



BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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

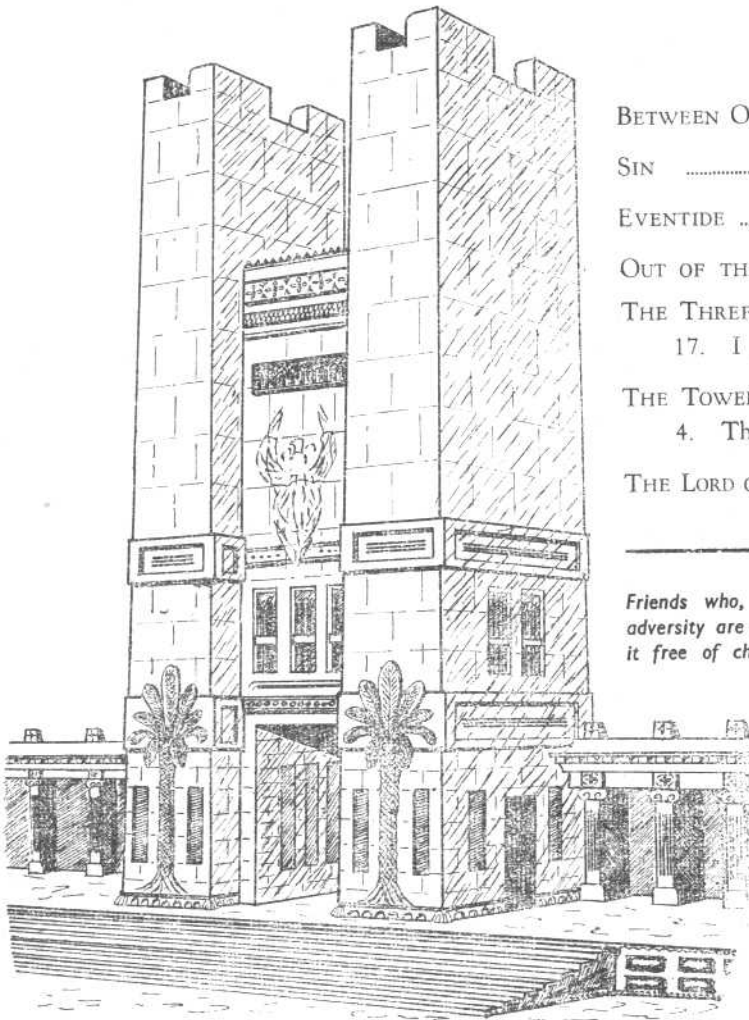
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CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| BETWEEN OURSELVES | 2 |
| SIN | 3 |
| EVENTIDE | 6 |
| OUT OF THE STOREHOUSE | 8 |
| THE THREE EPISTLES OF JOHN 17. I John. 4. 1. | 10 |
| THE TOWER OF BABEL 4. The Lord came down | 12 |
| THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS | 14 |

*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

Some friends were disappointed when the new translation of the Epistles of St. Paul, by Arthur Way, went out of print so soon after publication a year ago. We are glad to say that a new edition has now been published and that we have a good stock in hand. The book is entitled "*The Letters of Saint Paul*" and consists of 228 pages, comprising a chronology of the life and writings of the Apostle Paul and a brief sketch of related matters, and then a translation in modern English of all the Pauline Epistles and the Epistle to the Hebrews. The translation is a vigorous and forceful one and should find many admirers. The price is 11/- post free (\$1.75).

* * *

The work of the Benevolent Committee is already well known to most of our readers. Oftentimes it has proved a timely means of aid to those in need, and those entrusted with its administration value very highly their privilege of service. Gifts and recommendations of cases of known need should all be sent to Br. E. Allbon, 20 Sunnymede Drive, Ilford, Essex.

* * *

Those who habitually use Dr. Moffatt's translation of the Bible may be interested to learn that a complete Concordance to the Bible in the Moffatt translation has now been published. This book serves the same purpose to readers of Moffatt as Cruden's Concordance does to the Authorised Version. The book is expensive—naturally so in view of its nature and size, especially since the demand is not likely to be large—and is published at 52/6d. We will be glad to secure and despatch copies to any of our readers who cannot obtain it easily locally, at 54/6d. post free (\$8.00 to friends in U.S.A. and Canada).

* * *

The monthly united meeting at Caxton Hall will be held this month on Saturday, 19th January, at 6.30 p.m. Election of Committee and general business followed by praise and testimony.

* * *

Will the friends please help in the matter of renewal? At present it is the practice to enclose a "renewal notice" with the issue that marks the end of the annual subscription. More than half of these notices are ignored and the next month's copy is sent with another copy of the renewal notice. If this also elicits no answer third month's copy goes asking for a line in reply saying whether or no it is desired to continue the "Monthly." When the fourth month arrives, and no reply, a slip is attached bearing the words, "Last copy to

be sent in absence of further word from you," and that is the finish. Now renewal slips are expensive and moreover are subject to purchase tax—each slip costs about three farthings and the clerical work involved in all this is heavy. So much of it could be avoided if readers would make a point of replying as soon as they receive the first renewal slip.

It is not an uncommon occurrence for there to be received a letter from one or another, two months or so after the "last copy" has been sent, saying that the "Monthly" has "not been received lately" and asking what has gone wrong!

Just a word to the "Lord's Poor readers." The renewal notice has to be put in your copies also or we might never know when the time has come—as come it must to all—when you need the "Monthly" no longer. Practically all who are on the "free" list are advanced in years and unable to write much, so that it is not expected that much will be heard from them during the year; our only assurance that you are still receiving the "Monthly" lies in the annual reminder that you still need it. Let none such hesitate to ask for it "free," even though you may think that expenses are mounting. We ourselves are quite sure that whilst our Master provides for the "Monthly" to be published at all He will see that the "free list" ones can still be supplied.

So, please, when the first renewal notice appears

SEND IT BACK AT ONCE.

Gone From Us

Sister K. E. Gray (*Hornchurch*).

Bro. J. Reay (*Hartlepool*).

Sister F. Westell (*Portsmouth*).

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

There is a type of Christian witness which is merely noise, and noise is not an evidence of power. There is only one manner of testimony which can really count for the Lord in days like these: it is that which can confront modern secularistic and materialistic life, with all its paganism, immorality and ignorance of spiritual truth, with the authority of "Thus saith the Lord," and we can only do that if every one of us as men and women born of the Spirit of God, know something in personal experience of what the Apostle Paul meant when he said, "Little children, I travail in birth again till Christ be formed in you". Alan Redpath.

SIN

A DOCTRINAL ESSAY

"Drought and heat consume the snow waters; so do the grave those which have sinned."

(Job 24; 19.)

There is a story of a Scotch shepherd who arrived home one Sabbath and was questioned by his wife as to the subject of the morning sermon. "Sin" said the old shepherd briefly. "And what had the minister to say about sin?" queried the good wife hopefully. "He was against it" said Jamie.

A good many people view the subject in the same comfortable way, accepting the fact of sin in the world without any real understanding of the manner of its entrance or in what way it will be eliminated. It is left to the earnest Christian to know, firstly, what sin is, and secondly, how to deal with it in ourselves, in others, and in the affairs of the world in which we live.

The universal sway of sin was expressed by Paul when he declared "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3. 23). To that general rule there are no exceptions. The entire human race is involved in sin, and every institution of earth, every nation, every creation of man is tainted to a greater or lesser degree with its blight.

So far as the majority of people are concerned, sin in its wider aspects—its influence in national and international systems, in social orders within nations, in political, financial, and even religious organisations—is not heeded so much as its influence in individual life. All too often the idea of sin is bound up with religious faith, that sin is merely the performing of any action which God has commanded shall not be done. In the days of Jesus sin consisted of failure to comply with the strict interpretation of the Law. "Why do thy disciples eat with unwashed hands?" asked the Pharisees. The rubbing of grain between the hands on the Sabbath was construed as threshing wheat, labour which should not be done, and therefore sin. And the climax to this grossly distorted view of Divine Law was reached when these same professedly righteous men accused the Lord Jesus Christ of profaning the Sabbath day because on that day He performed works of mercy in healing sufferers from sickness and disease.

In later days the influence of Puritan England gave rise to the prevailing notion that anything affording pleasure or which was attractive to the natural man was, on that account, sin, and displeasing to God. So recently as fifteen or so years ago a Scottish minister was suspended from his ministry

because he had permitted children to dance at a party in his house. This conception of religion has given it a name for gloom or morbidity, whereas the Apostle on the contrary says "Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say, rejoice!" Lingering remnants of this totally wrong idea are met with to-day in many Christian communions—and even in our own fellowship—in the idea that the enjoyment of natural forms of recreation and relaxation are forbidden to the consecrated follower of God. That some things conducive to pleasure or mirth have value in keeping our minds and bodies at the best pitch of fitness for the prosecution of our calling as servants and ambassadors of Christ in the world is not always realised as fully as it should be realised.

A charming story is told of the Apostle John. In his old age he was at times to be found amusing himself with a pet dove. Upon one occasion a young Christian brother, a hunter, reproved him for thus "wasting consecrated time". The old man glanced at the bow in his visitor's hand. "Why do you carry your bow with the bowstring slackened?" he enquired gently. "If it is kept taut all the time, its elasticity would be gone when I require to use it" came the answer. "Even so" replied the venerable Apostle, "our minds need relaxation that when the work of the Lord comes before us we shall be fit and ready to fulfil our privilege."

The ancient Peruvians of South America were taught that sin was anything against the will of the Emperor. All that he did was declared right, and none were allowed to question or obstruct his wishes. The Emperor was regarded as the representative of heaven and his power stretched beyond death into the future life. By conforming without question to the laws of the land, security in this life was assured and happiness in the next promised. Thus all moral sense of sin was lost and righteousness came to be merely an unreasoning obedience to a code of man-made laws.

What is the Bible doctrine of sin?

The Hebrew word for sin is "*chata*" and the Greek word in the New Testament is "*hamartia*". Both words have the same meaning; expressed literally in English, they mean "To miss the mark" or "To come short". Hence the force and accuracy of Paul's words quoted above:

"For all have SINNED

And COME SHORT of the glory of God."

Those who have sinned have "missed the mark".

Now this should give us a new idea of the meaning of sin—not that of man labouring under a code of arbitrary instructions with no knowledge of their meaning; not even as Israel, endeavouring hopelessly to keep inviolate their ten commandments, and finding it an impossible task, but one that shows us man in his present condition failing to reach up to a mark, a standard, set before him by His Creator. The very existence of that mark, that standard, even although man now fails to attain it, implies the possibility of his one day coming up to it, and so the door is opened to hope.

We know from the foundation principles of the Divine Plan that Christ is to lead, first, His Church, and afterwards, the world of mankind, to that point where they no longer "miss the mark". Then sin will have been overcome. There must be a period during which men are learning how to attain the mark which they have previously missed. Men must also be willing to learn how to attain that mark, since clearly its attainment will require effort and that effort must be put forth by the man himself even although he will be assisted by the powers of heaven. Therefore we speak of this present Age, this "Gospel Age", as the training time of the Church, and the future age, the Millennial Age, that which will see the fulfilment of the Scripture which says "And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21. 4.) Every man must have a true conception of God's Plan and of the fundamental laws of His creation before he can rightly aim at the mark, and this is the purpose of these two great Ages in world history which we call the Gospel Age and the Millennial Age.

"By ONE MAN sin entered into the world" says Paul in the fifth chapter of Romans, "and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned". He speaks only of the introduction of sin on earth, for we must not exclude the possibility of there having been rebellion in heaven before the fall of man and that evil had already commenced to mar the harmony of God's creation. So far as man was concerned, death reigned because of that first sin, and also because of subsequent sins; but there is a difference in moral quality between the sin of Adam and the sinful course of his posterity. "Death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them who had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression" (Rom. 5, 14.) Does this refer merely to those whose sins did not consist in the eating of forbidden apples? By no means. It means that there is a difference in moral quality between the first sin and all subsequent ones. Adam's sin was against knowledge and ability. The sin of man in general is without both.

The story of Eden tells us that God made man "very good". He was capable of great things. He was shown his commission, one that bade him multiply, replenish and subdue the earth. All of its resources, its products, its possibilities, were for his use and enjoyment and he was morally bound to exploit them to the full in harmony with the revealed law of God. His physical powers and his mental powers were fully adequate to the task, and his knowledge was adequate to its commencement. Further knowledge would have come with experience as time went on.

Notwithstanding all these advantages, Adam failed, ignominiously. He missed the mark; came short of what he should have done and could have been. We do not need to insist that the primal sin was actually the eating of a literal fruit which had been forbidden—more probably the story presents deep truths in pictorial guise—but undoubtedly there is presented to us a picture of the woman grasping at present advantage to the detriment of future achievement, the man debasing his better judgment to accept the guidance of the creature instead of the Creator, and a deliberate rejection of the Divine commission which in itself was wrapped up with the Divine Plan. Not because of inability, not because of ignorance, but quite definitely in lack of experience and proper realisation of the meaning of righteousness, the first human beings violated the Divine law and reaped the logical result of that violation in death.

We must guard against the thought that death is devised by God as a punishment for sin. The fact that sin brings about its own retribution led to the idea of Divine punishment, but in reality, and Christian students to-day should be the first to realise this fact, the whole creation of God is founded upon the fundamental principle that sin, and beings who are sinful, and therefore out of harmony with the laws which govern the creation, cannot endure eternally. Sin itself contains within itself the seeds of its own destruction, and the sinner, unless he be recovered from his sin and become sinless, must eventually perish as though he had never been. That is not punishment; it is the inevitable result of the normal operation of a law which governs all creation.

Paul knew this when he said "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is *aionian* (enduring) life". (Rom. 6. 23.) The word he uses for "wages" is one denoting a Roman soldier's daily allowance—as though sin were a hard taskmaster, demanding hard labour in its service; for men are truly bondslaves of sin, sold unto sin—and the "wages", when at length paid, is death, an end of all things. The man could have had the Divine gift of the glorious liberty of the children of God,

enduring into eternity. This is an immutable principle which the Father Himself has ordained. Throughout all ages, as long as time endures; throughout all creation; on every plane of spiritual and earthly responsible being; it is and always will be true that the inevitable end of sin is death.

In the early days of the world men did not realise that God had a Plan whereby the evil effects of sin could be overcome and the harmony of His world restored. A vivid light is thrown on this by the story of Cain—the first instance in which the Bible mentions the word “sin”. Two themes stand out in this story in bold relief; one, God’s declaration before the deed that Cain had it within him to overcome the incipient temptation of sin; the other, Cain’s own insistence after the deed that his action had placed him beyond the power of God’s mercy forever. God says to Cain (Gen. 4; 7 Leeser) “If thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door; and unto thee is his desire; but thou canst rule over it”. The idea is that of sin crouching for a spring upon its intended victim. The test was upon Cain but he still had power to resist and gain the victory. The effects of the fall had not so obliterated the Divine image that Cain was heedless of the promptings of a better nature. But sin temporarily won the day, and the bitterness of his remorse comes out through the despairing words which broke from his lips after God had brought him face to face with the enormity of his sin; “My iniquity is greater than can be forgiven”. Cain saw himself as the perpetrator of a crime which could not be condoned.

The mystery of Divine forgiveness for sin could not be revealed to men until Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, had tasted death for every man, giving Himself “a Ransom for All” (I Tim. 2. 5-6) and thrown open the “only way” whereby men may become reconciled to God. Even so two conditions are necessary—repentance and reformation. The blood of Christ is of no avail unless these two conditions have been fulfilled upon the basis of that ransom so freely given. With repentance and reformation sin is forgiven so freely and completely that Jesus, discerning those characteristics in the woman at the feast, and knowing that soon He would have consummated the supreme sacrifice, was able to say “Thy sins are forgiven thee”.

It is rather more difficult to understand what our Lord meant when He declared (Matt. 12. 31-32) “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven unto men . . . neither in this age, neither in the age to come”. This has always been a difficult passage. Mark’s version of the declaration says that such are “in danger of enduring judgment” (*aionian krisis*) (Mark 3. 29) and this would appear

to indicate that there is at least some hope for such if by repentance they endure the inevitable retribution or “stripes” as they work out their reformation and so return to life, in the day when that return is made possible. Quite evidently, though, our Lord indicates the possibility of there being some whose sin is so grave that they are never recovered by the forces of righteousness, but go steadily down the road to that “blackness of darkness” which is forever. What then is this “blasphemy against the Holy Spirit” which is fraught with such hopeless consequences?

