by day, we are learning more to correct ourselves. In thus discovering our own imperfections, we should learn, as a matter of course, not to expect perfection in others; and we should give them credit for doing their best to exemplify the highest ideals which they have in respect to the unity and perfection required for membership in the Body of Christ.

Love is always kind; Love cannot wilfully injure another. The parent who loves his child will not do anything to harm that child. He might sometimes make a mistake and punish the child unjustly, but the motive behind a loving parent's action will always be kind and true.

Love might sometimes be regarded as unkind, for the principles governing the actions of the individual might be misunderstood. When our Heavenly Father forbade Adam and Eve to partake of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, He had a wise reason for so doing. No doubt He would have eventually permitted them to partake of that fruit; but it was kindness on His part to keep them in ignorance of that fact. Thinking God to be unkind, ungenerous towards them, Eve thought to obtain her rights. So with us. If our Heavenly Father's kindness is not always understood, we may not be surprised if we have a similar experience. Although our spirit, or motive, may be right, yet

we may not always have the ability to manifest it; and so we must make due allowance when others misunderstand us.

Man was originally made in the image of God (Gen. 1. 26, 27); but by reason of the fall of Adam, his balance of mind has been destroyed. Those who have the mind, or will of Christ are able to overcome some of the inequalities of their natural disposition and to think soberly of their own knowledge and ignorance and of that of others. This ability to appreciate the true state of affairs is the secret of much of our blessing in the Lord.

When we see others who have a smaller appreciation of justice than we have and who do things contrary to the principles of righteousness, we rejoice that we know better and are able to do better than they. The spirit of a sound mind shows us that we have more ability along some lines than have some others, and that others have more ability along some lines than we. Because of the fall of man, all are weak in one direction or another. The knowledge of the imperfect condition of humanity should humble us rather than puff us up.

Humility of mind comes only after the attainment of considerable knowledge of Christ. Knowledge puffs up because of selfishness of heart, because we are more likely to be conscious of our own good qualities than of those of others. Hence those born with less selfishness have less to contend with, and those born with more of it have more to contend with; and in proportion as we have the Spirit of Christ, we are able to overcome the tendency to be puffed up with what little knowledge we possess. Indwelling love has the power to build up, to strengthen character, and to counteract the wrong effect of the fallen human nature.

The whole world has a tendency to recognise the principles of Justice. Even those whose conduct towards others is far from just, seem to crave an opportunity to fight against injustice, provided that the case is not one with which they are identified. This inclination often manifests itself in acts of violence, as when mobs vent their anger against some poor sinner who has done something to provoke their wrath. The least virulent amongst them have perhaps done wrong also, yet they use the opportunity to show their indignation against wrong doing and seem to take delight in punishing the offender.

The Lord's people should not possess this spirit of intolerance. We should have patience, sympathy and endurance when things go wrong, and make due allowances for those who are transgressors. The more we possess of the spirit of patience, the more we have of the spirit of forbearance and the more

difficult it is to arouse us to anger. Wherever the spirit of love prevails, its possessor is not easily moved to do or say anything unkind or unjust. Love makes us very patient with those with whom we are associated; it is anxious to throw the mantle of charity over everything that seems to be wrong.

Love would have us remember that while another may be in error, it does not follow that he is at fault. He may not have understood a matter correctly or his judgment may not have been the best, owing to inherited weakness over which he has no control. Before condemning anyone we should make sure that he is at fault. Justice demands that we do no less than investigate before we condemn. Love urges us to be as merciful in the case as is possible.

The Lord's people are not to be of that immovable kind that cannot feel any resentment of injustice. Lack of ability to have just indignation would imply lack of morals and of harmony with God. Of our Lord Jesus it is written that when He beheld the unrighteous condition of the rulers of His people, and saw the injustice of their conduct, He "looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts." (Mark 3. 5.) Like Him, we should be wholly out of sympathy with everything that is not in harmony with God.

We are to love righteous and hate iniquity. This word iniquity, which means the very opposite of Love, is a strong expression. A person who is indifferent to matters of right and wrong is indifferent to the character of God, who is in opposition to all forms of iniquity. Of our Lord, the Scriptures say, "Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness; therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows". (Psa. 45. 7.) All who are cultivating character pleasing to God, all who are endeavouring to become exact copies of His dear Son, should put away every impurity, everything not right. Whatever is wrong should always be opposed by our new minds.

On the other hand, if we have Love as our Lord has it, we shall hate the wrong, and not the individual who does the wrong. In proportion as Love controls our minds and hearts, we shall feel sympathy for those who are in iniquity, for we remember that the race of mankind are fallen from perfection. We should think that to do evil is not their intention, their will, but that they are suffering from an iniquitous disease. Love is patient and tries to find extenuating circumstances and conditions. It seeks to help the evil-doer and is not easily provoked to anger.

But the word "provoke" signifies to incite; in

another place the Apostle says, "Provoke one another to Love and good works." (Heb. 10. 20.) Love should say and do those things that will incite to loving words rather than stir up bitterness, which leads to anger, wrath, malice, strife and evil-speaking. (Eph. 4. 31, 32.) In other words, it is much better to be a peace-maker than a strife-maker. Yet we are not to have peace at any price; rather we should have peace if possible, where principle is not involved. We should stir up strife only where some good is sure to result.

The degree of love, the strength of love, may be determined by the ease with which it may be swerved and aroused to opposition or to impatience and anger. We have already seen that there may be times when patience might stand in the way of the real interests of the case and where Love would take steps to correct what seemed to be an apparent evil; but we must remember that balance of mind, or judgment, is not ours by nature. Perfection of decision is a quality belonging only to our Heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are in the School of Christ, the Great Teacher. We have the words of the Heavenly Father, of our Lord Jesus and of the Apostles recorded in the Bible; therefore we should know the difference between right and wrong. On the other hand, we see that sin exists in the world. Mankind is imperfect in mind and morals. This condition is hereditary—the result of Adam's transgression. Yet with all our advantages of knowledge, we "cannot do the things that we would"; consequently, we feel a measure of sympathy for ourselves, and we should extend the same measure to others. Indeed, we should be more critical of ourselves than of others, although the Lord's Word says that we are not to judge either ourselves or others. We cannot read the hearts of those around us and therefore are not competent to decide what motives prompt their actions nor what degree of punishment should be meted out to them.

Nevertheless, we are to observe right and wrong conduct among our neighbours. We may know that they have figuratively speaking, a bad tree and therefore bring forth bad fruit; and we should consider why they have a tree that produces such fruitage. Perhaps they were less favourably born than we. Perhaps they have never been in the School of Christ and have never heard the Great Teacher or the Apostles. If so, our sympathy should go out to them and our attitude of mind towards them should be such that we will not be provoked by their shortcomings, but should manifest generosity of heart toward them.

To attain this sympathy and generosity is a part of our instruction in the School of Christ, but we

do not learn all pertaining to the subject in a day or a week. We get "here a little, there a little" (Isa. 28. 10); and if we are following on to know the Lord, our mental discernment will become clearer and our minds will broaden in sympathy for others. Thus we shall become more like our Father in Heaven, for He is kind to the unthankful, and just to the unjust, as our Lord pointed out.—Matt 5. 44-48.

Undoubtedly the causes for irritability and for being provoked vary in different persons. With some, it is because of a nervous condition of health, which renders them less easily able to control themselves according to the standards which they themselves recognise. With others, the cause of irritability is pride. In fact, pride is connected with nearly everything that is injurious to the people of God. Wherever pride exists, the person is susceptible to evil influences from every quarter.

Pride manifests itself in various ways. Sometimes it exhibits itself as self-esteem, leading one to think too highly of himself and too lightly of others, even to the extent of imagining himself to be their superior. At other times, pride manifests itself as approbation: anything that conflicts with the desire to appear well before others touches a tender spot.

We are not to be indifferent to these things. If we have pride or approbation, we are to seek to control it with the spirit of love and sympathy for others, instead of letting the wrong spirit control us. The best way to do this is to practise generosity and to provoke others to love and good works instead of to anger. Let us remember that humility is one of the great lessons to be learned in the School of Christ; obedience to the instructions of the Teacher along this line has very much to do with our ever getting into the Kingdom.

One of the best aids to the learning of this important lesson is to learn to judge ourselves—to scrutinise our own motives. If we find that we have acted unjustly toward another, we should go and make amends to the best of our ability; we should properly scourge our own minds, and seek to make matters right with the one we have wronged. For a person who is proud, or who is sensitive to the good opinions of others, it is very difficult to apologise; but the best thing to do is to set the matter right as speedily as possible, and repeatedly, if necessary. Thus we may have help along the lines where we should have it, by overcoming our pride and vanity.

The members of the Body of Christ are all to be copies of God's dear Son. This does not mean that God's dear people will be able to control

their looks and actions and words, but that the heart must recognise this standard and strive to attain it. Every time a person who has some weakness along this line of pride and vanity apologises for a wrong done, he will by that act show both

God and man that his heart recognises the right principle. A great blessing will come to him because of his following very strictly the Divine Word; thus he will gradually overcome his weakness and strengthen his character.

CONDITIONS OF DISCIPLESHIP

Notes taken on the occasion
of a Pilgrim Visit

Did our Lord say "If any man would be my disciple let him serve me" or was it "If any man would serve me let him follow me"? Let us look at John 12. 26. which reads, "*If any man serve me let him follow me*". Following is the important thing. The real results come to the follower, not just to the one who seeks to serve. "*Have we not done mighty deeds in Thy Name?*"

What does it mean to follow? The answer is in Matt. 10. 38. It includes taking up His cross. "He who does not take up his cross and follow cannot be my disciple." All the studying we may do will not make us disciples; only taking up the cross can do this. We can learn a lot from books but following Him is the vital thing. We must be burden bearers in the sense of bearing one another's burdens but we must each take up our own cross. We sometimes think we could bear another's cross more easily than our own but we cannot change crosses with our brethren. Often those who bear the heaviest crosses do the least talking—I am doing the groaning and my brother the bearing. To the rich young ruler Jesus said, "take up *the* cross," not *your* cross. He had not been assigned a particular cross yet; perhaps he had one later; we do not know. We are reminded of the poem about the one who tried on different crosses and found none that he could bear until he came to one which just fitted his shoulders, and he found it was the one he had taken off. The cross which has our name on it is the one for us, and we must accept it joyfully. Jesus did not choose His cross or complain of the nails; He accepted it from His Father's hand. The Lord alone knows what is best for us, we must not try to change our cross.