It is distinct from all other kinds of sin, even those which are committed “against the Son of Man”. Those are “missings of the mark” for which there is some excuse, some reason to plead at least partial ignorance, or inability, as the result of inherited Adamic imperfection, to reach up to it. But this is deliberate refusal to reach the mark, wilful sin against light, a studied turning away from the influences which are seeking to ameliorate the sinner’s lot and lead him to reconciliation with God. *Forgiveness in such case is impossible to God, because there is no basis for it.* No repentance, no reformation, no acknowledgment of the resurrected Christ—what basis is there upon which God can forgive sin and accept the sinner? “*There is a sin unto death*” says the beloved Apostle (I John 5. 17) “*I do not say that he should pray for it.*” This undoubtedly is what the writer to the Hebrews has in mind when he speaks of some having been once enlightened “*crucifying to themselves the Son of God afresh*”. “*If we sin wilfully*” he says (Heb. 10. 26-27) after that we receive the knowledge of the truth, *there remaineth no more sacrifice for sons; but a certain fearful looking for of judgment*”. This word *wilfully* is *hekousias*, willingly, voluntarily as in I. Pet. 5. 2 “*Not by constraint, but willingly*” and the idea is that of deliberate evil doing after full light and opportunity has been given and there is nothing left that God can do in His effort to reclaim the sinner.

Much misunderstanding and not a little distress of mind has been caused in times past by the idea that what used to be termed the “backsliding” of a disciple, or what we in our day call the “repudiation of consecration” of a believer, involved almost certain “Second Death” for such an one. A sane and balanced view of the Divine mysteries to-day should satisfy us that the Heavenly Father will never relax His efforts to deliver each of His human sons from the thralldom of sin until they have of themselves rendered all His efforts of no avail. There must be many who have started on the way of consecration who have, after running well for a time, allowed the cares of this life, or the deceitfulness of riches, or some other consideration to draw

them away from "following Him". It by no means follows that such have entered again into sympathy with sin, even although they may have taken up with some of the discreditable practices which are common in the world around us. We may be quite certain that all such will eventually attain a place in the Father's Plan for which they have become fitted, even although they will have missed the "Prize of the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus".

This "sin unto death" is not the same thing as premeditated sin. The fallen angels premeditated their rebellion but there is no indication given us that their case is on that account hopeless. Upon the contrary, we are expressly told that their restraint is "until the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6), and if it be true, as we know it is, that the judgment of the great day means, for mankind, *an opportunity to be recovered from their fallen state*, it may be equally true that some such opportunity is provided in the Father's Plan for His heavenly sons who have rebelled against Him.

The sixty-sixth chapter of Isaiah pictures the end of sin's supremacy. "And they shall go forth, and shall look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me, for their worm shall not

die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring to all flesh". (Isa. 66. 24.) Never will the memory of the dark days of sin so fade from the minds of men that its lessons shall be forgotten. To all eternity men upon earth will realise the truth of the ancient saying "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people".

Will sin ever again invade God's creation? Is sin an essential experience for all who are to occupy a place of habitation in some part or other of His vast domains? To our finite minds the suggestion is unthinkable. The horrors of this dark chapter in earth's history are so impressed upon our own minds that to anticipate even one repetition of such scenes would be provocative of deep sadness. Surely the lessons of this reign of evil, transmitted to future creations by means which we as yet may not be able to imagine, will be sufficient to ensure that all who at any future time are given the blessings of life from the Author of life will take up their place in His "house of many mansions" without needing to journey through this dark valley which for many thousands of years has been the abiding place of the sons of Adam.

Eventide

"So he bringeth them unto their desired haven"

"And to keep me from being too elated by the abundance of revelations a thorn was given me in the flesh to harass me, to keep me from being too elated". So writes our favoured brother Paul to his Corinthian critics and opponents in proof of the Lord's mindfulness of him as a vessel honoured and chosen (2 Cor. 12. 7, *New Revised Version*.) "Three times I besought the Lord about this, that it should leave me, but He said to me 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness'".

What a delightful little item of loving intimacy is indicated in that little side-light of Paul's inner life! How greatly he had mellowed and subdued himself since that former day when Jesus laid His arresting hand upon His servant on the Damascus way! Or even as compared with the day when the Lord sternly and peremptorily told him to "depart" and get out of Jerusalem.

Many trying and crucial experiences lay between those days and this, and many lessons had been set and learned during that interval. A wonderful degree of intimacy between Teacher and pupil had

grown up, and endeared each to each in bonds of ever-deepening love.

Special revelations, to meet the pupil's need, had been afforded him. On at least two occasions, seemingly, he had been carried forward "in spirit" to the yet-future third heaven, and to the delights of restored Paradise and had seen and heard the most wonderful things, while rapt forward in that ecstatic state. And while the narration of those coming wonders was reserved for another pen, for John the beloved disciple—he knew the certainty of these promised things for his own inner comfort and peace of heart. His Lord had revealed to him that his way was not heading to an eternal void, or even to a never-ending continuance of this reign of sin and death. He had seen that there would then be an "end"—a consummation—when God would be "all-in-all" and His Kingdom fully come. That had been a most wonderful "make-weight" to throw into the scales when the success of his enemies tended to tilt the whole drift of circumstance too heavily against him.

But while it was comforting, it could also be dangerous if once he became too mystically minded. Supposing he began to loiter away his time in vain attempts to attain that "in-the-spirit" condition of mind too frequently—that clairvoyant and clairaudient condition conducive to evil-spirit interference and control! Or supposing he sought that state as a way of escape—as a method of occult escapism—from the arduousness of the appointed way—ah then! even this chosen vessel might be snatched from the Lord's grasp, and used by another mind for other purposes.

To make sure of his remaining firm and secure in the Master's grasp a thorn in the flesh was "given" him. Very deliberately and purposefully the Lord had sent this "stake" into his life, to pin him down at the cross-roads—much as notorious criminals were pinned down—to remind him that he had a life to live here and now, and that it was to be spent in arduous toil, and that there could be no "let-up" of its strain while he yet remained in the flesh. The loving watchful Lord put him—as it were on the lead—the leash—so that he would not thenceforth stray either into Satanic activity or hallucination's fantasy. In that way the Lord purposed to say to him, "Paul, my dear pupil, you are Mine—my servant, my messenger, my 'alter-ego', or other self, through whom I have yet much work to do. I am doing this so that I can live in you, and work through you more and more".

And the pupil—slow at first to understand—came at last to realise what the affliction really meant. "Three times I besought the Lord about it"—Oh, delightful intimacy! oh, wonderful freedom of access! three times in the "secret hours" with his Lord the servant drew the Master's attention to his affliction—his thorn—and at the end of it, "He said to me"—ah yes; the answer most graciously and lovingly came! "Three times"—was there some intended reminder there of another scene—another three-fold request ere the answer came that the "Cup" must be drunk? If so, how closely the pupil was walking in the foot prints of his Lord!

What wonderful memories are these as the servant looks back down the years—"I besought the Lord . . . He said to me . . ." What pen can tell the worth of the Master's reply to the straitened suffering soul, as he went forth by day and night, over mountain and sea, mid friend and foe, with the Gospel entrusted to his care. Afflictions may await, but could not crush him down; persecutions may abound, but could not separate from his Lord; perplexities may increase, but could not drive to despair—there was always "My

grace" to call upon, to rest upon, to feed upon, and never could it fail to meet his every want and need.

What a wonderful inspiration is this little scrap of Pauline experience to all, who love the same supervising Lord! Has He brought us also to see "the End" is yet to be? Have we, through the eyes of the beloved John seen the earth a restored Paradise, and the new heavens come to their place of power? Let us thank God for that. It is the antidote to the world's present ills for us; it is the make-weight to tilt back the scales when our present light afflictions weigh us down too low. And if the Lord has tied us down with a stake—some affliction of pain or weariness, some sense of isolation or loneliness, is it not that the Lord is saying still "Thou art Mine; this is but my lead (or leash) to keep thee to Myself"?

But let not the delights of "beseeching" Him *escape thy attention*, so that the "He said unto me" may be also thy experience! It will be good for thy soul to hear, by faith, in the inner chambers of thy heart, the words "My Grace is sufficient for thee"—not may be, not will be, but "IS"—is sufficient for thee all the way! Think of it thus: the same Lord, the same relationship, the same experience, the same promise, only me and thee, instead of Paul as recipient. Canst thou then fail to say,

"All the way my Saviour leads me;
What have I to ask beside?

Can I doubt His tender mercy,
Who through life has been my guide?
Heavenly peace, divinest comfort,
Here by faith in Him to dwell!
For I know what e'er befell me,
Jesus doeth all things well.

"All the way my Saviour leads me;
Cheers each winding path I tread;
Gives me grace for every trial.

Feeds me with the living bread;
Though my weary steps may falter,
And my soul athirst may be
Gushing from the Rock before me.
Lo! a spring of joy I see.

"All the way my Saviour leads me;
Oh, the fulness of His love!

Perfect rest to me is promised
In my Father's house above;
When my being, clothed immortal,
Joins His saints in realms of day,
This my song through endless ages
Jesus led me all the way".

OUT OF THE STOREHOUSE

A collection of interesting items

The Golden Door

On the base of the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbour is chiselled these lines from the "New Colossus", a sonnet by Emma Lazarus, who saw this monument as the "mother of exiles" speaking to ancient lands.

"Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to be free;
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed, to me;
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

That was the welcome America set out to give to the oppressed and down-trodden of the Old World. What an apt symbol is that of the welcome that will be extended to all mankind when the gates of the Millennial Age are opened to them, and the voice of the King is heard saying "Whosoever will may come". "Therefore with joy shall ye draw water from the wells of salvation" shouts Isaiah triumphantly. And we who in these last days of the old world of sin and death are trying to maintain a witness to that new Kingdom, surely we can stand and say, as does that symbolic figure over there in the waters of New York harbour, "I lift my lamp beside the golden door". That might be a very good watchword for our continuing witness; though men may take little heed of what we say, though faith and hope in the Kingdom seems to be confined to only a few—yet—day in, day out, as year succeeds to year and decade to decade, we who see the glories of that coming Day and know that it must surely come can well proclaim without ever growing weary "I lift my lamp beside the golden door".

Our Daily Bread (Matt. 6. 11)

The word used by our Lord in His wonderful model prayer for "daily" provides a hidden link with the every day cares of the housewife. It is a word not used elsewhere in the Scriptures and not found at all in the language of the educated sections of society in our Lord's day. It was a word in popular use among the peasants and fishermen referring to the provision of mundane necessities for the day, and has been found to have been used in Egypt at the same time by the women to head their list of commodities to be purchased in the market for the day's needs. It is as though a wife to-day in making out her "shopping list" were to head it with a word such as "dailies" and enter below it the list of vegetables and other things she

must shortly buy for the household's current needs. So our Lord, with His intimate knowledge of the lives of His followers, gave the promise of Divine provision for our temporal needs by the one word which could fitly describe how truly every little and seemingly insignificant need of ours is provided for by our God.

* * *

On hymns

A deservedly favourite hymn is the one of which the first verse in our hymnal runs:

"Walk in the light: So shalt thou know
That fellowship of Love
His Spirit only can bestow
Who reigns in light above".

Bernard Barton, the Quaker hymnwriter, was responsible for adding this gem to the treasury of Christian worship. Born 1784, he was for forty years a bank clerk at Woodbridge, Suffolk, where he died in 1849. This hymn was based upon the passage in I John 1. 7 "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". The original hymn has one verse which does not appear in our book and is worthy of quotation here.

"Walk in the light, and sin, abhorred,
Shall ne'er defile again.
The blood of Jesus Christ, thy Lord
Shall cleanse from every stain."

* * *

Things Under the Earth (Phil. 2. 10).

"That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, both in heaven, and in earth, and under the earth." The reference to some who "under the earth" will bow the knee to Jesus sometimes provokes a question. Those in heaven, and those on earth—that is easily understood; but who are those "under the earth?" The Greek word which is translated by these three words is *katachthonios*, which is composed of *kata*, meaning down, *chthonios*, which is defined by Liddell and Scott as having reference to anything in or under the earth but especially to the gods below the earth. These gods in Greek mythology were the Titans, who rebelled against the gods of heaven and after being defeated were cast out of Heaven and imprisoned below the earth. These Titans correspond to the fallen angels, and it would seem that Paul used the word to refer to those fallen angels who are

described by Peter as being imprisoned in Tartarus. In other words, when the Divine Plan for man is complete, not only will all in heaven and earth bend the knee, but also those who were "disobedient in the days of Noah" unless of course by wilful and continued opposition to the ways of God they reap the inevitable wages of sin—death.

* * *

When Joseph Shaved

The brief reference in Gen. 41. 14, to Joseph being shaved upon being taken out of prison and prior to being brought before Pharaoh would not at first sight convey much to the English reader. There is a world of significance in the words, however. The peoples of Palestine esteemed beard and flowing hair a sign of dignity and manliness; to be shaved was the mark of prisoners and slaves, and was a thing of which to be ashamed. (See II Sam. 10. 4 and Isa. 7. 20). In Egypt, on the other hand, every good class citizen was habitually carefully shaved and hair well trimmed; the profession of the barber was an important one. Joseph therefore was required to be conformed to customary usage before appearing before the Pharaoh, and this passing allusion is a valuable testimony to the authenticity of the record—had the story been a compilation of a much later date as asserted by some critics, an allusion like this would have never appeared.

* * *

The "Only Begotten of the Father"

The term "only-begotten son" was in use among the Jews as an expression descriptive of the "best-beloved" son. In both the Old and New Testaments it is used in this fashion. Genesis 22. 2, where Abraham's "only" son is referred to, is an example—for Isaac was not Abraham's only son in a literal sense. The Septuagint renders "only son" by "beloved son" in this Scripture. A New Testament instance is found in Heb. 11. 17. There are at least two examples in the writings of Josephus ("Antiquities of the Jews" Book 1, chap. 13. 1, and Book 20, chap. 2. 1), which is a confirmation of the custom. How apt then is the reference in Scripture to Jesus being the only begotten or best beloved son—as the writer of Proverbs 8 has it, "daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him."

* * *

The Decree of Cyrus

The name of Cyrus is always associated with the famous "Decree" in which he gave authority for the return of the exiles and the restoration of the Temple at Jerusalem. Taken in conjunction with Isaiah's prophetic words of two centuries earlier in which Cyrus was mentioned as the Lord's anointed for the restoration of Judah (Isa. 45. 1), it has been generally assumed that Cyrus the mono-

theist had a special partiality for the Jewish religion as against the polytheism of the Babylonians whom he had conquered. The record of his Decree, preserved in Ezra 1. 2 seems by its phraseology to betoken a special faith in the God of Israel. "The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? His God be with him, and let him go up . . ."

But compare, with that, another decree of Cyrus, issued at about the same time. This one appears, not in the Bible, but on inscriptions discovered in the ruins of Ur of the Chaldees, a city that was sacred to Sin, the Moon-god of the Babylonians. "Sin, the illuminator of heaven and earth, with his favourite sign delivered into my hands the four quarters of the world, and I returned the gods to their shrines. The great gods have delivered all the lands into my hands; the land I have caused to dwell in a peaceful habitation." The sentiments are almost identical, except that here Cyrus credits the gods, especially the Moon-god, with having given him all the kingdoms of the earth, whereas in his Decree to Israel he gives the credit to Israel's God. It would seem that Cyrus was, in fact, more of a diplomat than was formerly thought; he evidently intended being polite to all the gods in order that he might at least run no risk of unwittingly slighting whichever one of them proved in the end to be the true God.

* * *

"After their Kind" (Gen. 1).

The oft-repeated phrase which describes God as creating birds, beasts, fishes, etc., "after their kind" means literally "in all their varieties." There are nearly 800,000 species of animals known to naturalists, and this wonderful variety of only one phase of the natural creation is but a fraction of the marvellous works of Him who is "perfect in knowledge." The Hebrew expression *leminehu* rendered in this chapter "after their kind" is met again throughout Lev. 11, where the context shows up much more clearly the accuracy of the literal rendering "in all their varieties."

* * *

Lucifer

"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning." "Son of the morning" is a poetic allusion to the morning star—the planet Venus—as is indicated by the A.V. margin. The word Lucifer was not originally intended to be a proper name, having been derived from a Babylonian word meaning "The shining one". Long custom, however, now justifies its use as the name of the one who, after his fall, became known as Satan—"the adversary."

The Three Epistles of John

Comments on the writings
of the "Beloved Apostle"

Part XVII. I John 4.1.

With the fourth chapter of John's First Epistle we enter upon what can fairly be described as the third "book" or treatise into which this Epistle is divided. The first, chapters 1 and 2, could be entitled the "walk by faith"; the second, chapter 3, the "walk by love"; and the third, chapters 4 and 5, the "walk by knowledge". The theme of these two chapters is doctrine, and whereas John in the previous portion of his epistle is dwelling upon and warning his readers against moral shortcomings, he now turns around and begins to talk about doctrinal errors. It is a very necessary aspect of Christian instruction; these believers of the Early Church were very prone, as are we ourselves, to belittle the importance of doctrinal teaching and to overstress the place of the devotional and contemplative aspects of the Christian life. It was in consequence of that mistake that so many of the early Christians quickly lapsed into the grossest of sins under the mistaken impression that if the heart was pure it mattered little what was done in or by the body. John does not depart from his central theme, Jesus Christ the centre and circle of our faith and life, but he does speak of Him and His way from the doctrinal rather than the moral position. If many of his statements are allusions to sectarian errors of more particular application to his own day than ours, as they are, that does not lessen the value of his words. We also have doctrinal errors with which to contend and the principles of John's warnings are as valid for us as for his first readers.

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." (vs. 1).

These "spirits" of course are the opinions, beliefs, influences, teachings, which, emanating either from the Father or from the Arch-enemy of mankind, according to their nature, whether good or bad influences, determine the course in life taken by the one receiving them. This verse has no reference to unseen angelic beings, "spirits", whether good or evil, and there is no mandate here for investigations into spiritualistic phenomena as some have thought. We are not to accept at its face value any apparently attractive looking teaching that may be presented to us just because at first sight it looks reasonable or God-like. We are to test the teaching to determine whether it be of God, because there are many false prophets and

false prophecies, teachings, in the world and we must needs be on our guard. The words of Paul to the Ephesians are appropriate here. In exhorting them to see that they be not deceived by the vain words of unregenerate men he bids them walk as children of light, proving what is acceptable unto the Lord (Eph. 5. 8-10). The believers in the Greek city of Berea were especially commended because they searched the Scriptures continually to assure themselves of the verity of the things which they had heard. In like manner also the Thessalonians were exhorted to "despise not prophesyings (teachings); prove all things; hold fast that which is good." (I Thess. 5. 21).

This is one of the Scriptural supports for that right of private judgment which is the privilege of every consecrated Christian. No matter what the "official" teaching of one's fellowship on the subject under discussion or the weight of tradition behind the generally accepted belief, it is always the privilege, and right, and even the duty, of each individual to judge for himself and arrive at his own conclusion. None can take away that right, for it was conferred by the teachings of the Lord and the Apostles and sealed by the authority of the Holy Spirit. None may question it or deny it, for the same reason. And all this is for a very sound purpose. It is of vital importance that the future kings and priests of the Millennial world shall learn now to arrive at sane and balanced judgments on things of moment. The "babe in Christ" must needs sit at the feet of teachers, his "fathers in God", but it is good for him that he progresses out of that "milk" stage into the "strong meat" stage where he is able to take and assimilate nourishment with discretion, no longer having the choice made for him but making the choice for himself. Such an one will have the decisive character our Lord requires when in due course the work of His Kingdom is to commence?

But this implies a corresponding responsibility. This right of private judgment is not a licence to spiritual anarchy. The Apostles' insistence on individual "searching" and "discerning" of the doctrines does not ignore or disparage the communal sharing in matters of belief which is a necessity to the orderly and harmonious continuance of any Christian fellowship. The same liberty that accords each one the right of private judgment demands also that the expressed belief of the

majority composing a group or community be respected. There are so many who have discovered—or think they have discovered—some startling new variation from a doctrinal truth formerly held, and immediately conceive it their duty to bludgeon their fellows into acceptance of the new view, stigmatising as “sectarian; followers of a man; spiritually blind”; etc., those who do not accept the new finding. An attitude of that kind is hardly a good recommendation for the exacting duties that will be laid upon those who make their calling and election sure and are thereby assigned to superintend the educational work of the next Age. It is not an unknown thing to come across men and women who claim to have been entrusted with some marvellous understanding of newly revealed Truth or light on the Divine Word, who by their actions make it perfectly obvious to even the most casual observer that they are far from fit to be entrusted with any Divine commission at all. So the Apostle, writing to the Corinthians, appeals to their maturity of understanding, “*I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say.*” (1 Cor. 10. 15). In soberness and gravity, fully cognisant of the tremendous issues involved, both for ourselves and our fellows, let us use our God-given powers of discernment and judgment for our own advancement and establishment in the Truth, and also for that of others, too.

John’s assertion that “many false prophets are gone out into the world” was no news to the more reflective of his readers. The infant Church was still less than seventy years old. The first generation had to all intents and purposes passed away but the second generation still lived and there may have been a few left, like John himself, advanced in old age who remembered the Day of Pentecost with its thrilling happenings. But if so they had been very young—mere youths and maidens—at the time. And those who were the leaders and teachers in the Church, men who had sat at the feet of the Apostles, learned of them, laboured with them, served them, men like Timothy and Titus and Silvanus, knew full well that already all was not well with the life of the Church. Some had left or were leaving their first love; some were introducing fragments of paganism and Eastern philosophies under the pretext that these were the true teachings of the Lord and represented the inner meaning of His sayings. The world, the flesh and the devil were continually seeking to break in upon the fellowship. The early expectation of an almost immediate return of the Lord and the imminent establishment of His Kingdom was fading in the light of clearer understanding of Apostolic teaching, and although no one as yet had any conception of the time that was truly to elapse until

the end of the Age—the general expectation at the time of John’s Epistle was that the year 500 or thereabouts would witness the Second Advent—the time was sufficiently far away to induce a lessening of love and zeal on the part of those whose faith rested more upon the desire for immediate glory than the devotion of life and all life holds to the Lord, for howsoever long that life may last. So the false prophets found ground in which their teachings could take root and begin to flourish.

Jesus had forewarned them of this. Long before the End Time, He told His disciples (Matt. 24), there would many come in His name, saying “I am Christ”, and would deceive many. “Take heed” He said “that no man deceive you . . . Many false prophets shall arise, and shall deceive many.” Here in John’s epistle, written less than seventy years later, is the melancholy record of the fulfilment of that prediction. The writings of the Early Fathers, the works of the Church historians, the records of the many ecclesiastical conferences and synods and councils, throughout the first four centuries of Christianity, all show how amply justified were those warnings of the Master and of His Apostles. Not only in the last days did perilous times come; they were there almost from the beginning.

For the precise nature of the heresies taught by those false prophets in John’s day consideration must be given to verse 2 of this chapter. But before passing to that verse let it be clearly realised that a false prophet is not necessarily a teacher of false doctrine. True it is, sadly true, that many a believer has been led aside and his faith wrecked by the reception of doctrinal error; in so many things the life, its outlook and its conduct, is shaped and directed by the doctrinal views that are accepted. But it is also true that much of the false teaching lies in other fields, in those things that concern the inward relation between the disciple and his Lord, the fellowship between the Christian and his brethren, the activity that is the outward fruit of a Christian faith manifesting itself in the preaching of the glad tidings to those who as yet know it not. In all of these fields the acceptance of erroneous views may and often does render unfruitful a life that started full of promise. If in this chapter John seems to stress the doctrinal “false prophets” it is because they were prominent in his day and because it is from doctrinal errors that most of the other errors flow. In verse 2 he comes down to the root of the matter and shows that incorrect ideas regarding our Lord and His mission to mankind and His redemptive sacrifice stand behind all the false teaching that in his day, as in ours, threatened the Christian community.

(To be continued)

THE TOWER OF BABEL

4.—THE LORD CAME DOWN

An Excursion Into
Ancient History

"And the Lord came down to see the city, and the tower, which the children of men builded." (vs. 5).

The last great rebellion against the Most High had been of the sons of God just before the Flood. Now there is another rebellion, this time by the children of men. Despite the suggestions of some to the effect that the "sons of God" of Gen. 6 were the children of Seth, there is no doubt whatever that the ancient Jewish understanding is perfectly correct, that they were "angels who kept not their first estate", assuming fleshly human bodies and in those bodies committing the crimes of which they are accused in Scripture. But this is something different. Here are children of men, human beings of Adam's race, setting themselves up against God within two or three generations of the time when He had made a clean sweep of sin and unrighteousness in the earth. How true is the Scripture which declares that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked! The antediluvians scorned and rejected the preaching of Noah and perished in their unbelief. These men also must have had the preaching and warning of that same Noah, intensified by the experience of the Flood through which he had passed, but they rejected him just the same. God sent the judgment of the Flood from his place in heaven; this time, the story tells us, He came down to earth to see, and pass sentence, and execute judgment.

If there was in fact an actual coming to earth it would have been the pre-human Christ, the "Word" of the Father, taking shape as a man as was the case in the time of Abraham when news of the coming destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was conveyed to the patriarch in just the same manner. (Gen. 18; see especially vs. 20-22 where the Lord is spoken of as going down to Sodom to investigate conditions for Himself.) It is often suggested that in the Babel story it should not be thought that the coming of God down to earth to see the city and tower is literally true, and that may be so; yet on the other hand there is no real reason to do other than accept the statement to mean what it says and consider it an earlier instance of the same thing that happened to Abraham; the personal representative of the Almighty appeared in garb of flesh armed with His authority. The three men who visited that patriarch in connection with the coming destruction of the Cities

of the Plain were real enough; they ate and drank with him; it is perfectly reasonable to conclude similarly that the Lord, the "Logos", did come to earth in bodily form to pronounce a similar judgment upon the builders of the Tower of Babel.

"And the Lord said 'Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language: and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them which they have imagined to do'." (vs. 6). Compare that last sentence with the expression in Gen. 6. 5 "every imagination of the thoughts of his (man's) heart was only evil continually". It is once more the imagination of man's heart that is the cause of the mischief; God knows that the course of sin must inevitably continue and flourish measurably unchecked until His due time for taking firm control of all mankind and imposing upon them that rule of the shepherding rod which will at last wean them away from sin and make of them convinced and unchangeable servants of righteousness. But back there at the time of Babel nothing of this could be done; indeed it became necessary for God to do something to expedite and hasten the essential developments which must take place in the earth before men could be ready to listen to the voice that will speak from heaven. So God acted there and then to scatter them over the face of the earth. They would not go willingly; He would see to it that they went of constraint.

This unanimity of purpose in the building of the city seems to betoken the presence of a chief one, a leading spirit to whom all would give allegiance and loyalty. The statement of Josephus to the effect that Nimrod, the mighty hunter of Gen. 10, was the instigator of the project has no Scripture or other evidence whatever to support it; but Nimrod would have been alive at the time and there may be truth in the old tradition. The name "Nimrod" is the Hebrew equivalent of the Sumerian "Marduk", their god of the earth, reigning conjointly with Anu the god of the sky and Ea the god of the sea. Now the Tower of Babel and the city of Babylon was sacred to Marduk and there is more than a possibility that the worship of Marduk (or "Bel" as he was known in the Semitic tongue and by which name he is referred to in the Bible) arose from the mighty prowess of the man Nimrod, the "mighty hunter before the Lord" whose first kingdom embraced Babylon and many adjoining cities (see Gen. 10. 8-12). If such

was indeed the case we can see a very definite meaning in the expression "a mighty hunter before the Lord". We can imagine Nimrod standing forth before the people to defy the Word Who had come down from heaven to see the city and tower and to pronounce judgment. We can picture him persisting in his defiance just as Satan at the head of his fallen angels must have persisted in his defiance of God right up to the moment of the Deluge; and we can visualise to ourselves the change that came over the scene when the Divine judgment had gone forth and the schemes of these men were frustrated, that they could no longer work together in the execution of this enterprise to which they had pledged themselves.

"Go to" said the Lord "let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth, and they left off to build the city" (vs. 7-8).

It should be noticed that there is no indication here of the differentiation of language occurring at the Tower, before the scattering. It has so often been assumed that the story narrates the suspension of building activities consequent upon a miraculous confusion of language making it impossible for any man to understand his fellows. Nothing of the sort. "Let us confound their language" says God. "So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence, upon the face of all the earth." The scattering was the cause of the language differentiation, which came as the logical result, and what the Lord did in order to effect His purpose was to divide and scatter them.

How did that come about? Probably by reason of the same influence that has frustrated so many of the schemes of men in days since then—the development of differences of opinion on methods, on policy, on all that had to do with the project in hand. The process of scattering may have been a long one. The Semitic writer of Genesis 11 can trace Japheth's children only to the second generation but Ham's to the third. That may indicate that Japheth's "tribe" moved off first and that the break between Shem and Ham came a generation later. What is fairly certain is the fact that Ham's descendants remained in possession of the land—a few centuries later we find that Shem's children, having settled and multiplied in Syria, were pressing on the sons of Ham and invading their territory. Of Japheth we hear no more—he and his went north, following the River Tigris in all probability, to become the ancestors of the peoples of Europe, Asia and India. In after years they had little or no contact with the other two peoples, and are mentioned hardly at all in later Scripture history.

Shem and his house went up the Euphrates and settled in what is now North Syria, from whence their descendants in the fourth or fifth generations began to spread, some southward into the great peninsula of Arabia,—the sons of Joktan; some of their names as recorded in Genesis 10 survive still as names of South Arabian tribes—and others back along the Euphrates to the plain of Shinar itself, where they met and began to fight with the sons of Ham who had remained there all the time. These invaders were apparently the sons of Peleg the brother of Joktan, for six generations later on we find Abraham, with Terah his father, of the line of Peleg, living in Ur of the Chaldees in the very south of the land, on the then shore of the Persian Gulf. But by that time the invading Semites had so inter-married with the native Hamites—the original Sumerians—that the two races had virtually become one. By that time also Babylon had become a relatively great and powerful city.

The narrative says that they left off to build the city. That may very well be literally true. The earliest notice in secular history that we have of Babylon is in the time of Sargon of Akkad, and that must have been at least four or five centuries after the frustration of the original project by the Most High. In Sargon's day Babylon was a holy city sacred to Marduk and it held both the Tower, E-temen-anki, and the Temple, E-sagila. At some time between, the building of the city must have been resumed by the sons of Ham, and this is in harmony with the Genesis 10 account, which declares Babylon to have been the beginning of the kingdom of Nimrod, who was a Hamite. After the sons of Shem began to invade the land, however, Babylon became a Semitic stronghold and retained that Semitic character during the rest of its existence.

This is the end of the story as such. The writer has achieved his purpose, to explain how men were scattered over the earth and how they came to speak different languages. In Gen. 10 he has described the different nations and their geographical distribution, each having its own language, and in Gen. 11 he tells how that distribution came about.

"Therefore is the name of it called Babel: because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth; and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of the earth." (vs. 9.)

This verse is a comment upon the story. It may have been written at the same time as the original account was written or it may have been added at a later time. We do not really know just when the story was first written down. It may have been as early as the time of Joktan's sons and the invasion of Sumeria by the Semites; this is

deduced from the fact that in Gen. 10 no descendants of Joktan after his own sons are named, as though at that time the writer of the account lost touch with that branch of the family. But the account may well have been written much later. In any case we can reasonably assume that it was committed to writing by one of Abraham's ancestors and that was how it came into the patriarch's hands in due course. Verse 9, at any rate, could not have been written more than one generation before Abraham, for it was not until then that the city became known as Babel. ("Babylon" is the Greek form of the word, "Babel" is the Hebrew form, and "Bab-ilu" the native and correct form). When the city was first built the name given to it was Tin-tir-ki, meaning "the place of life". One can appreciate the significance of such a name if it was in fact bestowed by the sons of Noah when first they settled at this spot, ceasing from their travels, and determined to make themselves a name. Many centuries later the name of the city was changed to Ka-dimirra, which in the Sumerian tongue means "The Gate of God". The native Semitic equivalent for the same expression is "Bab-ilu" and as the Semites obtained the ascendancy in the city that became its name and has remained the name by which it has always been known. Bab-ilu; Babylon the Great!