We read in Matt. 27. 33 how Jesus took His cross. "*When they were come to a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull*". Golgotha—place of a skull. Just gruesomeness—nothing to make it easy. Verse 34 says Jesus was offered gall and He refused it. At the start of His ministry Satan offered Him an easy path, "worship me and I will give you all these things". He refused, and at the end, when He was offered gall to make death easier, He again refused. God is training and educating us; are we to complain about His methods?

Verse 35 says they divided His garments among them. Our Lord, who knew the loving hands that had made those garments, would probably have liked to see them go elsewhere, not to the soldiers who crucified Him, but He made no protest. We remember His injunction "*If they take your coat, let them have your cloak also.*"

Verse 36. "*Sitting down, they watched Him there*". We do not realise how many are watching us as we die daily. Thus we are bearing testimony and some who now speak of us as evil doers may praise God on our behalf in the day of their visitation.

"*And they set up over His head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.*" Some speak of this as though it were complimentary but the accusation means the charge. The oriental method leaves out as much as they dare, unlike our method which multiplies words and puts in all we can!

Verse 38. Two robbers were crucified with Him. So it was with the early church. They were accused of every crime. We, too, find it hard to explain our position at times, that we are not this or that. He was found in human form and became obedient unto death on the cross which was the very lowest form of death. (Phil. 2. 8) So with our dying daily; if this means our taking the lowest place in the estimation of our neighbours we can accept it as hanging between thieves and robbers.

Heb. 12. 2. If we are followers of the Lamb we shall despise the shame but we can only do this by keeping clear before our eyes the joy. When one has real love and joy in service he believes that all the families of the earth will be blessed and the joy increases so much that he knows that death is only the entrance to the joy of taking part in blessing all the families. This is the death of those who die willingly.

"*If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.*" (Matt. 16. 24) Self denial comes first. When self is denied there is no self love. No general would start a battle while there is mutiny in the ranks. Self love is mutiny against our Captain and we must first quell the mutiny, then we shall be ready to do

battle. "Whosoever he be that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple". (Luke 14. 33.) We must be able to say, "none of self and all of Thee."

The Apostle Paul was very much favoured in his upbringing, yet he said, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yes, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." (Phil. 3. 7-8) How easy it is to start bragging about our advantages instead of counting them loss. Paul did not say how much he had given up for Christ; he spoke of his light afflictions. Nothing worth mentioning—I count everything a loss. But, we may say, we have to have food, raiment, etc.; how can we count everything as loss? Recently some manuscripts were found in a crocodile that was dug up and among other things were household accounts where the word that is here translated "loss" was used for "bones for the dog". Bones may seem pretty poor to you, but ask the dog, he thinks they are very good! So the things valued by the Gentiles (dogs) are as nothing to us. As New Creatures we are not interested in these things, we are using them for a little while but we shall be glad when we can turn them over to the dogs. Spiritual things are the realities for us. "For the excellency of the knowledge" not of all the arguments of doctrine but the joy of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Not just knowledge that we may be better in argument. The things that reveal God Himself are the things that appeal to the Christian. We must study that which will sanctify. If our studies are not making God clearer, then change to something else. We must not forget that one of the most difficult things for us to count as loss is our ability to think. It is not our thoughts that sanctify, it is God's thoughts. "Cease from thine own wisdom" (Prov. 23. 4) "Wilt thou set thy mind on that which is not?" Colossians 3. 2 says "Set your mind on things above" and Romans 13. 14 "Make no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof". The word lust means desires. Do not do anything because the flesh wants it done. Christ is our head. To keep on using our old head is to reject Him. Conduct yourselves as aliens and exiles. "Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." (Gal. 5. 16)

Do not seek after what ye shall eat or drink or wear for after all these things do the Gentiles seek. Seek first the Kingdom and all these things shall be added to you. We shall have all that we actually need. Where your treasure is there will your heart be also. We must leave the earth or heaven will never be ours. Our arms are not long enough to reach heaven while we hold on with one hand to earth. Seek ye first. This may mean principally or

it may mean the first thing we do each day—we have no right to limit a scripture. We may say we have no time in a morning but how many of us would fail to spend half an hour each morning in this way if someone promised us £1,000 at the end of three months for doing so? Here there is no limit—all these things shall be added unto you. We must not only read but live what we read. Many of us are Bible Readers not Bible Students. A sister who was told by her doctor that she must rest her eyes to the extent of reading only one paragraph an hour found this to be a great blessing for she read a paragraph and thought about it for an hour so that she made it completely her own before reading another paragraph. "So run that ye may attain".

We should not be visible sacrifices (Matt. 6. 16-18.) Luke 14. 26 says that the disciple must hate even his own life, and Matt. 5. 29 if his right eye cause him pain he must pluck it out. This is of course figurative language for no one could run the race better with only one eye but it means that the most important powers must be devoted to Him. Setting our affections on things above we shall get the things we strive for; if our affections are on earth we shall get earth.

Hebrews 3. 6. One rendering gives this "If we hold fast the confidence and pride in our hope". That is the one thing we can be proud of. Ephesians 6. 13 tells us to put on the whole armour of God. We sometimes choose to have just a shield or just a sword, but we need the whole armour. Some get the wrong helmet on. They think it is knowledge but the helmet of salvation is knowledge properly applied. Jesus said, "By this is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit", not just a little, but much fruit. That is what it takes to be a disciple. If we abide in the vine we shall have prunings. These are not to be complained of but to be rejoiced in because by them we shall bear more fruit.

Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. He can perform miracles if we will submit to the nails.

Simon the coward became Simon the courageous. Simon who denied his Master three times before soldiers and servant, spoke to thousands of men without flinching, and declared that it was the Spirit of the living God that had been received.

* * *

The inclination we all have to settle down and make things comfortable for ourselves has directed very much of Christian effort into a wrong channel. The importance of things seen and temporal has overshadowed the unseen and eternal.

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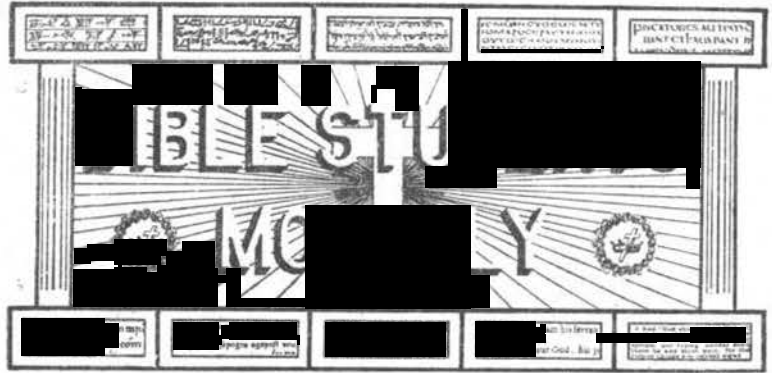
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Thou, therefore, endure
hardness as a good
soldier of Jesus Christ.



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DECEMBER, 1950

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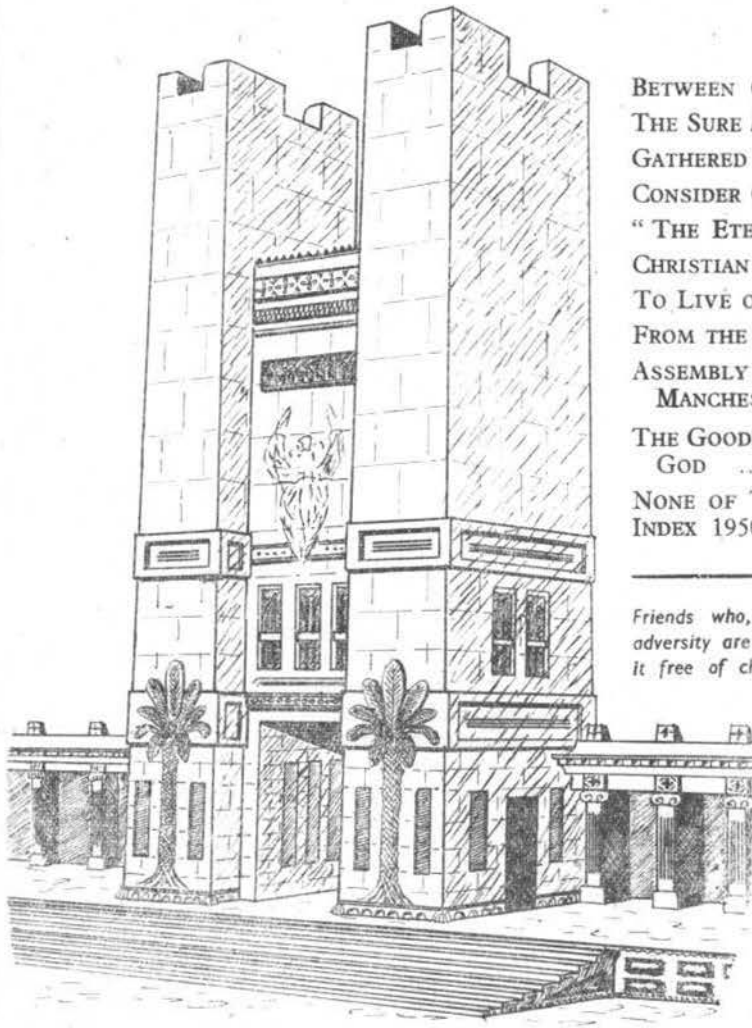
*Friends who, through old age, infirmity or other
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Lift up your heads, O ye gates.
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

The Benevolent Fund, which has done such good work for many years, remains in the care of the three brethren who have administered its work for so long, and becomes a means of help and comfort to our needy brethren very specially at this time of the year. Bro. E. Allbon, 20, Sunnymede Drive, Ilford, Essex, is secretary to the Fund and is pleased to receive and answer all correspondence.

* * *

Several brethren interested in the idea of a home for aged brethren, where such may spend their last years in a congenial "Truth" atmosphere, would like to hear from others likewise interested who would be able and willing to assist either financially or by becoming one of the staff necessary to the conduct of such an enterprise. Letters should be addressed in the first instance to Bro. A. O. Hudson, 24, Darwin Road, Welling, Kent.

* * *

Bro. F. Lardent of 174, Forest Hill Road, London, S.E.23, is able as usual to supply the "Christian Home Calendar" for 1952. It measures 10ins. x 7ins. and has the usual monthly turnover pages with coloured Scriptural pictures. Price 2/9 post free or three for 8/-. Please send orders direct to Bro. Lardent and not to Welling.

* * *

The receipt of a donation of £1 from a Midlands city is acknowledged with sincere appreciation.

* * *

A new class meeting has been commenced at Swansea. Anyone who may be interested, either on their own behalf or for the benefit of their friends in that district, may have full details upon request addressed to Bro. L. Shephard, Flat B. 1, Walter Road, Swansea, Glam.