The observation in verse 9 is due to a play upon words—a pun! The Hebrew word for "mingling" or "confusion" is *balbal*. The pronunciation is sufficiently like "Babel" for the writer to say "Therefore is the name of it called 'The Gate of God' (*Babel*) because the Lord did there confound (*balbal*) the language of all the earth." By our English standards it may not be considered a

very good pun; but it afforded the writer of the account an opportunity to show his contempt for the idolatrous city and its river, and what is the inevitable end of that which is erected in honour of false gods—confusion.

We have therefore in the first nine verses of this chapter a scrap of history that commences shortly after the Flood and ends shortly before Abraham. It pictures the descendants of Noah, at first living and travelling together in primitive simplicity, finding a pleasant and productive place in which to dwell and promptly giving way to overwhelming ambition and going on from that to active rebellion against God. It describes the first recorded deliberate alliance of men with the Evil One after the Flood. It tells how God intervened from above and frustrated the scheme, and in that it gives assurance of the Divine intention so to overrule the deeds of men that His own Plan will go forward into execution as He has ordained. It does not profess to tell the end of the story; the rest of the Old Testament bears eloquent witness to the fact that this was only a temporary reversal of the powers of sin. Men soon took the path of rebellion again and the Tower whose building had been halted by the intervention of God was after all completed and dominated Babylon for many generations. But God is not mocked. That Tower is not there to-day. And in like manner the time will come when the evil that the Tower symbolised will be no more, and the shadow of rebellion no longer fall across the sunlight of Divine rule over men. The remainder of the history of the Tower, gleaned as it must be from the pages of history, is itself a parable to this end and bears testimony to this truth.

(To be concluded)

The Lord Our Righteousness

An Exhortation

"I will go in the strength of the Lord God, I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only."—Psa. 71. 18.

How simple it sounds to 'go in the strength of the Lord', and yet how difficult it is to realise that 'there is none righteous, no not one.' (Rom. 3. 10). It is so easy, so terribly easy, to slip back into the old 'covenant of works' instead of accepting and relying on the 'free gift' of the Saviour who bought us. "Ye are not your own" says St. Paul, "ye are bought with a price."

The Devil is always anxious to allure us back to our fancied self-righteousness, and we must be

ever on our guard against this, examining ourselves daily lest the least taint of this "accursed thing" should so tinge our thoughts and actions as to hide us from our Father's face. For this is displeasing to Him.

Jesus, who was so gentle and compassionate to the greatest sinners—to fallen women, as Mary Magdalene and the woman taken in adultery, to extortioners as Zaccheus, and indeed all truly repentant sinners—even prophesied that "the publicans and harlots" should go in to the Kingdom before the self-righteous Pharisees, and how sternly He denounced them. Why was He so stern in

His condemnation of them? They were endeavouring to keep the Law and follow the traditions of the Fathers! Jesus, however, knew that all are sinners, and that He had come to deliver us and give us eternal life as a 'free gift' of pure grace. The Pharisees were so attentive to external rites and ceremonies and 'greetings in the market-places' but their hearts were not right with God, and they thought they were different from others.

The more clearly we see this the less room will we have for any ideas of 'self-righteousness'. The 'free gift' came upon all men unto justification of life 'by the righteousness of one'. That One—was Christ Jesus. (Rom. 5. 18).

"Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees" Jesus warned His disciples. What was this "leaven of the Pharisees"? We may be sure Jesus did not leave His disciples in darkness on this question, for He plainly stated that "*they trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others.*" Oh may we, by His grace, be saved from this offence, for this is to spurn His 'free gift' and tread it under foot, and we dare not do this, for we are quite unable to stand alone. "Without me ye can do nothing" said Jesus, and how well He knew that we are weak and helpless unless He be with us.

"My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day." (Psa. 71. 15).

David knew where his strength lay and that the Lord alone is our righteousness, and as previously shown the Prophet Isaiah referred to our own righteousness as 'filthy rags'. (Isa. 64. 6).

The Prophet Zechariah shows clearly a picture of Joshua 'standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him' and the account goes on to say "Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments and stood before the angel". There is no need to puzzle as to what these 'filthy garments' were—his own self-righteousness.

The angel then commanded that these 'filthy garments' should be taken away from him, and said to Joshua "Behold I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment." (Zech. 3. 4).

In this 'change of raiment' we can plainly discern the Lord's righteousness 'the garments of salvation' of which Isaiah exultingly cried:—

"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness." (Isa. 61. 10).

If there is, in our hearts, any vestige of spiritual pride or unwillingness to cast our all at the Saviour's feet in complete surrender, may God give us grace so to do, for

"For all within us good and holy
Is from thee, thy precious gift."

and the way of self-righteousness is the way of disappointment, frustration and despair, and shutting us out of the Kingdom of Light and its joys and blessings; for "he resisteth the proud and giveth grace unto the humble." (Jas. 4. 6).

God be praised that His 'free gift' is for all, and when we realise that all has been done for us, and how completely helpless we are, unable to go forward a fraction of the way unless we are 'upheld by the power of God,' who only is 'able to keep us from falling' we shall say with St. Paul:—

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour. That being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." (Titus 3. 4-5).

We should do well to notice the name of the New Church—the New Jerusalem.

"And this is the name wherewith she shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness." (Jer. 33. 16).

"And every virtue we possess,
And every victory won,
And every thought of holiness,
Are His alone."

In all our Lord's teaching He uses very simple figures. Think of His calling Himself bread! How condescending, that the commonest article upon the table should be used to represent Christ. He calls our faith and eating and drinking of Himself; nothing could be more instructive nor better set forth His gentleness and humility of spirit when He speaks thus of our receiving Him. God be thanked for the simplicity of the Gospel—Jesus indeed our soul's bread. Yet He must be received by each one of us personally for himself. An unappropriated Christ is no Christ to any man. Bread which is not eaten will not stay our hunger. The water in the cup may sparkle like purest crystal but it cannot slake thirst unless we drink it. To get a personal hold of the Saviour is the main thing, and the question is, how is Jesus the bread of life to me?

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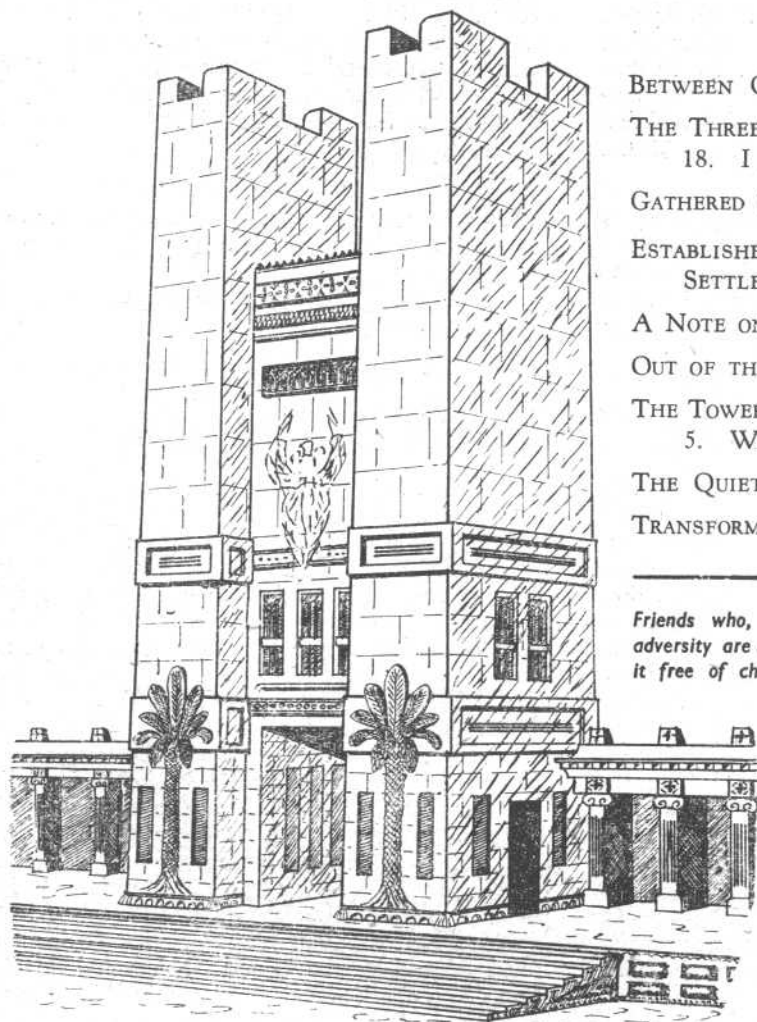
Vol. 29, No. 2

FEBRUARY, 1952

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| BETWEEN OURSELVES | 18 |
| THE THREE EPISTLES OF JOHN 18. I John. 4. 2-3 | 19 |
| GATHERED GRAIN | 21 |
| ESTABLISHED, STRENGTHENED, SETTLED | 22 |
| A NOTE ON ACTS 17. 28 | 23 |
| OUT OF THE STOREHOUSE | 24 |
| THE TOWER OF BABEL 5. While the centuries passed | 26 |
| THE QUIET TIME | 29 |
| TRANSFORMED | 30 |

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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 Committee would like to make known, through these columns, their appreciation of an anonymous donation of 10/- from the Victoria Docks area.

* * *

Some friends were disappointed when the new translation of the *Epistles of St. Paul*, by Arthur Way, went out of print so soon after publication a year ago. We are glad to say that a new edition has now been published and that we have a good stock in hand. The book is entitled "*The Letters of Saint Paul*" and consists of 228 pages, comprising a chronology of the life and writings of the Apostle Paul and a brief sketch of related matters, and then a translation in modern English of all the Pauline Epistles and the Epistle to the Hebrews. The translation is a vigorous and forceful one and should find many admirers. The price is 11/- post free (\$1.75).

* * *

The work of the Benevolent Committee is already well known to most of our readers. Oftentimes it has proved a timely means of aid to those in need, and those entrusted with its administration value very highly their privilege of service. Gifts

and recommendations of cases of known need should all be sent to Br. E. Allbon, 20 Sunnymede Drive, Ilford, Essex.

* * *

Those who habitually use Dr. Moffatt's translation of the Bible may be interested to learn that a *complete Concordance to the Bible in the Moffatt translation* has now been published. This book serves the same purpose to readers of Moffatt as Cruden's Concordance does to the Authorised Version. The book is expensive—naturally so in view of its nature and size, especially since the demand is not likely to be large—and is published at 52/6d. We will be glad to secure and despatch copies to any of our readers who cannot obtain it easily locally, at 54/6d. post free (\$8.00 to friends in U.S.A. and Canada).

* * *

The monthly united meeting at Caxton Hall will be held this month on Saturday, 16th February, at 6.30 p.m.

Names of speakers will be announced at the January meeting.

"HE THAT HATH THE SON HATH LIFE"

Late in 1951 there occurred the death of Dr. Serge Voronoff, the famous "monkey glands" scientist who sought to prolong human life by grafting certain glands of healthy animals into the bodies of human beings. He failed to conquer death, either for others or for himself. How could he hope to succeed? The Divine law forbids that everlasting life be given to any except on the Divine terms. Men may seek all the aid of science to outwit that law but they will never succeed in doing so. Shortly after the death of Dr. Voronoff it was announced that a learned society, the International Gerontological Association—"gerontology" means the study of questions relating to old age—is to launch a comprehensive campaign to discover the ways and means of postponing death and make old age less of a burden. They will fail also. The forces of evil abroad in the earth have been shortening the span of human life steadily and consistently since the beginning. In the antediluvian age men lived seven or eight centuries. In the days between the Flood and the birth of Abraham a life-span of four or five hundred years was common—there is some evidence for this in Babylonian records besides the clear statements of Genesis. Moses, the great leader

of Israel, lived a hundred and twenty years and that was a normal life for many of his contemporaries, as is evidenced by Scripture, which mentions at least seven such, living between 110 and 137 years. But to-day, little more than three thousand years later, fifty per cent. of children born die before they attain forty years of age, and only six in every hundred pass their eightieth birthday. "None of them" says the Psalmist "can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him, that he should still live for ever, and not see corruption." (Psa. 49. 7-9.) Long life, and everlasting life, can come to man only by living in full harmony with the laws that God has ordained for human existence, and in his present fallen, sinful state man can only attain that harmony through Christ, who died on his behalf. The full, unreserved acceptance of all that Jesus Christ preached and stood for, and whole-hearted dedication of ones' self to His service, will bring the gift of eternal life, without monkey glands or scientific research.

"The wages of sin is death—BUT—the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 6. 23.).

The Three Epistles of John

Comments on the writings
of the "Beloved Apostle"

Part XVIII. I John 4. 2-3

"Hereby know ye the Spirit of God; every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God; and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already it is in the world." (vs. 2-3.)

The challenge of the searching question "What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is he?" is nowhere presented so bluntly and fearlessly as here. There is no room for compromise or evasion; do we or do we not believe that Jesus Christ came in the flesh? All that John has yet to say in his epistle depends on the answer to that question. All that we are going to achieve in our own Christian lives, all that we are going to learn of the Plan of God, all that we hope to be in the life that follows this, depends upon our own individual replies to that question. In this Last Day of the present evil world, when light such as has never before been known has been shining for well-nigh a century upon the Plan of God, our personal conviction as to the coming to this earth, the life, the death and the going to His Father of Christ the Redeemer and Lord, is going to have a powerful influence upon our Christian walk and service. To us who live in this closing period of the Gospel Age the question "What think ye of Christ?" is fraught with tremendous significance.

This chapter of John's epistle asserts the real humanity of Jesus when on earth. Of that there can be no doubt. He was in truth the "man Christ Jesus," but there can be—and there are—many ways of viewing that "coming in the flesh" and not all of them are expressive of the truth. Thus Moffatt renders the verse "... confess Jesus as the Christ incarnate ..." which is correct Church theology and meets the surface understanding of John's words—for "incarnate" does mean "in flesh"—but it does not define the truth of the matter. Weymouth says "... that Jesus Christ has come as man ..." which is nearer to the truth but still capable of misunderstanding. The angelic visitors of certain Old Testament incidents came "as men", but the taking upon Himself of our human nature which was the "coming" of Christ was something more than that. And yet on the other hand we must not fall into the error of some modern groups which declare that Jesus was nothing more than a child of Adam, and in all biological

respects a man of the human race just like other men. We have to insist that Jesus of Nazareth was not like other men; He came from the Father, and from the Father's right hand, and He returned when His brief sojourn on earth had accomplished its purpose.

In John's own day there were those who said that the Divine Christ had come down from heaven and entered into the human body of Mary's son Jesus, thirty years of age, at His baptism in Jordan, dwelling in Him then for the remaining three and a half years of His life, leaving Him and returning to heaven at the crucifixion, so that it was not the Divine Christ but the human Jesus who died on the Cross. John knew, as we ourselves must know, that such teaching is blasphemy! Then there were those who admitted that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the promised Messiah but denied that He was anything more than man, or that He came from above or existed before He appeared on earth. That is a modern as well as an ancient belief but it takes away from Jesus all redemptive power. Psa. 49. 7 tells us that "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him." The real truth concerning the manner in which Jesus Christ came "in the flesh" is perhaps best expressed in Scriptural language, combining the angel Gabriel's words to Mary in Luke 1. 35 with Paul's to the Philippians in Phil. 2. 8: "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore that Holy One which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God . . . who being in God's form . . . divested himself, taking a bondman's form, having been made in the likeness of men." John, searching for words in which correctly to express this great truth when writing his Gospel, pointed to the prevailing belief in the Logos, the Word of God, all-powerful and ever active in carrying out the Divine purposes, the medium of Divine communication with man, yet never seen by men. John, with rare flash of inspiration, cried "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father." (John 1. 14.) There are two important words in this second verse of chapter four of John's First Epistle; one is "flesh" and the other is "come", and both must be accepted and understood. It was Jesus Who came from above, and the One coming from above Who

was made flesh. Here was no mystic union between a Divine being and a mortal man, no using the empty shell of a living physical frame as a temporary abiding place whereby to be visible to other men. The Word, Who had been co-existent with the Father for untold ages ere the world was, now laid aside that glory and became flesh by being born a babe of Mary; and in the fulness of time the Word, no longer flesh, took again the glory He had with the Father before the world was—and, too, added glory. (John 17. 5 and Phil. 2. 9-11.)

Every spirit, doctrine, therefore, that is built upon this understanding of the coming of Jesus in the flesh is "of God"—given by the influence of the Holy Spirit. It is upon this basis that the doctrine of the "Ransom for All" is founded, and upon that in turn is built the whole edifice of all that makes our hope what it is—Restitution, the High Calling, the ultimate destruction of sin and death and the everlasting life of "whosoever will" after full and fair opportunity. All springs from, and is dependent upon, the fact that Jesus Christ came in the flesh and gave His humanity a "corresponding price" for Adam.

In verse 3 the expression "Christ is come in the flesh" does not rest upon good authority. It is not to be found in either the Sinaitic, Alexandrian or Vatican Mss., the three great manuscripts. It is also absent from many other versions. Thus amended, the verse runs "Every spirit which confesses not Jesus is not of God." It may be a strange thought to us, that any claiming to be Christians should totally deny Jesus, but the expression seems to imply as much. In John's day it was not so strange. Extremists there were who denied the "supernatural" element in Christianity and insisted that Jesus was merely a great ethical and philosophical leader and teacher and nothing more. John had one word for all such—*antichrist*—and would admit of no compromise. This is antichrist, against which they had already been warned, and now already, thus early in the age, it had appeared.

John words are significant. "Ye have heard that it should come" as though there had been the prediction, "and even now it is in the world" as though the prediction had now begun to be fulfilled. Paul also had something to say about Antichrist, but he declared that it was not yet to be revealed because of a "hindering one." "He that now letteth (hindereth) will let, until he be taken out of the way; and then shall that Wicked One be revealed . . ." etc. (2 Thess. 2. 7-8.) Even then the full revelation of the Antichrist is to come apparently only toward the end of the Age, for his consuming and destruction is to be by the spirit of the Lord's mouth and the radiance of His presence

(vs. 8), which betokens an extension of the manifestation of Antichrist into the days of the Second Advent. It has been customary among Protestant commentators to refer the description in 2. Thess. 2 to the Papacy of the Dark Ages, on the ground of that system having usurped God's place in the "Temple", "shewing himself that he is God". We do well, however, to take careful heed to John's definition of Antichrist, one who denies Christ altogether, and if John and Paul, both by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, are speaking of the same thing, we have to apply the epithet of "antichrist" to that which both denies Christ and usurps His place. In this modern Age there is much in the organised social framework of the world that meets that requirement, and it may well be that "antichrist" is not purely an ecclesiastical power after all. It may combine within itself some of the secular things that are equally arrayed against Christ and His Kingdom. Whatever it is, and whoever it is, that seeks to usurp the place of Jesus Christ and His teachings in the hearts and minds of men, and in the affairs of daily life, is by this definition, antichrist. Perhaps Jesus had something of the same thing in mind when in Matt. 24 He referred to the "abomination of desolation standing in the holy place". True it is that in these last three generations Christ has been denied, and His place usurped, as never before. The fact that in many cases this denial and usurpation has been done in ignorance, or under complete misapprehension of Jesus' message and life, and what He teaches and stands for, and what is the Plan of God for all mankind, does not alter the fact that this is antichrist, that should come into the world. The antichrist is that whole power that is set against Christ and His righteousness to oppose the incoming of the Kingdom. It stands for the rule of this world as against the rule of the next; for the self-government of man by man without God, as against the self-government of man by man with God. It usurps the place of the powers of Heaven in the affairs of men and it justifies its usurpation by denying that there are any powers of Heaven. That is why the spirit of the Lord's mouth must be brought near to consume it and the radiance of His presence to complete its destruction. These things will convince men of the reality of the unseen world and the concern of God for their welfare and happiness, and when these things are thus seen, the power of antichrist will vanish forever.

There are some evangelical Christian groups which look for the emergence in the Middle East, at the end of the Age, of some one man, mighty in power and of extreme wickedness, who will rapidly become a kind of world Dictator and ruthlessly persecute all Jews and Christians, in this

way fulfilling the prophecies of Antichrist. Many expect him to make his capital in the ancient city of Babilon, which, they think, is to be rebuilt to more than its former magnificence. There is no Scriptural warrant whatever for such an interpretation of the two Apostles' teachings respecting Antichrist. It is not that the idea of a World Dictator is unreasonable or impossible; recent events have shown that much more unlikely things could happen nowadays on the stage of world politics. It is rather that the New Testament teaching regarding Antichrist demands something much bigger than the figure of one man astride the few short years of one human life can possibly meet. It demands an Age for its development, maturity and decline, and the whole sum of every system of evil that the Age has known, properly to fulfil all that is said of it. "*The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed.*" (Psa. 2. 2). It is that determined coalition of every evil force,

set in relentless array against the Rider on the White Horse, that constitutes Antichrist, and it is that same coalition which will be utterly broken at the end.

John probably had a more personal thought in mind also. The next few verses speak as though he knew his readers to have challenged this incipient antichrist even in their own day, and overcome it, because God was in them. It is not likely that he was thinking entirely of doctrinal battles or the victory of "Present Truth" over Judaistic or Greek errors. Much more likely is it that John knew what we ought to know, that it is easy, so fatally easy, to deny Christ ourselves in our own hearts and lives even whilst we take His name on our lips. And if we do that, then on the authority of verse 3 of this chapter, we too are partaking of the spirit of antichrist. For we can deny Christ far more effectually in our actions or by our conduct than ever we can by our words.

(To be continued)

GATHERED GRAIN

Like John Bunyan's immortal hero, we can withstand the terrors of Apollyon only by making use of the means provided, and to translate Bunyan's symbols and the Apostle Paul's equally martial language into the realities of every day life, means that after having known Christ and entered into the secret place of the Most High we must go forth armed with knowledge—clear, definite, positive knowledge of the devices of the Adversary and the outworking of the Plan of God. Without it we can wage no efficient warfare. We need not be bigots. We need not be sectarians. We can—nay, we must, be tolerant and understanding toward our fellows. But we must *know*, and in the power of that knowledge press forward to the consummation of our glorious hope.

* * *

Does one wonder and perplex oneself about the world of men to-day! The sweeping changes coming over church and state; the loss of faith and reverence, and the growth of worldliness and frivolity, and the menacing blackness of the clouds of war and strife among the nations? Can one look around and see men without employment, and without enough to eat, and not be moved thereby? But what can we do about it? It can "burden" us down into utter despair, if we try to carry it as "our burden". Get where Jesus was! "Take it to the Lord in prayer." Or perhaps it is not the national and international situation, but the general condition of "the brethren"—the splits and divi-

sions, the myriad tongues—the difficulties of getting on with so-and-so in the studies and classes, the overbearing attitude of this one or that, or the coldness and lack of appreciation of Brother — or Sister —! Listen to the words again, beloved, "Come unto Me all ye that are heavy-laden" —. We do not understand why it is that brethren who have received the truth as it in Jesus should find it so hard to live together in unity—but there it is. To worry about it will not alter it. Better leave it in God's Hands, and say "Even so, Father, it seems good in Thy sight to sift and test, and even cause to stumble all those whose hearts, are not right before Thee".

The whole substance of religion is faith, hope and charity, by the practice of which we become united to the will of God: All beside is indifferent and to be used as a means that we may arrive at our end and be swallowed up therein by faith and charity.

* * *

God knows all about our circumstances. If we need to be transplanted to another place, into a different kind of soil, where our new nature can better thrive and expand, or where our reasonable temporal needs can be obtained, He can arrange for it.

ESTABLISHED, STRENGTHEND, SETTLED

A WORD OF EXHORTATION

"The God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you."—I Pet. 5. 10.

The above words were penned by the Apostle Peter who, after years of experience in the Master's service and under His discipline, through much tribulation had evidently reached the blessed experience of one established, strengthened and settled in the faith and in the practice of the principles of the gospel. Peter had much to suffer and endure in his continuous effort to overcome. In common with all our Lord's disciples, he had much to bear from without, in the way of reproach, and sometimes of persecution, for the Truth's sake. But he had probably much more to contend against from within. His disposition was naturally impulsive, wavering and difficult to bring under restraint, even when the Truth was clear to his mind and when his affections were fastened upon the Lord.

It should be the aim of every truly consecrated saint to reach this desirable state of strength and settled establishment in the faith. This condition cannot be reached at a single leap; it is gained by a gradual steady growth under the discipline of suffering—as the Apostle says, "after ye have suffered awhile." "Now," as Paul remarks (Heb. 12. 11, 12), "no chastening for the present seemeth joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." "Wherefore" with him we would add, "lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way."

Are you weary and disheartened in the journey, discouraged at your slow progress, and almost overwhelmed with the cares and various besetments of this life? Is a lethargy and indifference creeping over you, cooling your ardour for the Master's service, relaxing your energies in that direction, and enlisting your interest more and more in other matters? Then beware! It is high time to wake up. Be sober; be vigilant, because your adversary, the devil as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour. Sometimes he goes about as a roaring lion, and sometimes as a skulking serpent in the grass.

Sometimes, lion-like, when we are off guard he springs upon us unawares, stirs up the devil of the old nature, and unless desperately resisted he will

take full control and drive us on to ruin. Or he will endeavour at least to turn us off the track of the narrow way. Sometimes, serpent-like (2 Cor. 11. 3) he assumes a pleasing and seemingly reasonable aspect, and endeavours to beguile us from the way. If we permit ourselves to be so off guard either by neglect to feed upon the truth, or by indifference to the reception and cultivation of its spirit, we may be sure that our ever vigilant adversary will gain an advantage over us which we may not be able to resist.

Our only safety, then, is in giving earnest heed to the Apostle's counsel. Be sober, be steadfast in the faith, be vigilant, and resist the adversary. We find foes within as well as foes without with which we must not deal too gently. The human nature which we covenanted to crucify must not be too sensitively regarded by ourselves, though we should be careful and thoughtful in our dealings with others. We must let the human nature die, and rejoice to see the new nature triumph over it. We must look our old nature squarely in the face, and thankful for a brother's or a sister's kindly showing of the same; and even the heartless rebuke of an enemy, or the impatient criticism of an unwise but well meaning friend, should be soberly considered and profited by, though it may severely wound the sensitive flesh. All this is a part of the crucifying process, a part of the humbling under the mighty hand of God—under the discipline of His truth. If we study it carefully and cultivate its spirit day by day, seeking constantly to purge out all that is contrary to it, our characters will mature, ripen and grow more and more like the glorious model given for our imitation. Our convictions of the truth will become more settled and clear; our faith in God and in the power of His love and grace will be more and more established; and our constant effort to learn and to do the will of God will harden into habit, and thus we will grow strong in the Lord and be able to strengthen and confirm the faith of others.

If we have cares, we are invited to cast all our cares upon the Lord, knowing that He careth for us. We have the encouraging assurance in the midst of present trials that we shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away, if in steadfast sobriety and humility we work out our salvation with fear and trembling, having first been redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, and thus through faith having gained the privilege of working it out. We are comforted in the midst of trials with the

blessed assurance that while God resisteth the proud, and they also resist Him, He giveth grace to the humble. Let us humble ourselves therefore, dear fellow members of the called and Anointed Body, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt us in due time. Let us bear in mind that not all of the suffering and cross-bearing comes from the world's opposition to the truth, but that much of it must necessarily come from our faithfulness, not in excusing and cultivating but in humbling and

subduing the evil propensities of our fallen nature. "If any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass; for he beholdeth himself and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whosoever looketh unto the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he, being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the word, this man shall be blessed in his deed."—James 1. 23-25.

A NOTE ON ACTS 17.28

"In him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said 'For we are also his offspring.' Forasmuch then as we are the children of God, we ought not to think that the Deity is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device."

Who were these poets of the Greeks to whom Paul referred, and what was the propriety of his appealing to pagan writers to declare the fact of man being the offspring of God? Paul was an educated man and it was quite natural that he should draw upon his classical knowledge, when talking to educated men of this world, philosophers and the like, to support the truth he was proclaiming to them. In this speech before the Athenians on Mars Hill he gave voice to the most profound of dispensational truths, explaining the whole purpose of God for this Age and the next, and the reason for God's apparent silence in the past. And at the centre of that truth lay the fact that men live, and move, and have their being in God, and cannot live eternally without Him, for they are in the last analysis the offspring of God and owe their life to Him. In making that statement he drew upon the considered conclusions of the Greek philosophers themselves, and quoted them to support his point. He was not so petty-minded as to ignore the insight of those philosophers because they were pagans and knew not the God of Israel. Even although the very words he quoted "For we are also his offspring" had been addressed to Zeus the principal god of the Greeks, and not to Paul's God at all, he gave those men credit for their perception.

There is a lesson here worth taking to heart. We can take the words of these Greek poets, as did Paul, and apply them aright, because their authors had grasped the true principle, that men receive their life from God and owe their being to Him, and in the last resort are His children. The Prodigal Son in the parable was still his father's son when away there in an alien land, wasting his substance in riotous living. And in these quotations to which Paul referred we have but to change the name of Zeus to that of our Father and there is not one word with which we would disagree.

There are two poets, either of whom Paul may have had in mind when he made this remark; perhaps he had both. He says "certain also of your own poets" using the plural. One of these was Aratus, a Greek poet and astronomer who was born in Paul's own province of Cilicia about three hundred years before. This Aratus became Court physician to one of the Macedonian kings and his works were esteemed so highly by the Romans in Paul's day that at least three men of letters produced Latin translations of them. The passage in which Paul's quotation occurs is from a kind of technical poem dealing with astronomical matters, called the "Phenomena." It runs:

... With Him, with Zeus, are filled
The paths we tread and all the haunts of men.
He fills the sea, and every creek and bay;
And all in all things we need the help of Zeus,
For we too are His offspring."

The other was Cleanthes, who lived at about the same time as Aratus, and who was a leading member of the Stoics at Athens. In his "Hymns to Zeus" occur these lines:

"Most glorious of immortals, many named;
Almighty and eternal, thou, O Zeus,
The God of Nature, guiding with Thy hand
All things that are, we greet with praise.
'Tis meet that mortals call on thee with one
accord,
For we thine offspring are, and we alone
Of all who live and move upon this earth,
Have had from thee the gift of god-like
speech."

The fact that we can thus identify the poets whom Paul is reported as quoting on that historic occasion, and read for ourselves the very lines he had in mind, is an undesigned confirmation of the accuracy of the "Acts of the Apostles". This apparently quite casual allusion, coming to us down the ages, bears with it this testimony that it was no idle embellishment of a writer of fiction; it was a verbal transcription of words that were actually spoken before that distinguished audience in Athens two thousand years ago.

OUT OF THE STOREHOUSE

A collection of interesting items

Biblical allusions

The following extract from the writings of Rev. James Neil, who was resident in Palestine for a number of years over half a century ago, and familiar with the customs of the people, is a useful comment upon a point that is raised from time to time.

"Consider for a moment the highly damaging objection sometimes urged against Holy Scripture on the ground of the coarseness of the expressions it contains, and the handling of subjects the very mention of which we should account impure. This has been an honest difficulty to many earnest and sensitive minds. Yet a comparatively short residence in Palestine serves to remove it altogether; and indeed no Eastern could possibly see any objection whatever on this score. They still, as in ancient times, use the greatest plainness of speech throughout the Holy Land. At first a Western sense of delicacy is greatly shocked. Things the very mention of which decency forbids amongst us are there spoken of freely before women and children of the highest class, and of the greatest respectability and refinement. As soon as one acquires a knowledge of Arabic, which is virtually but a softer and more copious form of Hebrew, the ear is assailed by a plain speaking on these subjects which is extremely embarrassing until such time as one becomes accustomed to it. This explains, however, at once the perfect naturalness and innocency of the use of expressions and the mention of matters which our translators have softened down in some instances, and public readers have tacitly agreed to omit in others. . . . Seeing the Bible purports to be an Eastern book, written in the East, and first—and for long ages only—addressed to Easterns, it could not possibly be genuine if these very matters were absent from its pages."