* * *

Bro. Allbon wishes to acknowledge with sincere appreciation an anonymous donation of 10/- for the Benevolent Fund, sent from South-West London.

* * *

The friends at Hyde have now obtained a further supply of "Cross and Crown" badges. There is now no purchase tax on these and so the price is cheaper than previously. One style only, gilt on metal, at 4/6 each plus postage. Orders should be sent to Miss E. A. Wilkinson, 28, Mona Street, Hyde, Cheshire (not to Welling).

* * *

The brethren of the "Christian Fellowship" class at Manchester plan to hold their thirty-third annual convention on December 31st, and January 1st next. If no programme is enclosed with this issue,

details can be obtained from Bro. H. Chrimes, 2, Cheam Road, Timperley, Cheshire.

* * *

Despite the notice below, Margolis translation has just gone out of print and can no longer be supplied. Way's "Letters of St. Paul" is temporarily out of stock but we hope to have some before Christmas.

* * *

The December meeting at Caxton Hall will be held on 16th December, the speakers being Bros. H. C. Thackway and A. O. Hudson.

* * *

Bro. N. D. Charcharos, of 3, Nelson Street, Cardiff, South Wales, would be very pleased to hear of anyone who possesses copies of the magazine "The Watch Tower", loose (i.e. not bound) any year from the start up to 1916, and who is willing to dispose of same. Readers who are able to help are desired to write direct to Bro. Charcharos at the address given.

BOOKS FOR CHRISTMAS

A few suggestions for those who like to give books for Christmas gifts. All these are available from stock at Welling. For the children, the books shown on back of cover. The "Little Life of Jesus" is useful for older children at 6/9 and the "Ten Camels" at 6/6 for the little ones. For teen-agers, "The Man Who Did Not Sin" a story of the Millennial Age (5/6) or the "Mission of Jonah" (2/9) can be recommended. Devotional books include "Poems of Dawn" at 7/6 and "In Green Pastures" with a short reading for each day (4/6). Quite an acceptable little gift would be the *Bible Students Hymnal* bound in yapp rexine (in black, blue, red or green) at 3/3. Then for those interested in Palestine and prophecy we still have the handsome book "Palestine the Land of My Adoption" by Clapham with photos and coloured plates, (13/6).

For students there are the translations, *Septuagint* in Greek and English, parallel columns; this is the Old Testament in general use in our Lord's day and the one from which many of the apostles' quotations from the Old Testament are taken. This is 32/-. *Ferrar Fenton* in modern English, complete Bible, is 27/6 and *Margolis* Old Testament, translated by Jewish scholars, 13/6. Then there is Arthur Way's new modern English translation of Paul's Epistles and Hebrews "The Letters of St. Paul" (8/6). The "Treasury of Scripture Knowledge" containing literally thousands of cross-references to almost every text in the Bible is a useful book for Bible students — the price is 16/-.

THE SURE MERCIES OF DAVID A momentous promise

"Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David". (Isa. 55. 3).

What are the "sure mercies of David"? They are the subject of a promise of considerable importance, for the offer is to those who will incline their ears to God, and so find life eternal. This fifty-fifth chapter of Isaiah is a Millennial chapter; there is not much doubt about that, but just because the Millennial Age is the one in which all the good purposes of our God converge together toward their glorious conclusion, it is only meet that we give it our earnest attention, for here there must surely be good and sound doctrine for our own hearts and minds.

This expression, the "sure mercies of David", is evidently either a synonym for the "everlasting covenant" of the same sentence, or something intimately associated with that covenant. This everlasting covenant is very clearly the covenant under which Millennial work is to be conducted; that much is plain from the intimate association of this verse with the remainder of the chapter, which deals with the evangelising work of the Millennial Age. That is the covenant which in Jeremiah is referred to as the New Covenant, the one under which men's hearts are to be changed from hearts of stone to hearts of flesh, and none will need to ask his neighbour if he knows the Lord, because all, from the least unto the greatest, will know Him. (Jer. 31. 34). Only in the Millennial Age will that be true. Now David had nothing to do with the making of the New Covenant. It is true that God did make a covenant with David but it was rather a re-affirmation of the original Abrahamic Covenant than one having direct application to the reconciliation work of the Millennium. We cannot say therefore that the "sure mercies of David" are one and the same with the "everlasting covenant". Rather are they the characteristic features of the arrangement by which the everlasting covenant will be carried into effect, and those characteristic features are all pre-figured by David and his reign back there in the days of Israel.

Let David himself tell us of this. He has enshrined the truths of this matter in the 89th Psalm, and in that Psalm does David tell of the promises that God made to him, promises that were fulfilled

only to a very limited degree in his earthly life but will be fulfilled in their glorious entirety in days yet to come. "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever" he cries (verse 1) "With my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations". These "mercies of the Lord" are the things of which we are now thinking. The word itself means "loving kindness" and when the adjective "sure" (*aman*, faithful, steadfast) is prefixed we have the "faithful loving kindness" which the Lord has promised David, and through him, the whole world. In this introductory verse David is telling us that the loving kindness and faithfulness of God is to be made known for ever, proclaimed to all generations, an apt way of saying that what he has to tell is intended not only for his own day and people, but also, and much more urgently, for the people of "the Age" the Day of reconciliation which even now is still future. Here in this Psalm is the record of the Covenant God made with David, a covenant so very like the Abrahamic promise in its phraseology that we ought clearly to see that it is but a re-affirmation of the kingly phase of that great Covenant. "I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant. Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations". (verse 3-4). In the ecstasy of this revelation of the Divine purposes David goes on to speak of the glory and power of God and the absolute righteousness of His rule. "Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne; mercy and truth shall go before thy face" (verse 14). So he goes up, step by step, to the lofty height from which he views the "sure mercies", the "faithful loving kindnesses" which are to constitute the salient features of the Millennial Age. A King, reigning in righteousness! An Administration, ruling in righteousness! A Kingdom built upon righteousness! These are the sure mercies of David and these are to be "given" to those who hear and respond to Isaiah's call; those who, thirsting, come to the waters where they may drink and buy wine and milk without money and without price. The kings and the administrations and the kingdoms of this world demand money and sacrifices from the people their subjects. There is nothing to be had "without money and without price"; all must be paid for and oft-times the price is a heavy one. Jeremiah says in another place of

the inhabitants of Babylon "the people shall labour in vain, and the folk in the fire, and they shall be weary" (Jer. 51. 58). Those who receive this inestimable gift, the "sure mercies of David" will not be weary, for they are to "go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands" (Isa. 52. 12). Small wonder that David was joyful when he composed the 89th Psalm.

It is in verse 19 that he rises to this theme of the "sure mercies". "Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one, and saidst, 'I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people. I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him . . . My faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him, and in my name shall his horn be exalted . . . also I will make him my first born, higher than the kings of the earth. My mercy will I keep with him for ever more, and my covenant shall stand fast with him'" (vss: 19-28). This is clearly intended to refer much more definitely to David's great antitype, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in His office as earth's Millennial King, than ever it could to David himself. David, the man, great as was his faith and loyal as was his heart, time and again showed himself a man of like passions with other men, guilty of grievous offences against God's holiness. Only in an illustrative sense can he ever be said to have fulfilled these glowing prophecies. We who look back upon the words from the standpoint of the Christian dispensation see here a vivid word-picture of the future, of the day when Jesus, whose right it is, takes the throne of earth and rules, as Isaiah said He would rule, a King in righteousness. That is the first and the principal of the sure mercies of David.

The Apostle Paul saw this very clearly. When he came to Antioch of Pisidia in company with Barnabas and preached in the synagogue there he associated the fulfilment of this promise with the resurrection of our Lord. "As concerning that he (God) raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise 'I will give you the sure mercies of David'" (Acts 13.34). Christ must needs rise again in the power of an endless life if He is to be given to mankind at His Second Advent to be their righteous and everlasting King in conformity with the terms of this promise. Without the risen Christ the prophecy could not even begin to be fulfilled.

The Divine Plan provides for some to be associated with the Lord Jesus Christ in His kingly work of the next Age. The promise is given to His

faithful disciples of this present Age that they shall live and reign with Him the thousand years of the Millennium (Rev. 20. 4). The New Testament is so full of this theme, the future work and privilege of the Church of Christ, glorified and joined to Him "beyond the Veil", that there is no shadow of doubt and no uncertainty about the matter. The work of the Church, under the direction and guidance of the Lord, will be the teaching and converting and reconciling of mankind. They will come to resurrected humanity as benefactors and helpers. They too, then, must be included in the "sure mercies of David". The Church is the promised Administration by means of which the Millennial blessings will reach the people. And Divine promise guarantees that they will be ready for their work when the time comes. There is no possibility of failure; that elect company which God foreknew will have been justified and sanctified and glorified in good time for the commencement of its great work (Rom. 8. 29-30). So is it promised in Psalm 89. "His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven . . . Once have I sworn in my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed . . . and his throne . . . shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven" (Verses 29-37). Notice here how the "seed" and the "throne" are associated together. That is only to be expected, for the faithful in Christ Jesus, the "seed," are to sit with Him in His throne (Rev. 3. 21) and both seed and throne are to continue eternally "as a faithful witness in heaven". What rare word of comfort and encouragement is this for the loving hearts who are tenaciously maintaining their loyalty and love for the Lord in the face of discouragement and opposition and persecution, to-day. They will be to all eternity "a faithful witness in heaven" testifying to the mighty power and the tender love of our God who had wrought such wonderful things out of such unpromising material.

This is where the Psalm leaves the future. Verses 38 to 51 have no parallel in the future, no place in the prophecy. They voice David's own bitter realization that the outworking in his own day was not reaching up to the full measure of the prophecy. And the reason is not far to seek. David himself had proved unworthy. As a type and a picture of his Lord Who was yet to come he filled the requirements and pointed the way for us to follow and observe, but in actual literal truth the glowing words did not attain the limited fulfilment they could have attained in his own day had he himself been more faithful to the principles of righteousness and the duties of kingship. This part of the Psalm does not concern us therefore; we have a King, who although

tempted and proved in all points like as we are and like as David was, endured it all without sin, and attained to His Kingship in the triumph of absolute righteousness. We do not need to end our Psalm, as David did his, on a despondent note. We can finish at verse 37 and hold before our mental vision the glorious prospect of the Church, faithful and triumphant, joined with the Lord, an eternal and faithful witness in Heaven. The Church is, to mankind, the second of the "sure mercies of David".