* * *

Into Thy hands I commend my spirit

It is said that this expression was included in the evening prayers of every Jewish boy. If this be so, we can well imagine the boy Jesus repeating these words nightly, and then in perfect confidence laying himself down to rest. So when the shades of death were closing round Him He repeated the same hallowed words, knowing that the Father in Whom He trusted would indeed put forth His mighty power to raise His Son from the dead.

Dean Farrar on sectarianism

"It is one of our trials that the Bible, with its tender and hallowed bearing upon all that is sweet and noble in our lives—with its words so stately and full of wonder, and full of music, like the voice of an arch-angel—should have been made in these days the wrangle ground for sectarian differences: but if with our whole hearts we are striving to live according to its spirit, we need fear but little that we shall trip in a right pronunciation of the shibboleths of its letter. Surely it is deplorable that, because of mere questions of authorship, of historical accuracy, of verbal criticism, having for the most part little or no bearing on the spiritual or moral life, party should be denouncing party, and Christian excommunicating Christian, and so many hands tearing in anger the seamless robe of Christ. It is, alas, the due punishment for our lack of charity, our Pharisaism, our unwisdom, that while we have been so eager about such controversies, the love of many should have waxed cold."

* * *

"That He might fulfil all things" (Eph. 4. 10.)

There is a world of meaning in the Apostle's words here. The Greek is *plerose ta panta* "fill the all-things"—i.e., the universe. *Plerose* means to fill by diffusing a thing throughout, as by filling a room with smoke, for instance, and also to furnish abundantly, as by filling the sky with stars or furnishing a garden with plants. It is derived from a word which has the significance of filling a vessel or a hollow place. Consider the aptness of the word. Christ, after His ascension, is to fill the universe, but not with stars, for that has been done already. What more appropriate than that He shall furnish it with living beings all in harmony with God and living to His praise. The universe as we see it through our telescopes is but the empty framework of that which shall be when the work of Christ as regards this earth is finished and in company with His glorified Church He commences His eternal work of "filling the all-things".

* * *

The Promised Land

It is not always realised that the land promised to Abraham considerably exceeded in size the greatest extent of the territory occupied at any time by the children of Israel. It was defined as extend-

ing from the great river, the Euphrates, to the river of Egypt. This tract of land would be about one hundred miles broad at its northern end, and one thousand miles at its southern extremity, from Egypt to the mouth of the Euphrates where it enters the Persian Gulf. From north to south the length of the land would then be about six hundred miles. This makes a country about twelve times the size of England, and when it is remembered that England alone has at present a population of fifty millions, it can be seen what possibilities exist in the "Land of Promise" for that regathering and for a blossoming and budding that will fill the face of the world with fruit, to use the figure of speech coined by Paul. Without doubt the great desert which at present occupies much of this area of land will become fruitful under the industrious labours of those who are to build the old wastes and repair the former desolations.

* * *

Sunday in the Early Church

Justin Martyr, who lived in the second century, wrote "On Sunday all those of us who live in the same town or district assemble together, and there is read to us some part of the Memoirs of the Apostles, which are called Gospels, and the writings of the Prophets as much as time permits. Then whoever is presiding gives us a sermon, after which we rise for common prayer; afterwards bread and wine are brought".

The allusion to "rising" for prayer calls to mind the fact that it was the custom of Christians in the early centuries to stand whilst prayer was being made, the one who was offering prayer doing so with arms extended as if in blessing. Engravings in the Catacombs at Rome depict this usage in repeated instances and this in turn explains the words of I Tim. 2, 8, "*I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.*"

* * *

The Resurrection

A well-known resurrection text, Isa. 26, 19, is difficult to understand in the form in which it appears in the Authorised Version. It is evident from the italics that the translators were not sure of the precise sense. The Septuagint rendering throws more light upon it and makes its Millennial setting more definite. "*The dead shall rise, and they that are in the tombs shall be raised, and they that are in the earth shall rejoice; for the dew from thee is healing to them: but the land of the ungodly shall perish.*"

No evolution here!

Hippocrates, the "father of medicine", described tuberculosis twenty-three centuries ago. The Eber Papyrus of Egypt, something like four thousand years old, mentions the same disease. The life cycle of the bacillus of tuberculosis is said to be about half-an-hour, which means there are 336 generations in a week or 17,529 in a year. That makes seventy millions of generations of tuberculosis germs since the disease was first described by the ancient Egyptians—and they have not changed in any way in all that time. Not much evidence of evolution in that!

* * *

Blind leaders of the blind (Matt. 15. 14-15)

The force of our Lord's words "Let them alone; they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" is better appreciated when it is explained that this expression "blind leaders of the blind" was an everyday catchword in Israel. The Pharisees and Rabbis were often referred to—quite respectfully—as "leaders of the blind" in recognition of their reputed ability for leadership in things of God. The fact that these dignitaries had moved largely out of touch with the common people and their problems resulted in their being often referred to in popular conversation as "blind leaders of the blind" and Jesus quoted this everyday proverb in His teaching, adding thereto His own telling comment "*And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch*". Elsewhere (Matt. 23) He calls them "blind guides" and it would almost seem from the words in John 9, 40 that the Pharisees, knowing of this customary saying aimed against them, asked Jesus if He supported the proverb or not. It is certainly clear that Paul in Rom. 2, 19 makes allusion to the same proverb, which he, as a Pharisee, must have had good reason to remember; and Isaiah (56, 10) shows plainly that the same traits of character were manifest in his day, although the Pharisees as a class had not at that time come into existence.

* * *

Three dead cities

Joshua destroyed and burnt three cities—Jericho, Hazor and Ai. So says the Old Testament. Learned men have written massive volumes to prove that those stories were all based on folk lore and Nature myth; that they had no foundation in fact. To-day those three ruined cities have been revealed. They lie in the hot Syrian sun just as Joshua left them over three thousand years ago, mute witnesses to the truth of that which was written.

THE TOWER OF BABEL

5.—WHILE THE CENTURIES PASSED

*An Excursion Into
Ancient History*

The first notice of the Tower in secular history is that to which reference has already been made, when, perhaps in the time of Peleg the son of Eber (Gen. 10), the great Semitic king Sargon of Akkad, kinsman of Abraham's ancestors, took some of the sacred earth from the Temple enclosure, and as penance for his sacrilege rebuilt and endowed the edifice. It would seem that so soon, not many centuries after its erection, the great building was showing signs of decay; and in fact that is characteristic of all its after history. The kings of Babylon were forever repairing and underpinning and rebuilding the giant Tower and recording what they had done for the admiration of posterity. It would almost seem as if this, the classic demonstration of man's attempt to do without God, was doomed from the very start to illustrate the hollowness and rottenness of that which is erected in defiance of Him and disregard of His ways. "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it" sang the Psalmist. (Psa. 127. 1.) That was certainly true of the Tower of Babel.

Nothing more is known of the Tower for three centuries, and then, just about the time of the birth of Abraham's father Terah, we find that Dungi, the king of Ur of the Chaldees, Terah's own city, profaned the sanctuary of the Tower, for which the god Marduk, the god of Babylon, slew him. At least that is what the history of the times declares; probably the priests of Marduk knew more about the matter of the slaying than was recorded. Those priests were in process of becoming a powerful and influential body, jealous of their interests, for there is some evidence that within another century the Tower had become a centre of scientific and particularly astronomical knowledge and research. Our knowledge of that fact comes in consequence of the conquests of Alexander the Great nearly two thousand years later. At that time, the period of the end of the Persian empire and its conquest by the Greeks, the succession of the "leopard" to the "bear", the brass of the image to the silver, of Daniel's dream (Dan. 7) the great conqueror had attached to his entourage a Greek scientist named Callisthenes. When Alexander conquered Babylon in 331 B.C. Callisthenes examined the written tablets stored in the vaults of the Temple and found records of astronomical observations going back to the year 2234 B.C., which was before the birth of Abraham. While the "father of the faithful", as yet uncon-

scious of his mighty destiny, was still a boy playing in the streets of Ur, the priests of the false religion he was chosen to overthrow were busy in the Great Tower two hundred miles to the north accumulating knowledge wherewith to perpetuate their hold over the people.

There was more rebuilding soon after Abraham's birth, by Zabium king of Babylon. When Rebekah was on her journey from her father's house to be married to Isaac, there was yet more repairing in process, at the instance of Samsu-iluna king of Babylon. At the time Ishmael and Isaac were met together to bury their father Abraham, who at last had been gathered to his fathers, the Hittites were raiding Babylon, desolating the Temple and the Tower, and carrying away the image of Marduk in triumph to their own land. Whilst Israel was captive in Egypt, Gandash king of Babylon was repairing the damage done by the Hittites and sixty years later his successor Agum brought back the image of Marduk in triumph. So through the centuries the sorry tale goes on, with scenes of strife and bloodshed, frantic efforts to restore and preserve the crumbling edifice, seasons when the sanctuary and city lay desolate while the people and their gods endured subjection under the heel of a foreign power. What a biting commentary is this on the self-confidence of the people who at the first had said "Let us make us a name, that we be not scattered abroad upon the face of the earth"!

But despite all these vicissitudes of fate, the Tower remained. The city of Babylon and the Temple of Marduk were destroyed and rebuilt several times but the Tower was always there. It was probably much too gigantic to break down. And it may be that it was reserved by a higher Power for a more spectacular destruction in later days. At any rate, we find the Assyrian king Sennacherib destroying Babylon and, after his defeat outside Jerusalem and his death, his son Esarhaddon rebuilding the city and paying special attention to the sanctuary. We are coming now to the days of Daniel and to that Bible book which more than any other describes life in Babylon in detail. Nabopolassar, the father of the famous Nebuchadnezzar, took the venerable Tower in hand and executed extensive repairs. This is what he says about it himself in the inscriptions that have since been discovered: "At this time Marduk commanded me concerning E-temenanki (the Tower of Babel),

which in the times before me had become weak, and had been brought to ruin; to key its foundation firm in the bosom of the underworld, while its top should stretch heavenwards". It is noteworthy how the old ideal is reiterated "its top should stretch heavenwards". Nabopolassar apparently did not finish the work, for Nebuchadnezzar himself spent much of his time and energy in rebuilding and beautifying the edifice. He also left an inscription commemorating what he had done "To raise up the top of E-temenanki that it may rival heaven, I laid to my hand" (E-temenanki, "the house of the foundation of heaven and earth" was the Babylonian name for the Tower.) Daniel must have seen the work going on; perhaps he related the true history of the Tower to the king but if he did so the lesson must have fallen on deaf ears for the work proceeded. In the days of Neriglissar, successor to Nebuchadnezzar, there was still greater activity. Neriglissar is scathing in his comments on his predecessors' treatment of the Tower. He says that it had "sunk in its foundations, its walls were fallen down, its joints were loosened, and its base had become weak". It would almost seem, from the king's scornful description, that the ancient structure, now over two thousand years old, was on its "last legs". But the king goes on "Then my lord the great Marduk inspired me to raise up the building. . . . I dug up the ancient foundation stone and read its records". (In all Babylonian buildings a clay cylinder inscribed with details of its founding was buried within the foundations. If the one dug up by Neriglissar was the original one he might have read the same story that we have in Gen. II but written from the point of view of the culprits) "On its ancient foundation stone I based the building; its summit I raised like a mountain; I made firm its threshold and I fixed the doors in its doorway. . . ."

Neriglissar did his best, but the day of reckoning was drawing very near. Daniel, living in retirement since the death of his master and friend, Nebuchadnezzar, might have sensed something of the approaching destruction. The end of the empire of Babylon was at hand; Daniel knew that. "Thou art this head of gold" he had told Nebuchadnezzar something like thirty years ago, and already in the East there was coming into public notice a figure of whom Isaiah a century before had prophesied that he would deliver God's people from Babylon. Cyrus was a power to be reckoned with, and in the year 538 B.C., when the great Tower presented perhaps a more magnificent spectacle than ever it had done before, and seemed sure of standing for long ages yet to come, Cyrus captured Babylon and the dominion of the men of Babel came to an end.

Contrary to popular belief, the city was not

destroyed at once. Babylon remained a populous and prosperous city for another three centuries and even then it took three more centuries to die. Babylon suffered a slow and lingering death and it was not until the early years of the Christian era, after the apostles had lived and laboured and "fallen asleep", that the last inhabitants left the dying city and abandoned it to the owls and jackals of Jeremiah's and Isaiah's prophecies. But the Tower did not survive. We know a great deal about it as it existed in Daniel's day when it was at the peak of its glory, but almost immediately after, it must have been, there came catastrophe, swift and sudden.

Daniel died, the exiles went back to Judea and commenced to rebuild the Temple. Cyrus died and was succeeded by Cambyses, Cambyses by Darius, and Darius by Xerxes, who is generally thought to be the Ahasuerus of the Book of Esther. This Xerxes plundered the Temple of Marduk at Babylon, killed the priests, desolated and plundered the Tower, according to the historians. All this was in the year 478 B.C., sixty years after Cyrus captured Babylon. Forty-eight years later still, Herodotus, the Greek writer and traveller who is known as the "Father of History", visited Babylon and in his writings describes the Tower as he saw it. It was still standing; evidently Xerxes had despoiled it of everything of value and left the brick structure to take care of itself.

Of the manner of its final destruction we have no details, but what happened can be inferred. A century later, when Alexander the Great conquered Babylon, and the brass empire of Greece succeeded the silver empire of Persia, the Tower was no longer there. The whole area which once had been occupied by the ancient structure and its attendant buildings and walls and courts was a desolate mound of brick rubble. A building half as high again as the Great Pyramid of Egypt and containing twice the quantity of material as there is in the Pyramid had been levelled to the ground!

What was the cause of so great and comparatively sudden a fall? It might well have been that the building collapsed under its own weight. The stories of constant rebuilding and restoration, of which the records are full, especially towards the last, seems to show that only by almost continual repair work could it be kept safe. The river Euphrates, which in the days of the Tower flowed hard by its western side, to-day describes a wide curve to the west as though to avoid the spot, rejoining its ancient course half-a-mile farther on. The old bed is easily to be traced, and still has the foundation piers of Nebuchadnezzar's bridge in position, and the curve of the river is quite consistent with the assumption that at the last the soft

alluvial soil on which the Tower was built refused any longer to support its bulk, and the six-hundred-foot mass of brickwork, standing only eighty feet or so from the then water's edge, crashed across the river, damming the latter and diverting it into the course that it occupies to-day.

If that hypothesis is the true one, how apt and truly prophetic the act of Seraiah the messenger of Jeremiah. Bidden by his master, he took to Babylon a "book"—an inscribed clay tablet—in which was written the doom of Babylon. He was instructed to read out the denunciation and then to cast the tablet into the Euphrates, saying at the same time "*Thus shall Babylon sink, and not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her*". (Jer. 51. 59-64.) Now the obvious place for Seraiah to accomplish his mission would be upon the centre of the stone bridge which Nebuchadnezzar had built to span the river, and that bridge lay right under the shadow of the Tower. There, in a place as important to ancient Babylon as Westminster Bridge is to modern London—and the Euphrates at Babylon was just about as wide as is the Thames at Westminster—Seraiah could cast his tablet into the water in a fully impressive fashion. Not many decades afterwards, if the physical signs on the spot are correctly interpreted, the Tower itself followed suit and fell into the river. One wonders if the Apostle John had some vision of that when, speaking under guidance of the Holy Spirit, he said "*And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all*". (Rev. 18. 21.)

That was the end of the Tower. Alexander the Great determined to rebuild it and set ten thousand men to clear the site of the fallen brickwork as an essential preliminary. They toiled for two months, transporting the broken masses to a point three-quarters of a mile away, where they still remain, a quarry for every builder in Iraq who wants

good bricks. But it was not in the purpose of the Almighty that the Tower should rise again. Alexander died suddenly while he was still at Babylon, his empire was divided between his four generals as the angel had beforetime told Daniel (Dan. 11. 4) and the ambitious project was abandoned, never to be revived.

From that time Babylon commenced to die slowly. Although the Tower had been destroyed, its associated Temple, where the golden vessels of Solomon's Temple had been placed during the Exile (Dan. 1, 2) still remained, and the priests continued, although with a constantly diminishing power and following. One of those priests, sixty years after Alexander's time, was Berosus, a learned and cultured man who wrote an elaborate history of the Babylonians. His history is the source of much of our knowledge of ancient times. Another century passed, and now the Temple itself was in ruins, and in a corner of the ruins a decadent priesthood, holding still to a few remaining vestiges of its former glory, conducted worship to two deities, Marduk, the old god of Babylon, and one whom they called "the god of heaven". As late as the year 29 B.C., when to the Jewish world there was about to be presented the true Light that is to enlighten the world, there were still priests at Babylon serving the ruined shrines. But that is the last we hear of them. By the end of the B.C. years and the time of the birth of Christ the Tower whose top once aspired to reach unto heaven, and the Temple that stood with it as the centre and sanctuary of false religion, and the priests who for nearly three thousand years had corrupted the earth with their idolatries, were no more. The world had forgotten the people who once boasted that they would make a name for themselves that they be not scattered upon the face of the earth. Great Babylon was dead!

The End.

"HE THAT ENDURETH"

There is much that would deter from that patient continuance in well-doing which is the only way whereby we shall reach the goal of our desires, and not the least effective of the influences which lead some to give up the race is that realisation that comes to all of us as the years of our Christian life begin to multiply, that after all, like Paul and Barnabas at Lystra, our brethren are men of like passions with those around them and that we all manifest traits of character which do violence to

the exalted conception we have set up as the standard of conduct amongst us. And so discouragement and disappointment become twin demons, ever standing at our right hands with their insidious whisperings of the failure of our hopes and telling that the glorious Divine Plan of the ages, this revelation coming "in due time to the Household of Faith", this word which, when first it came, satisfied our longings as nothing else could do, has been after all nothing more than a beautiful dream.

THE QUIET TIME

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

HOPE

*"I live to hail that season,
By gifted minds foretold,
When men shall live by reason,
And not alone by gold;
When man to man united,
And every wrong thing righted,
The whole world shall be lighted
As Eden was of old."*

SUBMISSION

"My Father, help me as a follower of Christ to say 'Thy Will be done.' Thou would'st not have me accept Thy Will because I *must*, but because I *may*. Thou would'st have me take it, not with resignation, but with joy, not with mere absence of murmur, but with song of praise . . . Give me, O Father, the blessedness of the man whose delight is in Thy Law, who can tell of Thy Statutes rejoicing the heart. Then shall I obey Thee with perfect freedom and say from my heart 'Thy Will be done'."

FRUIT-BEARING

Are you a fruit-bearer in your Lord's vineyard? Are you seeking to make life one grand act of consecration to His glory. It is often those fruits that are unseen and unknown to man, ripening in seclusion, that He values most; the quiet, lowly walk, the humble mind, the willing heart, the unselfish spirit, the unostentatious kindness—these are some of the 'fruits' which your heavenly Father loves, and by which He is glorified.

GODLINESS

"Behold now, I perceive that this is a holy man of God, which passeth by us continually."

—2 Kings, 4. 9.

Elisha himself was, in his life and spirit, the proof of his message. It is what we are, and not what we say, which does the most for God. We leave behind us, in every house we enter, some traces of God, of ourselves, or of the enemy. Some Christians cannot enter a house without leaving behind a wonderful consciousness of God's nearness; but some leave behind traces of their own personality—talent, will, energy, etc. Others leave a strange, terrible unrest behind them; they have served the enemy in sowing strife, bitterness, evil speaking, etc.

Let us never forget that our message is gauged by what men see in the messenger.

BROTHERLY LOVE

Let us continually remember that love for all the brethren is a sure indication that we love as New Creatures. And love for the brethren means that we will do them no injury, that we will speak no evil respecting them unless of absolute necessity; and, finally, that we will not even surmise evil in respect to their words and deeds. "Love is the fulfilling of the Law." "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God (by His Spirit dwelleth) in him". For though we should give all our goods to feed the poor, and though we should even sacrifice our bodies to be burned in the interests of righteousness, yet if we have not love—the Spirit of love—we are nothing in God's sight.

DISCIPLESHIP

To be a disciple of Christ signifies much more, both in the way of responsibility and of advantage, than many think. Our Lord's words are very explicit in defining the terms of discipleship to be nothing less than a full, complete consecration of all that we have and are to him who has bought us with his own precious blood. It must be a consecration to daily crossbearing and to following in the footsteps of Christ, even unto death.

FORGIVENESS

Life without forgiveness would be a constantly increasing cloud and fear. Forgiveness renews life, calls back banished youthfulness, throws open the radiant gates of new opportunities. We may know that we are growing in grace in the degree in which we are prepared to exercise the grace and duty of forgiveness. Not how I would forgive, but how Christ would forgive must be the standard of conduct.

THREE GATES

*If you are tempted to reveal
A tale someone to you has told
About another, let it pass,
Before you speak, three gates of gold—
Three narrow gates—First, 'Is it true?'
Then, 'Is it needful?' In your mind
Give the truthful answer. And the next
Is last and narrowest, 'Is it kind?'
And if, to reach your lips at last
It passes through these gateways three,
Then you may tell the tale, nor fear
What the result of speech may be.*

TRANSFORMED

Wise Counsel for the
Christian Life

"We all with unveiled face reflect as a mirror the glory of the Lord and are transformed into the same image from glory to glory."

Christians are not the only ones who would like to be better men and women. Professor Huxley said, "I protest that if some great power would make me always think truth and do right on condition of my being turned into a sort of clock and wound up every morning, I would instantly close with the offer." "Oh, that I could only think right and do right" has been the desire of great men right down the ages.

This is our inheritance if we are the Lord's people. This is shown in the Word of God and can be obtained under the right conditions. It is as natural for the character to become beautiful as for flowers to become beautiful: the same Creator who instituted laws for the production of beautiful flowers instituted laws for the creation of beautiful characters.

Some claim that the only way to be transformed into the likeness of the Lord is to resolve by sheer willpower to overcome sin in our bodies and minds. There is nothing wrong in resolving to overcome sin, but that is not the vital point. Suppose we were on a ship which, when in the middle of the ocean, refused to go, and those on deck tried by pushing at the masts to move it. It would not move, however much pressure they used; their strength would be used in the wrong way. They need to go down to the engine room, the real seat of power, and use every energy to put right what was wrong. Effort is useless unless exercised in the right direction. A drowning man cannot pull himself out of the water by his own hair.

Some say, "Our idea is to tackle one sin at a time and thus eradicate sin from our hearts that good may work." That would be a very big task for any man, to get sins one by one out of his life. That is the wrong way; sin is only overcome by something taking its place. The evil spirit discharged from the man must be replaced by the Lord's spirit or the last condition becomes worse than the first. The tackling of one sin at a time is therefore not the right method.

Still another method is to copy Christ's virtues. The word "copy" suggests the thought of an artist in wax or paint trying to reproduce a beautiful flower. Many believe in Christ as the standard to be copied, but very few are able to copy Him. The

power that is used is a power of self—a power within themselves instead of a power from without.

Again, some say, "How about self-examination"? Setting up a code of rules to which we must keep! A watchmaker once made a present of the parts of a watch, but when they were put together the main spring was missing. The vital thing is the power, or mainspring.

The Scriptures give us a valuable formula for our sanctification. There are laws of science and art, and if we would produce anything correctly we must use a formula. We are told that God's thoughts are higher than man's, and if the wisdom of men sees the necessity for a formula, God has not left us without one. 2 Cor. 3, 13-18 provides this formula, and in verse 18 reveals three laws: 1, reflection; 2, assimilation; and 3, influence.

Notice that it does not say we are transforming ourselves into the same image from glory to glory. No, we do not transform ourselves, we are changed or transformed. The changing power is something that does not naturally belong to ourselves, it is a power that comes from without. Throughout the New Testament we find that the verbs used in connection with our sanctification are passive. As far as the power of sanctification is concerned it is a power from without. We can come under the influence of His Spirit and so be transformed. The barometer is made to tell us the condition of the weather, but it does not itself register the condition of the weather. The weather does that, the barometer responding to changes in the weather. So our responsibility is to bring ourselves into the attitude of susceptibility in which God can work on our minds. That is our part of the work, to get our hearts into that attitude of full consecration: take out anything and everything that would hinder the working of His Spirit. The Word of God must be received into our prepared hearts and the whole being must be yielded as members of righteousness. That is the thought in this text. We, beholding Christ with unveiled face, in our study of the Lord's Word and His example and teaching, see the glory of God. We see the beauty of God. He exemplifies to us the character of God, and as we set our affections on that lovely character, our love for God and our study of His Word is so close to our hearts, we cannot but reflect it. A man is shaped and fashioned by that which he loves. We find two young people coming together; they

see something they love in each other. They marry and live together for fifty years, and during that time a reflecting work is going on; one would speak as would the other; their very appearance becomes alike. If we are in love with the Lord, the things He says are the things we would say, the words He has given us are the words which express the sentiments of our hearts. We take them into our hearts and reflect them. Beholding Christ, we reflect His image, and we are changed from glory to glory. This word "glory" is rather a crude word to express the thought here. The Psalmist says, "The heavens declare the glory of God". There is a demonstration of the glory of God, His power, His wisdom and the grandeur of His mind. In other words, God's glory is His character. So, we, beholding Christ, reflect His image and are transformed from character to character, from one character to a better character, then to a still better one until we are ready for our final change. We are all mirrors, we cannot help it, and we are all reflecting, whether we know it or not.

Now, what is it we reflect? We reflect what we have gained from our environment. If we choose an environment that leads to a depraved life, we shall reflect that depravity. We shall also reflect if we have been reading uplifting books and have been in uplifting company. Are we living in an environment of the Spirit? Do we read the Word of God? If so we shall reflect it. Do we keep the company of the brethren? Then we shall reflect the spiritual effect.

This reflection is not merely a matter of mind or memory. The impressions we have gained are made on our very beings, so much so that a man is shaped and fashioned like that with which he comes into contact. Where we cannot change our circumstances, we can use them. It will either be a matter of our circumstances using us or we using them. This is important. We may find one who goes through a trial and the result is a stronger faith in God than ever before, whilst another may pass through similar circumstances in a spirit of questioning, murmuring and complaint, producing a very different result. By taking Christ's precepts, no matter what experiences we go through, they will all work out for our good; whether painful or pleasant, they can be used for our sanctification. We not only reflect what we receive from our environment and experience, but we receive these impressions into our own beings. This we have referred to as the *Law of Assimilation*.

Now, *influence*: Our study of great men's works, or our contact with individuals, have the effect of changing our lives. David and Jonathan had a great influence on each other. How about

the influence of Christ? If the influence of good people is great, and yet they are only a very small part virtuous in comparison with Christ, what would be the influence of Christ on those who make Him their companion? Some may say that there is a difference, that there is something tangible in a friend. But we do not love our friend because of a nice face; it is because of his virtues. So it is with Christ. It is His life and influence that does the work of transforming. It is by the begetting of the Spirit of God that the Christian is in receipt of a power that the world cannot know or comprehend.

There are certain laws governing the Christian. "Except a man be born from above." We must receive a power from above before we can be transformed. There are laws governing the material world, organic and inorganic. A mineral is inorganic and must remain so, for it cannot by any power from within itself cross into even the lowest form of life. Plants are also governed by laws of growth, which are peculiar to themselves. While the mineral cannot reach up into the organic, we find that a plant can reach down its roots into the mineral and by absorbing it, transforms it to part of itself. The mineral has been "born from above" and entered the Kingdom just above it. No law governing the human can make the human spiritual by effort or power from within itself, but God can take hold of us if we yield ourselves to Him, and so we can be transformed into His image. The power is the power of life and we derive that life from the Word of God, for the Word of God is living, and we have been begotten of the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever, and by imbibing that Word we are transformed. If we study His Word and character and take His Word into our hearts, we receive a power that changes us from glory to glory.

A full appreciation of our fellowship with Him must bring with it much that is bitter to human experience. It will call for self-denial, the mortification of our members which are upon the earth, the reckoning of self to be dead indeed unto sin. But it is all part of the obligation we have taken upon ourselves, even as the bitter herbs were part of the feast.

* * *

The sweetest perfume that the home circle ever knows arises from deeds of loving service which its members do for each other. The sweetest perfumes of our homes do not arise from elegant furniture, soft carpets, elegant pictures, or luxurious viands. Many a home, having all these, is pervaded by an atmosphere as tasteless and odourless as bouquets of waxen flowers.

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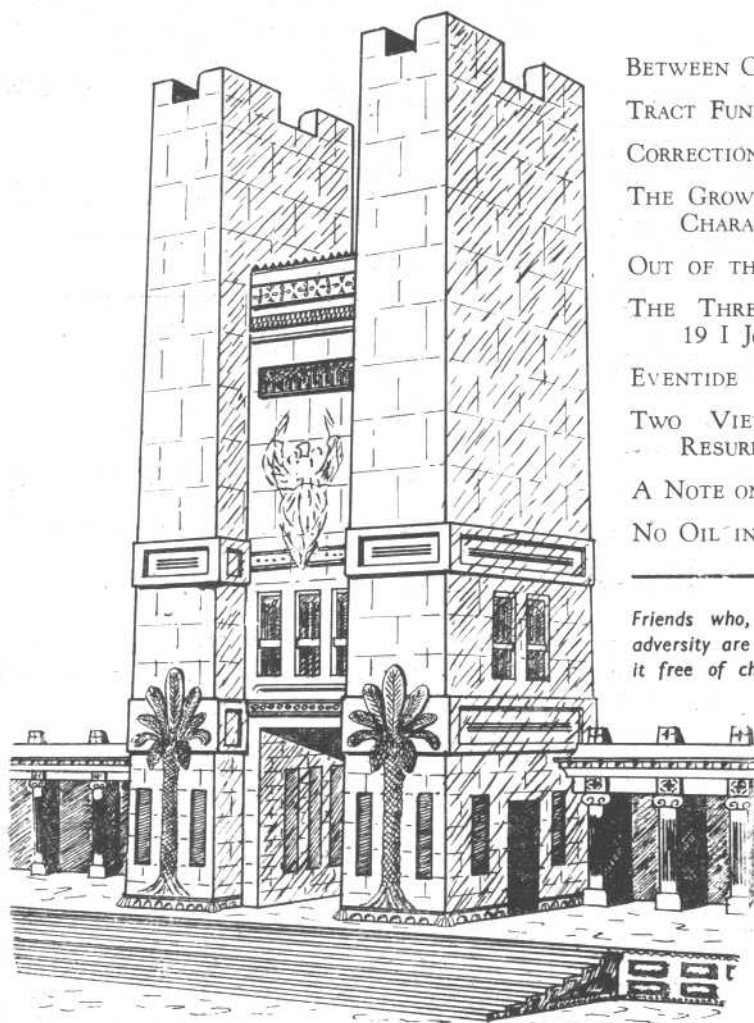
Vol. 29, No. 3

MARCH, 1952

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| BETWEEN OURSELVES | 34 |
| TRACT FUND REPORT | 34 |
| CORRECTION WITH JUDGMENT | 35 |
| THE GROWTH OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER | 37 |
| OUT OF THE STOREHOUSE | 40 |
| THE THREE EPISTLES OF JOHN: 19 I John 4. 4-6 | 42 |
| EVENTIDE | 44 |
| TWO VIEWS OF THE RESURRECTION | 45 |
| A NOTE ON JOHN 20.21 | 46 |
| NO OIL IN THEIR LAMPS | 47 |

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And the King of glory shall come in.

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BETWEEN OURSELVES

We still have a goodly number of the special issue "God's Fulfilling Purpose" available for free distribution to all who can make good use of them, and will be pleased to forward quantities to any who will make the request. This is a useful pamphlet to pass to newly interested people and to those who are perplexed at the apparent inactivity of God in face of the world's distress; it takes the reader right through the working of God from the beginning, tracing, as one has said, "the stately steppings of our God through time." If you can make use of same, do not hesitate: ask now.