What of the third? It is Solomon, the son and successor of David, dedicating the Temple that David himself was not allowed to build, who touches upon the sublime truth that underlies the third. This Kingdom of righteousness which is also included in the offer "without money and without price" to mankind in "that Day" is the Kingdom of which the Temple of God is the centre, and that is why it is going to be so great a blessing to mankind. Ezekiel saw the same in vision, the Millennial Kingdom built around and depending upon the Temple of God as its centre. Out of the Temple is to flow the River of Life and from the Temple comes all the light that illuminates mankind in the Day of Blessing. So Solomon, standing and dedicating the Temple he had built and which prefigured the dwelling of God with men in the day when all tears shall be wiped away, (Rev. 21. 3-4), was moved by the Holy Spirit to associate what he was doing with the promise of God to his father. "O Lord God" he entreated "turn not away from the face of thine anointed: remember the mercies of David thy servant" (2 Chron. 6. 42).

Just as that Temple became a place where God could meet His people, hear their prayers, accept their offerings, pronounce them clean and justified in His sight, and hold them in continuing covenant relationship with Himself, so in the future Kingdom for which we look God will do all these things in much more real a fashion than He could do in those far-off days of types and ceremonies. There was no lasting validity in what was done then, for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats shall take away sin; in the future day men may accept for themselves the ransom-sacrifice of Christ, and repent, and turn to Him, and be justified by faith in Him, and so be reconciled to God and enter into everlasting life. All these things that Kingdom will achieve, and the whole earth become as it were a golden city dominated by the abiding presence of the Father and the Son, jointly the life and the light thereof (Rev. 21. 23). So the Kingdom is the third of the "sure mercies of David", an abiding evidence of the faithful loving-kindness of our God. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it; and the kings of the earth do

bring their glory and honour into it; and the gates of it shall not be shut at all at end of day, for there will be no night there; and they who enter into it are they who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

Entrancing prospect! Is there not here great incentive for us, that we gird up the loins of our minds and resolve to run our race with a greater determination and more constant zeal than ever before, knowing that it is upon the completion of our course that the blessings of this coming Kingdom are waiting. Is it not true that the "earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the Sons of God" (Rom. 8. 19)? Then let us press forward in hope and expectation that at the completion of our Master's work in us we shall become part of that inestimable blessing which God is preparing for the sons of men, and has promised to give them, saying to them "I will give you — the sure mercies of David."

HE KNOWETH BEST

"The outward features of our life may not be all that we would choose them to be; there may be things we wish for that never come to us; there may be much we wish away that we cannot part from. The persons with whom we live, the circumstances by which we are surrounded, the duties we have to perform, the burdens we have to bear, may not only be other than what we should have selected for ourselves, but may even seem inconsistent with the formation and discipline of character which we honestly wish to promote. Knowing us better than we know ourselves, fully understanding how greatly we are affected by the outward events and conditions of life, He has ordered them with a view to our *entire and final*,—*not only our immediate happiness*: and whenever we can be safely trusted with pastures that are green and waters that are still, in the way of earthly blessing—the Good Shepherd lead us there".

CHRISTMAS CARDS

For the first time since the war we are, in consequence of many requests, undertaking to supply Scriptural Christmas cards. A very suitable assortment is available in packets of ten, with envelopes, at post free prices as follows.

3/3 3/9 4/3 4/9

Friends are desired to send in their orders early; we cannot promise that the postal authorities will deliver packets asked for only a few days before Christmas.

GATHERED GRAIN

In the earliest days of Christianity it was revealed that there is no power which can do battle with the beast except the Lion of the tribe of Judah, which, in the eyes of a prophet of that time, seemed like a Lamb standing as though it had been slain. If in those first days, when the life of the Church appeared to hang so precariously in the balance, there could be traced clear signs of battle joined between the great beast and the spotless Lamb, surely now, in what may be the final hours of modern civilisation, it is not unreasonable to discern a like tremendous struggle. In the midst of such a conflict it would be rather foolish to try to make things just a little better, bringing in here a little and there a little of the spirit of Christian charity. The struggle between the Lamb and the beast is one in which no quarter is asked and none is given; at such an hour nothing less than a complete surrender to the leadership of Christ can be of the slenderest service. Our halting obedience and our careful policies have undone us at the last and, if the Lord Christ can find it in His heart to make any use of us at all, it can now be only as we are ready to follow Him whithersoever He may care to lead.

(Rev. Paul Gliddon, 1946)

Social work is no substitute for evangelism. Zechariah does not say that the Kingdom of God will have come when all the frying-pans are made of gold, or even when everyone in Jerusalem has a frying-pan of their own; but when all the existing pots and pans are dedicated to the Lord. What about our fountain pens and typewriters, the symbols of our business life; our pots and pans, the symbols of our home life; our books or musical instruments, the symbols of our intellectual gifts or social attainments? Do these belong to Him? Is Monday just as much the Lord's day for us, in the sense that it belongs to Him, as Sunday? If it is true that social work is no substitute for evangelism, it is equally true that evangelism not backed up by honest Christian living is of little avail. The preaching of the Gospel by the life does not absolve us from the responsibility of witness by lip, but the two must go together.

(Brian Aldis, 1942)

The native Christians in a West African village had no privacy for prayer in their huts, so they formed the habit of retiring to the bush to get quiet moments with God. Presently from each hut

occupied by a Christian a little track could be seen leading into the bush. If they grew slack in prayer, the track soon became overgrown, and then some watchful elder Christian would approach the back-sliding one and say: "Brother, there is something wrong with your track." In these days of haste it is good to remember that if we are too busy to pray, we are busier than the Heavenly Father wants us to be.

Some one has remarked that as the sharpening of scythes in harvest time does not mean lost time and energy, so also time spent in prayer is not lost as respects the affairs of life. Unquestionably the best men and women in the world are those who pray, and pray regularly; who bow the knee as did Daniel. Unquestionably the moments thus taken from earthly affairs are well spent and bring more than commensurate blessings upon the worshipper. Unquestionably it is impossible to live a consecrated life in neglect of prayer. What would Daniel have been without his praying time? How would his faith in God have persisted in that heathen land? How would his loyalty to principle have maintained itself in the midst of corruption had it not been for his communion with his maker? To the Christian this privilege is still further enhanced by a realisation that "We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous," in whose all-prevailing name we may approach with courage, and obtain mercy and find grace to help in every time of need.

"The outward features of our life may not be all that we would choose them to be; there may be things we wish for that never come to us: there may be much we wish away that we cannot part from. The persons with whom we live, the circumstances by which we are surrounded, the duties we have to perform, the burdens we have to bear, may not only be other than what we should have selected for ourselves, but may even seem inconsistent with the formation and discipline of character which we honestly wish to promote. Knowing us better than we know ourselves, fully understanding how greatly we are affected by the outward events and conditions of life, He has ordered them with a view to our entire and final, — not only our immediate happiness: and whenever we can be safely trusted with pastures that are green and waters that are still, in the way of earthly blessing — the Good Shepherd leads us there".

(Selected)

CONSIDER ONE ANOTHER

A dissertation on
Christian Living

To make a distinction between the Golden Rule, the acknowledged standard for all mankind, and a Christian's rule of life will be considered by many, doubtless, as a distinction without a difference. But this is not true. The Golden Rule, that one should do to others as he would be done by, is a simple rule of justice. All should recognise it. All should follow it, as none will dispute it.

The rule for Christian living, as taught by the Master and exemplified by Him, is far more exacting than the Golden Rule, which is applicable to all men. Those who become followers of Christ are, of course, subjects to the Golden Rule, but they voluntarily place themselves under a far more stringent rule. Their Covenant with the Lord is that in the doing of His will — the doing of righteousness — they will ever stand ready to sacrifice everything, even life itself. This is what the Apostle meant when he declared that Christ pleased not Himself. Even though His will was a perfect one, He renounced His rights, privileges, liberties, that He might serve humanity, and thus lay the foundation for carrying out the Heavenly Father's glorious purposes respecting our race.

The present call of the Church is for those who have the "same mind which was also in Christ Jesus." It is a call for sacrificers. As St. Paul declares, "*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.*" (Romans 12. 1). This sacrificing is not to be done in a foolish or aimless way. We are not to sacrifice the things that are right and proper, simply that we may suffer. Right and proper things we may enjoy, except as God shall open our eyes to see privileges and opportunities for self-denial which would enable us to forward His cause, and to minister grace and truth to those for whom Christ died.

Only to Christ and the Church could these words apply; for none others than these have entered into such a Covenant of self-renunciation, giving up the present with all of its privileges and interests in exchange for a spiritual life hereafter, in the resurrection.

All these, by the terms of their Covenant, are to live unto the Lord — to do His will and not their own will, to serve Him and not to serve self, to lay down their lives in fighting a good fight against

evil. All these, when they die, will be dying unto the Lord, in the sense that they are counted as members of the Body of Christ, every member of which must die to the flesh before the entire Body complete can be glorified beyond the veil. To these, therefore, apply the words, "Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's".

This being true, the Christian is to have no will of his own as respects his living or his dying, or any of his affairs. Everything is to be fully committed and submitted to the great Head of the Church. Christ's death on behalf of all is efficacious not only for the dead, but also for the living. All who recognise Him, and are fully consecrated to His service, trust Him fully, in life and in death.

The Apostle proceeds to show that we who constitute the Church which is the Body of Christ are not judges one of another, that all judgment is vested in the Head, the Redeemer of all. Each one now accepted as a member of the Church must ultimately stand the inspection of the Head of the Church; for our present membership in His Body is a probationary one. Loyalty, faithfulness to the Head of the Church now, will bring to us eventually membership in His glorious Body, the Church beyond the veil — His joint-heirs in the Kingdom — His Bride.

The Apostle's argument, then, is that we should avoid condemning one another, and content ourselves with encouraging each other in the good way. Since it is written that every knee shall bow and every tongue confess to God, this proves that our final accounting as members of the Church of Christ will be to God, or to our Lord Jesus as His representative.

The Apostle's argument also is that, instead of judging, condemning, fellow-members of the consecrated Body, we should be full of sympathy for them. We should realise that we do not know thoroughly their trials, their difficulties, their environments, their heredities. This should make us very sympathetic towards all the brethren. Our keen sense of justice, our love of righteousness, our hatred of iniquity, should find its principal exercise in self-criticism, and in watchfulness not to do anything that would stumble a brother — not to do anything that would discourage a brother or cause him to fall away from the faith and the works which the Lord requires.

What a wonderful lesson is this in battling against

self, rather than against enemies ! How many find it easy to excuse their own weaknesses while they are very captious and critical as respects the shortcomings of others ! How the Lord warned His people against such an attitude saying, "*With what (soever kind of) judgment ye judge (a brother), ye shall be judged*" (yourself of the Lord)—Matt. 7. 2.

If you are hypercritical and wish to measure others up to the full standard of perfection, you are thus recognising a high standard, and that recognition on your part will make it proper for the Lord to measure you by that high standard. If we could but remember this—that the merciful will obtain mercy—how glad we all would be to be extremely merciful to others, extremely lenient in our judgment and reproofs, hoping that the Lord would be correspondingly lenient with us ! — James 2. 13.

The Lord is not in this establishing a low standard, and wishing His people to think lightly of their own weaknesses and failures, and those of others. He is, on the contrary, setting up a high standard of love, sympathy, and kindness. Love is the principal thing, in God's sight. Whoever, therefore, has love and sympathy most highly developed, the Lord may well esteem as highly developed along the lines most essential in His sight, most essential for a place in His Mediatorial Kingdom.

"*I know and am persuaded of the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean (unholy) of itself,*" writes the Apostle. The Apostle is referring not to filthiness of clothing or person, but to foods which were to the Jew made improper, ceremonially unclean. His argument is that to the Jew who died to all hope of attaining eternal life through keeping the Law Covenant, and who became united to Christ, the restrictions of the Law Covenant would no longer be binding. And, of course, to the Gentile, who never was under the Law Covenant, its restrictions would have no application when he accepted Christ.

Having stated this broad ground, the Apostle admits that if any man had his reasoning faculties so twisted on the subject that he thought himself under obligations, he would be responsible according to his mind or judgment on the subject. If, for instance, a Christian thought that he was obliged to avoid eating pork, that thought in his mind would constitute an obligation ; for him to violate his conscience would mean that he had willingly, knowingly, committed sin ; for he would be wrong in doing what he thought was wrong, however harmless the matter might be in itself.

But now comes the final argument: Anybody realising his own liberty, as the Apostle did, might

eat freely, according to his convenience, without any reproof from his conscience or in the sight of God. But the brother still in the dark respecting his liberty should have consideration—should not be urged to violate his conscience. Rather, the brother of enlightened mind should yield to the other, and abstain from using his liberty, lest he should tempt his brother to violate his conscience.

This question of eating ceremonially unclean meat, or meat theoretically unclean because it had been first waved before an idol, is a question which no longer is a live issue among Christians; for general intelligence on the subject has gained the mastery everywhere. The special application of this lesson to Christians is along a different line. For instance, suppose that one brother had from childhood been accustomed to drinking beer, and that in his estimation it did him no injury. But suppose a number of brethren, less strong than he, physically and mentally, could not touch intoxicants without harming themselves; and suppose that the example of the drinking brother would continue to be a temptation to the others. What should be his course ?

The argument of the Apostle would seem to be that the brother who is strong mentally, morally and physically, should gladly abstain from anything that would stumble his brother, or anybody else upon whom he exercised an influence. "*Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.*" (Rom. 14. 15). If Christ loved the world so much as to leave His heavenly riches and glory to die for sinners, should not we, in proportion as we have His Spirit, be glad to lay down our lives for the brethren, as the Apostle elsewhere exhorts us ? And if so, should we not be much more ready to abstain from the use of comparatively trifling liberties for the sake of our weaker brother, for whom Christ died ? This is a strong argument. Who can deny it ?

"*Let not then your good be evil spoken of.*" Your knowledge, your appreciation of your liberties is a good thing, a desirable thing; nevertheless, you should so govern your exercise of that liberty that none will misunderstand it, and think you an evildoer. Rather restrain yourself of your liberties, preserve others from the temptation too strong for them, and increase your own influence by faithfully abstaining from everything that might appear to be an evil in the sight of others, however right it might be in your own sight, and however correct your own judgment of the Divine Law on the subject might be.

The Apostle adds another argument (v. 17). The advantages connected with our membership in the embryo Kingdom of God consist not in the greater privileges and liberties we have in eating and drink-

ing, but consist rather in the righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit which are ours because we are probationary members of this Kingdom Class. He who thus serves Christ is well pleasing to God and is approved of men. "Let us, therefore, follow after the things which make for peace and

things whereby we may edify one another. Overthrow not for meat's sake the work of God. All things indeed are clean; but evil for that man who eateth with offence. It is good not to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor to do anything whereby thy brother stumbleth."

THE ETERNAL GOODNESS

O Friends ! with whom my feet have trod
The quiet aisles of prayer ;
Glad witness to your zeal for God,
And love of Man I bear.

I trace your lines of Argument,
Your logic linked and strong.
I weigh as one who dreads dissent,
And fears a doubt as wrong.

But still my human hands are weak
To hold your iron creeds !
Against the words ye bid me speak
My heart within me pleads.

Who fathoms the Eternal Thought ?
Who talks of scheme and plan ?
The Lord is God, He needeth not
The poor device of Man.

I walk with bare hushed feet the ground
Ye tread with boldness shod ;
I dare not fix with mete and bound
The love and power of God.

Ye praise His Justice ! even such
His pitying love I deem ;
Ye seek a King ; I fain would touch
The robe that hath no seam.

Ye see the curse which overbroods
A world of pain and loss ;
I hear the Lord's Beatitudes
And prayer upon the Cross.

More than your schoolmen teach, within
Myself alas, I know !

Too dark ye cannot paint the sin,
Too small the merit show.

I bow my forehead in the dust,
I veil mine eyes for shame ;
And urge in trembling self-distrust,
A prayer without a claim.

I feel the wrong that round me lies,
I feel the guilt within.

I hear, with groans and travail-cries,
The world confess its sin.

Yet, in the maddening maze of things,
And tossed by storm and flood,
To one fixed trust my Spirit clings ;
I know that God is good !

Not mine to look where cherubim
And seraphs may not see ;
But nothing can be good in Him
Which evil is in me.

The wrong that pains my soul below
I dare not throne above.
I know not of His hate — I know
His goodness and His love.

I dimly guess, from blessings known,
Of greater, out of sight ;
And, with the chastened Psalmist, own
His judgments too are right.

I know not what the future hath
Of marvel or surprise ;
Assured alone that life and death
His mercy underlies.

And if my heart and flesh are weak
To bear an untried pain ;
The bruised reed He will not break,
But strengthen and sustain.

No offering of my own I bring,
Nor works by faith to prove ;
I can but give the gifts He gave,
And plead His love for love.

And so beside the silent sea
I wait the muffled oar ;
No harm from Him can come to me
On ocean or on shore.

I know not where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air ;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care.

O brothers ! if my faith is vain,
If hopes like these betray ;
Pray for me that my feet may gain
The sure and safer way.

And thou, O Lord ! by whom are seen
Thy creatures as they be ;
Forgive me if too close I lean
My human heart on Thee !

(J. G. Whittier)

CHRISTIAN SINCERITY

In every aspect and phase of our Christian life and our activity in the service of Jesus Christ there is nothing of greater moment than absolute sincerity and the ability to judge our own motives aright. Some of the greatest and noblest of men have ruined their life's work just because in the enthusiasm of success they have allowed their own motives to go more and more unquestioned until the influence of self-desire and the policy of expediency has usurped the place once held by selflessness and true sincerity. One whose early life is spent in unselfish service for others and whose native zeal is used to bring happiness and inspiration to his fellows, may in later life become a veritable barrier to progress, without at any time so much as suspecting that any inward change has taken place.

Particularly is this true in respect to our standing as believers in Christ Jesus. The very intensity of one's personal conviction of the teaching of Scripture inspires a zealous desire to "preach the Word instant in season and out of season"; and to carry the flaming torch of Truth into every place where it has not as yet penetrated. And in the power of that zeal and confidence great things have ever been done. It is in later years, when the wonder of the Truth, and the joys of its service, have become more familiar to us and begin to be regarded as the normal setting of life, that the temptation to adopt worldly methods for the furtherance of our work comes in. Fully justifying our attitude to ourselves, and fully desirous of doing our Master acceptable service, we become less tolerant to others, more arrogant in insistence upon our own way, and progressively we become blinded to that great secret enunciated by Jesus, "I came . . . not to do mine own will . . ."

Ah yes—here is a secret thing indeed. We who are as servants waiting for their Lord need to be very watchful, very, very prayerful, that when "He cometh" He shall find us ready in every respect—not only armed with that knowledge which is fitting in those who "know what their Lord doeth" but also in that attitude of mind and heart which belongs to an "Israelite indeed". If it can be said of us, not only at the beginning but at the end of our Christian life, that there is in our hearts absolute unselfishness, kindness, true brotherliness, we shall indeed be "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light". The children of Israel came short because they put their trust in the Egyptians, who were "men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit" and we too, if we become blinded to that spiritual guidance which comes from God alone, will fail in the same manner. Clear-sighted sincerity

and tolerant unselfishness will keep us ever true sons of Him who is worshipped only in spirit and in truth.

THE NEW LEAF

He came to my desk with a quivering lip—

The lesson was done—

"Dear teacher, I want a new leaf," he said,

"I have spoiled this one."

In place of the leaf, so stained and blotted,

I gave him a new one, all unspotted,

And into his sad eyes smiled—

"Do better now, my child."

I went to the throne with a quivering soul—

The old year was done—

"Dear Father, hast Thou a new leaf for me ?

I have spoiled this one."

He took the old leaf, stained and blotted,

And gave me a new one, all unspotted,

And into my sad heart smiled—

"Do better now, My child."

We are not to be reckless of each other's interests. In our contact with each other we are to "consider one another". We are to consider what would be helps, and what would be hindrances, what would be encouragements and what would be stumbling-blocks; and we are to do all in our power to assist *one another to run with patience the race for the heavenly prize*. If we are truly consecrated to the Lord, we can do nothing "against the truth, but (every effort must be) for the truth". (2 Cor. 13. 8.) What a burning and shining light every Christian would be if his every act were considered and shaped for the benefit of those with whom he comes in contact! What a blessing it would be in the home! What a blessing it would be in the Church! This brotherly consideration is what the Apostle is urging upon us: "*Consider one another to provoke (incite, encourage) to love and to good works*". Avoid every word and every act, so far as possible, that might incite to hatred, envy, strife, bitterness (and bad works, corresponding to these feelings), all of which are "of the flesh and of the devil".

In all temptation and difficulty the way of deliverance is to remember that the eye of the Lord Jesus as a Friend is upon you; that His presence as a Friend is with you; and then to ask with confidence and to expect with certainty.

TO LIVE OR TO DIE

An exhortation
to trust

In moments of high courage, when fired by a noble purpose, fearless men have been known to say "It is not necessary that I should live, but if I do, life can have but one object for me". It is no light thing to say, nor is it an easy attitude to have reached. Most men on sober reflection would agree that the world would still go on without them, but few sit down to face that uninviting situation. Most men are of a cowardly spirit on the question of "passing out" from the known to the unknown. They face the last issue with something of the resignation of fatalism, because they must. Even Christian people, long buoyed up by expectations of winging their flight to "a better land" at death, fight shy of the moment of departure. The doctor is expected to do his utmost to put off that farewell moment as long as possible, and many thanks are extended to him if he is successful in winning a respite for the "embarkee".

Those unhappy folk who "pass out" by their own hand are generally considered to be "of unsound mind", not able to weigh over properly the blessings of life against the dark uncertainties that lie ahead. Such unhappy souls are counted exceptions, beaten down by contrary forces till they find no desire in life. Not only would the majority of men not "pass out" in that way; but could they really have their choice, they would not "pass out" at all.

*"Had he his way, would rather stay
Right here, than go to heaven."*

is the way one wit of seventy-five summers expressed himself. There is nothing censurable in this attitude. Man was made to live originally, and had he not sinned, he would not have had to die. The entrance of sin did not destroy the desire to live, and except where adversity or unremitting pain rob existence of all its joys, the desire still persists. It is the enforcement of the penal decree of God against sin which makes death, thus far, inevitable. The "needs be" comes from the Divine side of the question, not from man's. The interruption of those subtle cosmic forces which come into our mundane sphere from outer spaces—vitalizing life-promoting forces—cause man to wither and decay and die, long before he has had enough (as a rule) of this mundane world. It is accordant with nature to desire to live, and it is true that man only dies because he must.

It is not fair nor reasonable to judge this question from the standpoint of these war-fevered days. These are days of mass-madness and hypnotic dementia. With the fearful things looming ominously near, thousands—perhaps millions—might say it were better to be dead than alive, but could the reign of peace return, the balance of their judgment would quickly be restored. The attitude of man in every land could be summed up in one short phrase—"Man wants to live as long as he can, and will face up to death, only when he must."

This general attitude of the mass makes the attitude of the exception only the more remarkable, and when the "exception," still blessed with health and strength, still unworn by adversity or pain, looks out dispassionately on life and death, and says "It is not necessary for me to live, but if I do, life can have but one object for me," it may be taken as a veritable certainty that such an one is consecrated to the noblest things he knows. The "object" is greater than the man, and greater than his life—so great that life is something to be spent in its behalf; so great that if life may not be spent in its behalf, life has no worth in itself at all. Some men reach this Alpine height, and conquer self and circumstance, but these rare souls are few indeed. There are but few objects within this mundane sphere which are worthy of such consecration and devotion, and where such consecration has been seen the object has been universal, as a rule. Men will set themselves apart in this supreme sense more readily when it is for "all" than when it is for a few—for a scientific, or humanitarian, or universal end.

When the Church of God was young her experience was blessed by the utterance of one who reached not only Alpine heights, but Himalayan heights of self renunciation and utter consecration. If ever human lips said truly "It is not necessary for me to live, but if I do, life can have but one object before me" it was said by this man's lips. "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" said this fully surrendered soul. "For me to live is Christ, to die is gain" he said on other occasion to his perturbed and wondering brethren. These words were not uttered in the thoughtless flush of youth but in the years when judgment was mature. The man himself was getting well on in years, yet not so old that he was

senile and worn-out. There was yet much vital force, and driving force left in his fervent soul. He had not reached "retiring" age. He was not ready for his "easy chair", yet with all this unspent reserve of capacity to "do", he was ready to subjugate his whole interest in life for his Master's sake—and "live" if his Master wished for him to live; or "die" if that were his Master's will.

It is not possible here to trace the full outline of his circumstances save only to say that it was a "crisis" time in his life. The man was in chains, under arrest, and waiting verdict from Cæsar's Court. Brethren in Philippi were perturbed about this situation, and wondered why it should have come about. They could not understand why Providence should have permitted the Gospel's most zealous ambassador to be put in chains; but that ambassador was under no uncertainty himself. He had no need to be uncertain. He had committed himself—as man and as New Creature—into Jesus' hands, to serve Him just as long as Jesus desired, and to lay his ambassadorship down and go to "sleep" just when his Master pleased. There were no "second causes" in his life. No other hand than Jesus' could mark out his path. It did not lie with Imperial Cæsar, nor with the Imperial Cæsar's Satanic master to interfere with his life's destiny. His life's objectives were not contingent upon the whim or mood of any man—no matter whether that man wore purple or fustian.

The decisions which affected his life were made in heaven; were made by his own Lord, and none could say Him nay. This man was his Master's chattel, his Master's slave, his Master's voice, and his Master could do His Will in every sense, alike "in" Him, and "for" Him, and "by" Him. He knew His Master had lived and died, and by the Father's power had mounted up on the hither side of death to glory, honour and immortality. His Master received "all power in heaven and earth" and was merely marking time, "from henceforth expecting" till the whole world should be made His footstool. Death could have no further dominion over that exalted One, and if to-day, to-morrow, or any day, his Master should decide his journey done, his service at an end, there was nothing else to the question—he would lay himself upon the headman's block as readily as on his nightly couch. There is something delightful in this utter abandon to the Master's Will. To have no choice of this or that apart from Him is rest and peace. To care not if we live, or if we die, if thus His Will be done is victory indeed. To yield one's self to His embrace with infant-like dead-weight in mother's arms, is ever His delight.

We need to take stock of these things to-day. God has not made any promise to preserve in unconditional physical safety any child of grace. The story of the faithful Church has been one of death and suffering, from the beginning of its career. Stephen was crushed with stones; James was slain by Herod; the catacombs of Rome were filled with heroic dead; the Waldenses, the Albigenses and Huguenots were ruthlessly cut down. Germany was deluged for a hundred years with blood. The saints were given into one persecutor's hand for "a time, times, and the dividing of a time." Jesus said ". . . I send unto you prophets and wise men and scribes . . . some of them ye shall kill and crucify . . ." God promises no immunity from violence to the followers of the Lamb, but He does promise grace enough to help them bear their lot.

But though no complete immunity has been proclaimed, no man nor other agency can lay God's children low till His due time has come. "They sought to take Him, but no man laid hands on Him, because His hour was not yet come" (John 7. 30; 8. 20.), but later on the Blessed One said "The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified" (John 12. 23.) "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I to this hour".

In these troubled days the child of God who sits loose to earthly things, and begins each day with resignation to finish his course that day with gladness should the Lord permit, can find rest and peace of heart. The child who knows he cannot end his days till God's due time has God Himself at the helm of his life, and with God at the helm his life cannot be wrecked by any storm until God pilots him into port. But if any saint of God thinks that the world (or any small part of it) cannot go on without his oversight, and that it is essential for him to live on its behalf, that saint has much to learn. He has not yet realised that the only object of the Christian's life is "Christ", and should he live, or die, he is the Lord's.

QUIET MOMENTS

Through the year that lies before us
Through its pressing day and hours
We shall need the Quiet Moments
In these busy lives of ours.

Moments when we talk to Jesus
Seeking Him for strength Divine
That our lives with power and sweetness
In this darkened world may shine.

FROM THE WALLS OF THE CITY

A look-out on the
signs of the times

Doctor Sholomo B. Ulman, a biologist of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, claims to have discovered a promising medium in the treatment of cancer by means of a serum made from figs. Whatever there may be of justification in Dr. Ulman's claim, it is interesting to remember that twenty-seven centuries ago good king Hezekiah was stricken with an unknown illness that brought him to the gates of death, and that Isaiah his counsellor cured him with a preparation of figs (2 Kings 20.7). Before dismissing the Bible account as fanciful or ridiculous, the critic will now have to reckon with the claims of a twentieth century expert.

* * *

It is reported from Hollywood that considerable difficulty is now being experienced in obtaining the services (for film appearances) of Red Indians who are truly "red". It seems that the modern Red Indian, in consequence of his adoption of European clothing, is steadily turning as pale as his European brother. Hollywood is having to apply a special skin colouring medium to make their Red Indians look authentic on the screen. That is just one of the indications we have which go to show that racial colouring is determined by environment and living conditions. One could reasonably pose the question as to whether there will be these differences of colour in the days of the Kingdom; will there always be this variety of form and feature such as now characterises the human race? And were the first human pair white, like Europeans, or some other colour? We of the white race usually think of them as such; but can we support the assumption by any reasoned argument?

* * *

A Congregational minister wanted a house. He applied for the necessary licence to have one built; it was refused on the ground that the applicant was not "a key worker in an industry vital for national recovery and the export drive".

Of course the authorities did not intend thereby to belittle the importance of the Christian minister to the community. Probably the official concerned ran his finger down the list of "vital industries" and not finding clergymen included, refused the application as in duty bound. But the incident does remind one of the growing insistence upon the importance of material aids to national recovery, to

the neglect of the spiritual. It is unfortunately only too true that in many quarters—not necessarily official quarters at that—the practice of the teaching of Christ is not considered "vital for national recovery" or of any consequence in either national or personal life. In the days of Israel the Levite was appointed to minister to the people in the things of God and the injunction to the people was "take heed that thou forsake not the Levite as long as thou livest upon the earth" (Deut. 12. 19). Present day statistics of crime and lawlessness, particularly among young people, show how necessary is the work of the man of Christ. Good would it be if the authorities were to make plain to all people that in their view the work of a Christian minister is most vital in the establishing of our nation upon a stable foundation.

* * *

In the year A.D. 211 a church historian and student of chronology concluded that the seventy weeks of Daniel had ended in A.D. 202, and that the Antichrist could be expected "at once". It is evident that he identified the Antichrist with the "desolator" of Daniel 9 but it is not recorded how he explained the revelation of Messiah as being delayed two centuries after the life and death of Jesus.

* * *

A most impressive statement on racial matters has just been put forward in the form of a report by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO for short) tabulating the findings of modern science on the subject. It declares that there is no considerable difference in the mental capacities of the different branches of the human race, no proof that any particular racial group is fundamentally inferior to another in intelligence, and — most important this — that extensive study has failed to produce any evidence that intermarriage between races produces any biologically bad results. Whether black, brown, red, yellow or white, men are of one nature and all capable of rising to the highest level of human achievement. That is at least one indication of the Bible truth that all men had originally one father and all races are but variations from a common stock. "God hath made of one blood all the nations of men for to dwell on the face of the earth" (Acts 7. 26).

ASSEMBLY OF WITNESS AT MANCHESTER.

The Assembly, arranged by the Manchester Council, was held on 16th and 17th September. It marked the close of another year's activity in bearing witness to the purpose of our God and Father and was again blessed by Him.

After a few apt words of welcome by Bro. G. Heap, the Chairman, Bro. F. Musk (*Rosendale*) gave the first address on "*His Wondrous Works*" (Psalm 145. 6.). He pointed out that the word, "works" is elsewhere translated "words" "deeds", "acts", "matter". Matters relating to God's purpose, His deeds, His acts, His words, should constantly be in our minds and hearts. Briefly Bro. Musk traced some of God's wondrous works from creation to the establishment of His Kingdom on earth. Reference was made to Psalm 46 and the works of the Lord there mentioned, when He "maketh wars to cease unto the ends of the earth". The Lord is to be exalted in those works which mark the end of this age and the establishment of His Kingdom. Knowing the great changes that are ahead, should we keep silent? We must proclaim these things. The work of witness has an important place in the purpose of God.

On Sunday afternoon Bro. F. H. Guard (*Forest Gate*) spoke of the witness in our own hearts, that we are God's people. We may say "I love God and believe I am called according to His purpose", but how do we re-act when we come up against the experiences of life? Can we say with certainty that we know that every detail of our life is bound up in Divine Providence? "All things" does not introduce any exceptions. Our Father's eye is on the sparrow—it is on us too. There is no need for anxious care if we really believe that God is planning our lives.

On Sunday evening, Bro. G. H. Jennings (*London*) gave the final address. The title was "Rejoice, ye Heavens". He said the evidences about us point to the fact that the realisation of the Church's hope is at hand. Giving the words of Rev. 12. 11, 12; 18. 17-20. and 19. 1, 2, 6, Brother said the time has come when God in the exercise of His righteous judgment will wipe evil from off the face of the earth and bring in everlasting righteousness. We do not rejoice in the travail and distress that is coming in the outpouring of His judgments, but in the fact that God is to be exalted in the earth and men are to acknowledge His power. Our cause of rejoicing was that we were at the beginning of the fulfilment of these things. We, in vital, personal relationship with God, like Moses of old, are in fellowship with Him—working with Him

as Moses did. God is watching over His word to fulfil it. If we live in harmony with Him, then His word and purpose will be fulfilled in us.

A feature of the Assembly was the Question Meeting on Sunday morning. Ably conducted by Bro. J. Barber (*Warrington*) it was a lively and profitable session. The time allowed was fully occupied. At the close, Bro. Lodge and Bro. Jennings, by request, spoke for a short time on some of their experiences during their recent tour of service in U.S.A. and Canada.

The Public Lecture on Saturday evening was given by Bro. A. J. Lodge (*London*). The subject was "*Will God be silent for ever?*"

God in the past has spoken by the prophets and by His Son. In this way He still speaks to those who have ears to hear. He is yet to speak in a manner which all will understand. This speaking is associated with action. Looking back, Bro. Lodge showed how God had broken His silence on a number of occasions, as at the Flood in Noah's day, at Babel, at Sodom and so on. God is soon going to speak again in this manner—and will make a clean sweep of wickedness and establish His righteous Kingdom in the earth. A good number of brethren and others listened with keen interest as Brother showed the need for such action on God's part and the blessings which would follow.

On 23rd September a "follow-up" lecture was given by Bro. Barber on the subject "*The Divine Purpose*". Again a good number were present. Dealing particularly with the promise of God to Abraham, the speaker set forth in a very convincing manner the purpose of God to bless all the families of the earth. Much impressed by the first lecture and again by this second one, many expressed their interest and appreciation. A good supply of free literature was taken and a number expressed their intention to visit local classes to learn more along these lines.

The Assembly was a season of refreshing and renewal and gave all concerned great encouragement to "press on".

Communications in connection with the Benevolent Fund (for relieving needy friends within the confines of Great Britain and Ireland) should be sent to Bro. E. Allbon, 20, Sunnymede Drive, Ilford, Essex.

Communications in connection with the German Relief Fund, and gifts of food or clothing for the same, should go to Bro. H. E. Nadal, 35, Palace Gardens, Buckhurst Hill, Essex.

The Goodness and Severity of God

God's severity consists in his insistence upon absolute righteousness—his refusal to approve sin in any sense or degree. The very first statement of Divine law is that death, destruction, must be the wage or penalty for transgression against his righteous regulations. For six thousand years the Lord has maintained this original position—has refused to sanction sin or permit sinners to live. Such an unchangeable attitude at first seems severe, especially when we consider that we were born in sin and shapen in iniquity, infested by weaknesses and surrounded by evil influences. It seems severe on God's part to insist upon perfection, when all of our experiences teach us that it is impossible for fallen humanity to attain absolute righteousness in word and deed and thought. Indeed the Scriptures confirm our experiences, declaring, "*There is none righteous, no, not one*"—Rom. 3. 10.

The goodness of God is not seen in the severity, but, wholly separated, it stands side by side with it. God's goodness, his generosity, his mercy, kindness, love, which are not manifested in the sentence and in the execution of its penalties, are manifested in the great gift of his love—the Lord Jesus and the Redeemer provided in him—a redemption coextensive with the fall and with the condemnation. The Apostle expresses the matter pointedly in the words, "*In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.*" (1 John 4. 9). God's love was not previously manifested: for over four thousand years only the severity, the justice of the Divine character was manifested, though a hint was given to Abraham and subsequently through the prophets, that God had kind sentiments toward the fallen and tainted race, which in due time would bring blessings to all the families of the earth.

The period between the First Advent of our Lord and His Second Advent is in some respects a parenthesis in the Divine plan, during which the Church is specially dealt with. The redemption of the world and its reconciliation with God, based upon Divine goodness expressed in the death of the Redeemer, wait for its further expression to the world until the end of the Gospel age and the opening of the Millennial Age—"the world to come." When the morning of that new day shall dawn, the goodness of God will be seen more dis-

tinctly than ever by mankind. Indeed it may be said that the world as yet has seen nothing of the goodness of God; it has merely seen His severity, executed against the entire human family for the last six thousand years. A comparatively small proportion of humanity has ever heard of the grace of God in Christ, the "*only name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*" And even those who have heard to some extent have been measurably deceived by the great Adversary in respect to the nature of the penalty for sin and the fullness and wideness of the mercy extended to men in the person of the Redeemer.

In that new dispensation the facts will all be made clear. The blessings then coming to the world—peace, righteous government, helpful influences, the restraint of evil, the knowledge of the Lord and understanding of His gracious arrangements and purposes—these will all be most convincing proofs to mankind of God's sympathy and mercy in Christ. The Adversary who now deceives mankind will then be bound, that he should not deceive the nations any more until the thousand years be finished, and the Word of God, which is in general now a sealed book to the world, will then be opened, and as a result the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the whole earth as the waters cover the great deep.

Nevertheless, we are not to understand that this triumph of God's mercy and goodness then displayed will in any wise imply a change of his character or of his attitude towards sin. God never changes; "*He is the same yesterday, to-day and forever.*" (Heb. 13. 8). When we come to understand the matter thoroughly, this unchangeableness on God's part is a guarantee that the blessings to be bestowed under His arrangements will be everlasting, unending blessings.

The goodness and severity of God will be displayed side by side throughout the Millennial Age to every creature. All must learn the lesson that God is kind, generous and full of blessing to all those who are in harmony with Him and His principles of righteousness, but that He is and always will be like a consuming fire to all who are not in accord with righteousness.

The redemption of the world by the sacrifice of our Lord entitled humanity to re-awakening from the sleep of death, to be granted an opportunity of full reconciliation to the Father. Not a reconciliation

in sin, however, but a reconciliation in righteousness. It is manifest that no change takes place in the character of any during the sleep of death: the awakening must be to the same conditions of heart and mind that went down into death. The awakened ones will, therefore, find themselves at first in the same attitude of rebellion against God and the principles of righteousness that they were in when they went into death. But there will be this difference—that when awakened under the Kingdom conditions they will find their surroundings totally different from those of the present life: themselves the same, all things surrounding them will be changed. The powers of evil to tempt their fallen tendencies will be absent; temptations to selfishness, covetousness, seen in the dominion of the prince of this world, shall find no part in the dominion of the Prince of light, in the world to come—in the new dispensation. Indeed the awakened ones will find love and righteousness and kindness the laws in general force throughout the world.

And if their fallen tendencies shall still grasp after the selfish things as before, they will steadily learn the lesson that under the changed arrangements selfishness will not be advantageous to them but disadvantageous, bringing to them shame and contempt. Gradually they will learn the rules of the Kingdom, the laws of righteousness based upon justice and love. Gradually they may come into accord with these if they learn the lessons of experience during that golden age under the great Teacher, the Christ, Head and body, and under the immediate supervision of the earthly ones appointed to be their instructors and helpers in the good way and their correctors in respect to their fall. Instead of the rule which now prevails in the Church, namely, that "whosoever will live godly will suffer persecution", they will find, instead, that whoever will live godly shall prosper and have increasing evidences of Divine favour. In that day the ungodly shall suffer "stripes," "corrections in righteousness," "judgments," a prompt and just recompense of reward for every good and every evil deed.

The world then will be entirely in the hands of Christ, in whom the Father has centred all His mercy and all His provisions of grace. Only those who will then come into accord with the Son, the glorified Christ, and continue in accord with the laws of the Millennial Kingdom—and none others—will be prepared by the close of the Millennial age to be delivered over directly to the Heavenly Father and the operations of his absolute law of justice. This is the period spoken of by the Apostle in 1 Cor. 15. 24-28, when Immanuel shall have put down all sin, all unrighteousness, all insubordination to

God; when he shall have raised up as many of the redeemed human family as would hear his voice, as would obey him—raised them up to human perfection—to all that was lost in Adam.

Having traced the operation of God's plan toward the world, as he instructs us it will be carried out during the Millennial age, we now return to the still more important matter respecting the operation of God's goodness and severity toward ourselves—toward the Church during the present time. Why the Lord should make a difference between His dealings with the Church in this Gospel age and the world during the Millennial age can only be appreciated by those who accept the Scriptural declaration that during the present time God is making special selection of a special class, possessed of special characteristics and for a special service both now and hereafter. It is because of all these special features that the Church has a different experience from that which the world will have by and by.

Now, the Lord speaks to the New Creation, saying, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God? Be not deceived." At first we are inclined to stand amazed and say, God has made no provision for our attaining actual perfection, all the provisions for such restitution belonging to the next age! How then can he require righteousness of us, who still have the blemished bodies, imperfect judgments, etc. resulting from the fall? After telling us that there is none righteous, no, not one, how shall we understand the declaration that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God—not be joint-heirs with Christ in the Kingdom—not inherit the glorious things which we have hoped for by the Lord's grace? The answer is that God has made special provision for the Church of this Gospel age.

It would be useless for the Lord to offer the prize of joint-heirship in the Kingdom to anyone perfect in the flesh when there are none such—our Lord Jesus being the only one, and He because He was not of the Adamic stock. God's provision, therefore, is that the justified by faith shall be counted perfect, counted righteous so long as their hearts, their wills, their best endeavours, are for righteousness. How simple and yet how sublime this arrangement, how it adapts itself to all the circumstances and conditions of the Lord's people! It is respecting this justification by faith, this "righteousness of God by faith," that the Apostle says, "*Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*" being justified freely from all things.—Rom. 5. 1.

All of the saints must be the foes of sin. Wherever sin is they must wage a warfare against it, and see to it that in their hearts at least they are free from

sin, that in their hearts they do not countenance sin but oppose it, that sin finds no harbouring place or sympathising weakness in their hearts. This will make them radical as respects the words of their mouths, the conduct of life and the meditations of their hearts, that all of these shall be in absolute accord with the Divine Word and its spirit of righteousness, holiness, truth, etc. Such as get this proper foundation of character before they begin to build love will find that they are making progress properly. All love that is founded upon injustice or wrong ideas of righteousness is delusive, is not the love which the Lord will require as the test of discipleship.

The Apostle's words "*Be not deceived*", imply just what we see all about us: that many profess to be the Lord's people, profess to love Him, profess the golden rule as their guide in life, and yet are blind to justice (righteousness) in many of the affairs of life. They exercise too much mercy in dealing with their own shortcomings and too little when examining the faults and weaknesses of others.

In other words, it is in vain that we profess to be the Lord's people, profess to be the servants of righteousness and truth, and love these principles, if our conduct clearly demonstrates that we love unrighteousness. For such persons to profess to be the Lord's people is to mock God by assuming that he cannot read the heart, and that what may be hidden to some extent from earthly beings is equally hidden from the Almighty with whom we have to do. He that doeth righteousness is not necessarily he only who is perfect, but rather he that doeth righteousness to the extent of his best ability and who is trusting in the Redeemer's merit to compensate unintentional shortcomings—he is righteous in God's sight—he is approved.

The Apostle proceeds to specify other unrighteous

conduct wholly inconsistent with membership in the Kingdom class. These are specified as covetousness, revilings, extortioners, etc. Those who have made any advancement in the Christian way, we may surely trust, are far from having sympathy with the gross evils; and they may therefore have special need to examine themselves carefully in regard to these other more subtle evil qualities, deleterious to their interests as prospective heirs with Christ in the Kingdom. What is covetousness but selfishness—the desire to have, possess, enjoy something at the expense of another? What is idolatry but selfishness, the idolising of money or fame or influence or child or self or some other creature, exalted to and receiving the honour due to the Almighty?

The Apostle in another epistle repeats these words, "*Be not deceived;*" and adds, "*Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap; for he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.*" (Gal. 6. 7, 8.) He is not addressing the world; it is the New Creation that is either sowing to the flesh or sowing to the Spirit, and that either will reap of the flesh or reap of the Spirit. We sow to the flesh every time we allow fleshly, selfish, unjust, unrighteous desires to have sway in our hearts and lives, and each sowing makes easier the additional sowing and makes more sure the end of that way which is death. On the contrary, each exercise of the new mind, of the new will, in spiritual directions toward the things that are pure, the things that are noble, the things that are good, the things that are true, is a sowing to the Spirit, which will bring forth additional fruits of the Spirit, graces of the Spirit, and which, persevered in, will ultimately bring us, in accord with the Lord's gracious promises and arrangements, everlasting life and the Kingdom.

"None of these things move me"

What wonderful words are these which fell from the lips of the unconquerable Apostle as he bade his Ephesian brethren what he thought was a last goodbye! All the way along on his journey to Jerusalem, the brethren endowed with the gift of prophecy testified that bonds and imprisonment awaited him when once he arrived in that heart-hardened city. And brethren who loved him with all the warmth of their passionate hearts, pleaded and begged of him not to proceed further on his journey,

—knowing full well that he did so at the peril of his life. Possibly they pressed him to realise how necessary it was for the "works" sake, and the "brethren's" sake, that he should not unduly jeopardise his life too much, for should he fall there was none to replace him in the whole wide world. Or they may have tried to assure him that it was not cowardice to keep away from that city of peril, but the very essence of wisdom instead. But neither entreaty nor persuasion could produce effect on his

indomitable soul. What if bonds did await him—or scourgings; or persecution? He had faced all this before. Long before this hour of his life, he had been scourged five times by the Jews, with the utmost rigour of the law—forty stripes save one—thrice had he been beaten by Roman rods; once he had been stoned and left for dead; and yet in it all, the Lord had never forsaken nor forgotten him! How very truly he had lived to realise and experience the truth of those vivid words spoken concerning him by Jesus to Ananias while Paul lay in his darkened room at Damascus “*I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake*” (Acts 9. 16).

And he had suffered, without murmuring or complaining; without losing one jot of his resolute tenacity, or unwavering determination. Search the records of the New Testament, or of the early Church, or of the entire Church from beginning to end, and no more thrilling and inspiring catalogue of willingly-borne suffering is found anywhere to excel (even if to equal) the record he sets out when writing the second letter to the Corinthians, chapter eleven. And this terrible list had befallen him already prior to this journey to Jerusalem, on which he was now bent. To this list, must be added those afflictions that came to him in Jerusalem, in Cæsarea and in Rome for some ten years more.

The Lord Jesus knew His man; for He told the same Ananias “. . . he is a chosen vessel unto me.” He was a man of granite, unyielding as a granite bastion against which the waves of persecution could make no impression. In like manner as it was said of Moses “he endured as seeing him who is invisible” so Paul always had the clear perception of his Master’s unseen presence, and in this he rested, and was strong.

Hence, when the testimony was several times repeated that bonds and imprisonment awaited him; and when to the repeated prediction there was added the ardent tear-bedewed entreaties of his dearest friends, it was no easy matter to keep his fac “set like a flint” to go forward to Jerusalem. Almost to the gates of Jerusalem this foretelling of bonds and imprisonment awaited him; for arriving at last at Cæsarea, again a certain prophet, Agabus, gave a dramatic emphasis to it by binding himself with Paul’s girdles “So shall they do to its owner, at Jerusalem”. And then the whole assembly, with tears and fervent solicitations, besought him not to proceed further on the fateful journey.

“What mean ye to weep and to break my heart?” asks Paul. Man of granite though he was, there was a heart beneath that inflexible exterior as tender as a child’s! Their tears touched him to his depths,

and for their tears, he too could return tears of affection, but!

He had undertaken this mission—bound in the spirit—feeling it to be the Will of God; and that being so, neither the ferocious hatred of his enemies nor the ardent love of his friends could swerve him from his predetermined course. “I am ready, not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.” “*I go bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there, save that the Holy Spirit witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me there. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto me, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus . . .*” (Acts 20. 22-24.)

Oh, strange enigma! and wonderful paradox! Bonds, afflictions, tribulations, imprisonment,—sufferings of all kinds—and even death—yet he looked forward to it all with “joy”. What an inexplicable intoxication it is to have the love of Christ in the heart at a white-hot glow!

How irrational it all seems when judged by ordinary standards. Seeking suffering and courting execration, and finding “Joy” in it!

That is just what comes of having in the heart that living vitalised faith in the power and presence of Christ! It was no mere theoretical acknowledgment of Christ Jesus that led to that pain-hunger! It was not just the admission of the historic fact that Jesus of Nazareth had lived and died in Jerusalem that steeled the heart to all that fearful outlook and yet gilded the darkness ahead with cloud-fringes of joy and exultation. No mere academic recollection that that same Jesus had even been raised from the dead, to procure our Justification, would have kindled a consuming fire within the soul, which no torrents of persecution or pain could extinguish!

It was only the inwrought assurance that on every step of the journey, from Corinth to Philippi—from Philippi to Cæsarea, from Cæsarea into that howling den of fanaticism which was Jerusalem—an unseen, but ever-present companion; closer than a brother, warmer than a lover, more tender than a mother, stronger than an army; entering into every experience of every moment of every step of the way. Never a thought, but it was permeated with Christ; never a word, but it was saturated with the power of his Lord,—never a longing, but that it reached up to the Jesus who had redeemed and rescued him.

Conviction, assurance, persuasion; that was the material out of which the chain was made that

linked him to a living, loving Christ. And with Christ in his life, no enemy or persecutor mattered!

All the long years of his Apostleship had led up to this. The fruits of all those years had been gathered, and he had grown strong thereon. A hundred times he had faced death; but with Christ at hand he had smiled at the dread monster. And his faith and assurance and conviction fed itself on the threats of enemies, and the intimidations of his foes!

Happy indeed the man who has reached this stage of growth in the stature of Christ! "My peace I give unto you" said Jesus. And Paul had it. His own lips later came to say "the peace of God . . . shall keep your hearts". And it kept Paul.

Rest, peace, joy, exultation, within; bonds, tribulations, prison-cells, death, without; and yet the power that worked within, made him more than conqueror over all that opposed without.

It is not given to all to climb the heights, nor to plumb the depths of rest and peace and joy which the Apostle knew. We are not all made by nature as he was. We could not fight single-handed so often as he did, yet thanks be to God, we have the same Lord and Master just as embracingly near and as tenderly interested as Paul had. He is the same loving Jesus to us to-day as to his "Chosen Vessel" long ago. And we have the same truths, and the same High Calling to thrill our hearts which carried that unfaltering Witness over all his stormy way. We have the same "grace to help" in every time of need. And that is something to thank God for. God has not changed, and He is not one whit less heedful of us than of Paul. Christ has not

altered, and he is never farther from us than from His great Apostle. Let us remember these things to-day when this thing or that comes in to assail our faith. When subtle suggestions or clever deductions come along, and call in question the facts and experiences upon which our convictions have been built, let us say "None of these things shall move me"! When attempts are made to prove our foundations wrong, and to unsettle our assurance in the things we have learned, let us "stand fast in the faith" unmoved and unmovable, knowing of whom we have learned. It is not the physical sufferings—the bonds and imprisonment—which menace our well-being and salvation to-day.

Our danger arises in being moved away from the assurances to which our faith has been moored these many years. Growth and development from the old truths are to be expected, but when it comes to casting this and that of our earlier assurances overboard, there is risk and danger to us. Unloading the cargo which has given ballast to our boats is a perilous thing. Thousands there are in the world to-day who threw their rubbish overboard, as they thought, and have found to their sorrow that they have nothing left.

Let us hold fast that which we have, and determine that none of these things shall move us from our conviction and rest of peace in the heart, determined that nothing will intervene to deprive us of the comfort and companionship of Paul's Lord and Master, who is our Lord and Master too. It is still conviction, assurance, and persuasion that is the material out of which salvation is made, and he or she who retains these, will never falter or fall by the way.

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