* * *

Brethren who are able to send in items of Scriptural interest suitable for our "Out of the Storehouse" feature are warmly invited to do so. This feature has appeared for several months now and our readers have been able to see the type of item that is useful; one of the ways in which even the humblest "member" of the "body" can help fellow-members is by looking out for such little items of interest to a wider circle. Original writing is preferred; if anything is copied word-for-word from any existing publication or book, please state the name of such publication and author's name when sending. In general the results of personal study of the Scripture are likely to be most interesting to our brethren.

The friends at Yeovil announce an Easter local Convention, Saturday, April 12th to Monday, April 14th, at the Masonic Hall, Hendford, Yeovil. It is thought that brethren in the West and South-West will be glad of this opportunity for coming together. Details from Bro. W. F. Fox, 34, St. Michael's Road, Yeovil, Somerset.

* * *

The work of the Benevolent Committee is already well known to most of our readers. Oftentimes it has proved a timely means of aid to those in need, and those entrusted with its administration value very highly their privilege of service. Gifts and recommendations of cases of known need should all be sent to Br. E. Allbon, 20 Sunnymede Drive, Ilford, Essex.

* * *

The monthly united meeting at Caxton Hall will be held this month on Saturday, 15th March, at 6.30 p.m., and the speakers will be Bros. G. A. Ford and S. H. French.

Gone From Us

Bro. T. WHEEN (Sheffield).

Bro. H. OLDROYD (Leeds).

—*—

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

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|---------------------------|-------|-------------|----------|----------|--|-------------|----------|----------|----|
| Brought forward from 1950 | | 10 | 15 | 8 | Printing, etc., for tracts and pamphlets | 135 | 6 | 11 | |
| Donations, 1951 | | 139 | 4 | 5 | Postage, stationery and miscellaneous..... | 11 | 5 | 6 | |
| | | | | | Balance in hand | 3 | 7 | 8 | |
| | | <u>£150</u> | <u>0</u> | <u>1</u> | | <u>£150</u> | <u>0</u> | <u>1</u> | |

Literature Distributed 1951

| | |
|--|---------------|
| Tracts (chiefly "Millennial Message")..... | 27,454 |
| 12 and 16 p.p. booklets | 4,870 |
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| | <u>34,954</u> |

There is in the Bible no promise of grace in advance of the need. God does not say he will put strength into our arm for the battle while we are in quiet peace and the battle is yet far off. When the conflict is at hand the strength will be given.

* * *

The Golden Thread of love is never broken by use; the more we use it the stronger it becomes.

CORRECTION WITH JUDGMENT

*A word of
doctrinal exhortation*

"O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing."
—(Jer. 10. 23-24).

Wonderful words, to come from the lips of a man who lived six centuries before the Lord Jesus Christ came to open the "new and living way." We tend sometimes to regard the whole thought of men in Old Testament times as hopelessly enmeshed in the mechanical framework of the Mosaic Law. "All that the Lord hath spoken will we do, and be obedient" the people had cried exultingly when Moses gave them the Divine Covenant, and although none of them ever succeeded in fully meeting the requirements of that covenant by works, very few of them ever realised why. They thought they could do it; the Ten Commandments must have seemed a very simple set of regulations by which to govern their lives; it must have come as a shock to many of them to find that, after all, they had not gained the everlasting life of the promise. The rich young ruler who came to Jesus was one such. "All these things have I kept from my youth up; what lack I yet?" There must have been a constant voicing of that question all the way from Moses to John the Baptist. Not many discovered the reason why. Jeremiah was one of the few who did. The way of man is not in himself. He has not the power rightly to direct his steps. So Jeremiah prayed to God that because of man's inability, God would not be harsh with man. Send correction, yes, by all means, for man sorely needs correction. Jeremiah knew that. But let it be with discretion, with judgment; not with severity or harshness, or man would speedily be reduced to nothing. And Jeremiah knew that God did not desire that. He knew that God had made man for a purpose and he prayed that the purpose might be achieved.

Man needs a shepherd, here and now in this life. We get so accustomed to thinking of the future Day of Judgment, the Millennial Age, when God will set Himself to teach all men, living and dead alike, the principles of His laws, that we do perhaps forget the fact that to-day also is a time of man's experience. True, the coming Age is set aside for man's instruction in the effects of righteousness under a righteous government, but the present has been set aside just as certainly for man's instruction in the results of evil when

sin is permitted to flourish unchecked. It is in this time of man's liberty to sin that Divine shepherd-care is needed. We do not well to think of the Father-Creator as bringing the earth to Edenic perfection and then washing His hands of the human race completely at the very time they need Him most. He has permitted man to go his own way and has allowed men to ignore the fact of His existence; nevertheless He has always held the controls in His own strong hands and intervened whenever it has been necessary to save men from themselves. The Flood was a supreme example; other lesser examples are known to us from the sacred records and there must be many more unwritten and unknown except to those directly affected. Even although Satan has arrogated to himself the title of "god of this world", he has not been allowed to have everything his own way. The same Power that brought into being all the mighty works of creation and evolved life on this planet in all its myriad forms has never ceased to watch over the interests of the helpless creature, man, who has it not in him to direct his own steps.

As natural men and women, even when born into one of the so-called enlightened and civilised nations, we know very little of our surroundings, of our past, of our future. Confined as we are to this one little planet, we know next to nothing of the remainder of creation. Until three hundred years ago even the whole of this earth had not been explored by man. Only in the last few generations have the jungles of Africa, the deserts of Australia, and the wastes of Antarctica given up their last secrets. We still look at our nearest neighbour in space, the planet Mars, and wonder whether or not life exists on its surface. Our astronomers feel fairly certain that there are mosses and trees, but that is as far as they are prepared to go. Our geologists look back over the vast space of time—calculated at three thousand millions of years—which separates us from the coming into being of this earth, and can tell us absolutely nothing of what went on during over two-thirds of that period. Definite knowledge covers only the veriest fraction of that enormous time-span; we are so recently arrived on this our home. If the period that has elapsed since God said "Let there be light" is likened to the length of one week, then the animal creation has been on earth for about twelve hours and man only three

seconds! The last three seconds at the end of a week! That is man's experience of his earthly home. He has hardly had time to learn much about it. If man then is so recent a creation of God, we would hardly expect God to get impatient yet. Long though the dark reign of sin and death appears to us, to God it has lasted only three seconds out of his creative week. Jeremiah's confidence was surely rightly placed when he besought God to administer his correction, not with anger, but with judgment; not to destroy, but to save.

That is the principle behind the Divine scheme of redemption. It is not for nothing that we have dismissed the Hell-torment Deity of the Dark Ages as a figment of ecclesiastical imagination. It is not for nothing that we insist on the Scriptural truth that not until a man has had every possible opportunity to learn of God and accept the ways of God under the most favourable conditions, and in full knowledge and recognition of all that is involved does deliberately reject God, can he eternally lost. Some there are who slightly speak of such a conviction as the "gospel of the second chance". They speak truly; it is the gospel of One Who spake the Parable of the Prodigal Son, and the prodigal son most assuredly did have a second chance. When Jesus told Peter to forgive his erring but repentant brother seventy-seven times we can hardly believe that He would refuse any man one more chance to make amends, if hope there be that this time the man would see the light. It is strange that the adherents of the "no probation after death" belief—and they number the majority of orthodox Christians—have never put to themselves the question of God's response to one who has passed through the gates of death and then, standing before the Throne, at last sees the light and repents. Would the Most High condemn such an one out of hand because it took the supreme experience of death and resurrection to effect the conversion? It is because our God knows that the way of man is not in himself; that it is not in man unaided to direct his steps, that He waits and watches in full confidence that, for the vast majority of men at any rate, the lesson will one day be learned and His ultimate purpose achieved.

So the Divine Plan is not one of harsh anger, of a jealous, wrathful God bent on displaying His omnipotence by the ruthless slaughter of those who are slow to understand and do His will, or rash enough and short-sighted enough and ignorant enough to set themselves against Him. But neither is the Divine attitude towards men and God's treatment of men correctly described by the common phrase "justice tempered with mercy".

Divine justice is not modified or qualified in any way. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" There can be no qualification of that which is right. The weakness of man calls for strength, and strength will be given. The ignorance of man calls for knowledge, and knowledge will be imparted. The sin of man calls for retribution, and retribution will be inflicted. But all these things come for the furtherance of the Divine ideal in man and not for his destruction. That is why Jeremiah prayed for the correction which he knew had to come but prayed that it might be in judgment and not in anger.

To-day we know that his prayer is being fulfilled. Peter at Jerusalem and Paul at Athens ushered in the new order of things in which God both commands all men everywhere to repent and invites those who will, to give themselves in sincere consecration of heart and life to be dead with Christ. For these two thousand years of this Gospel Age that latter work has predominated and the Church of Christ has been gathered out of the nations "a people for God's name". The other work has not been neglected. The Gospel of the Kingdom has been preached in all the world and in conformity with the injunction first voiced on Mars Hill there are many who have repented and experienced justification by faith in Jesus Christ without necessarily going on to consecration of life and entrance into the High Calling. The Lord knows what use He can make of such when the Millennial Age opens and God's final time of "correction with judgment" runs its course in the presence of all mankind.

The "Shekinah glory", that God-given supernatural light which dwelt in the Most Holy of the Tabernacle in the wilderness, was a source of confidence and life to all Israel. It held no terrors, but only joy and peace, for the High Priest when he entered with the offering that spelt Israel's deliverance from condemnation for another year. It was a pillar of fire by night to lead them in their desert wanderings and it went before the host to guide them safely into their Promised Land. But it was also a flaming fire to defend them from their enemies and it was a blazing radiance that swept out from the Tabernacle to execute the Divine decree when some of Israel had sinned. So it is with Divine judgment. It is remedial and educative to the one who is capable of reformation, leading such an one back into full reconciliation with God; it is consuming, and a destroyer, to the one who is determined to resist every inducement and every persuasion put forth for his reclamation. The Lord is a Shepherd to all who can be persuaded to accept willingly and sincerely of the green pastures and

still waters of His providing; it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God when there is nothing in the heart but black sin to confront His white-hot purity. It is and must always be true that the incorrigible sinner will be consumed by the Divine wrath when all possibility of con-

version has gone. There is a profound and fundamental truth, descriptive of the Divine dealings both with those who attain everlasting life and those who shall not see life, in Jeremiah's heartfelt entreaty: "*correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing.*"

The Growth of Christian Character

SAGE COUNSEL FROM THE PAST

There is a philosophy in the growth and development of Christian character, just as truly as in the growth and development of vegetation; and the more thoroughly we acquaint ourselves with the natural processes and conditions of development and growth in either case, the better we shall understand how to cultivate and to secure the desirable end—maturity and luxuriant fruitfulness. The farmer who puts into practice only what he has learned by accident, in a haphazard way, and who is goaded to effort only by sheer necessity, must not expect the fruitful fields, the abundant harvests and the well-earned approbation of the enterprising, thrifty farmer who has made a study of the business and has brought knowledge, carefully gleaned, together with enterprise and energy, to his assistance in the work.

Take, for example, a fruit tree. If one, knowing nothing about the necessity for cultivation, simply plants the tree and lets it alone, its strength, instead of producing fruit, will generally go toward making wood and leaves; worms and decay may attack its roots, insects may sting and blight its scanty fruitage; and if it continues to stand, it will be only a useless, fruitless lumberer of the ground, an advertisement of the farmer's negligence and worthy only of having the axe laid to its root. Had it been pruned and trimmed and kept free from insects, under the blessing of God's air and rain and sunshine, it would have been a fruitful, creditable tree; for the laws of nature are true and faithful in all their operations.

None the less rigid are the operations of moral law in the growth and development of moral character. Under proper conditions and with proper, diligent cultivation, the character will grow and develop according to fixed laws, and will become beautiful and fruitful in blessings to self and others; or, lacking the necessary cultivation, even under favourable natural conditions, it will be deformed, worthless and fruitless.

When we presented our bodies as living sacri-

fices to God, holy and acceptable through the merit of our Redeemer, we there received the spirit of adoption as spiritual sons of God; and from that time the faculties and dispositions of our mortal bodies were reckoned as our new being, now under the direction and control of the Spirit of God. The faithfulness with which we cultivate this reckoned new nature, by persistently weeding out old habits of thoughts and action, supplanting them with new virtues, and training them to activity in the Divine service, is to prove our worthiness or unworthiness of the actual new nature to be received at the resurrection, to which perfect spirit condition our present reckoned condition stands related as embryotic; for the character and disposition of the embryo New Creature will be the disposition of the perfected New Creature, when born in the resurrection.

The Apostle affirms (Rom. 8.11) that if we really have the Spirit of God in us—unless we quench it or put it away from us—it will quicken our mortal bodies, make them alive toward God, active in growing into his likeness and fruitful in Christian graces and activities. Again he adds, "*If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his,*" and "*As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*"—Rom. 8. 9, 14.

It is our business, therefore, to grow; to cultivate in ourselves those dispositions which are worthy of us as spiritual sons of God, called to be "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ".

The Apostle Peter tells us how to proceed in the matter of cultivating Christian character, intimating that we cannot do it all in a day, nor in a few days, but that it must be a gradual, daily life-work, a process of addition—adding virtue to virtue and grace to grace, day by day and hour by hour. He says, "*Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue [fortitude]; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance [self-control]; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly*

kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity [love]." Then he adds, "If ye do these things ye shall never fall."—2 Pet. 1. 5-7, 10.

This is a very strong assurance—that if we do these things we are sure to stand approved of God. We do well, therefore, to consider them with special care. Here are eight elements which must go toward making up the Christian character. Look at them again. They are:

1. Faith.
2. Virtue [fortitude].
3. Knowledge.
4. Temperance [self-control].
5. Patience.
6. Godliness.
7. Brotherly kindness.
8. Charity [love].

Now for a little self-examination. Let each ask himself: (1) Have I the faith to which the Apostle here refers; not faith in everything or every person, but faith in God—in his Plan of redemption through the sacrifice of Christ, and in all his rich promises built upon that sure foundation? Do I trust him implicitly? Is a "Thus saith the Lord" the end of all controversy, the solution of all doubts and the restful assurance in every perplexity?

(2) Am I endeavouring to lead a virtuous life? This, to the child of God, consecrated to be a living sacrifice, implies much more than merely abstaining from evil. It implies living truthfully, that is, true to his covenant, which to wilfully violate would be equivalent to swearing falsely. It is fortitude, strength of character in righteousness. It implies the cultivation of the strictest integrity in our dealings, both with God and with our fellowmen, scrupulous honesty, justice and truth being the only standards.

The Psalmist clearly defines it thus, saying, "He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour; in whose eyes a vile person is condemned; but he honoureth them that fear the Lord. He that sweareth to his own hurt and changeth not [who will not violate a contract found to be unfavourable to himself]. He that putteth not out his money to usury [taking unjust advantage of the necessities of others], nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved." (Psa. 15. 2-5.) Such a one is a virtuous man, a man of fortified or strong character. How we need to invoke Divine assistance here! and how critically to judge ourselves!

(3) Am I endeavouring day by day to gain a more thorough and complete knowledge of God,

of the Plan revealed in his Word, and of the special features now in operation, that I may co-operate with Him in its execution; and of His Will concerning me in the particular relationships and conditions in which I now stand—irrespective of my own will and disposition in any matter? Am I striving to gain this knowledge of God and of His righteous will concerning us, as revealed through His Word, by the Holy Spirit? Neglect of this Divinely appointed means of knowledge is equivalent to setting up our own imperfect standard of righteousness and ignoring the Divine standard. It is, therefore, important that we give all diligence to the study of the Divine Oracle, that we may be fortified in faith and works accordingly.

(4) Am I temperate, moderate, exercising self-control in all things—in eating, in drinking, in home arrangements, in conduct, in thoughts, in words, in deeds? Do I realise that self-control is one of the most important elements of good character? "He that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city," is the counsel of the Wise Man; and many a victorious general has yet to learn to conquer and control himself. Self-control has to do with all our sentiments, thoughts, tastes, appetites, labours, pleasures, sorrows and hopes. Its cultivation, therefore, means a high order of character-development. Self-control, accompanied by faith, fortitude, knowledge from on high, implies increased zeal and activity in Divine things, and increased moderation in earthly things. In judgment, in conduct, in the regulation of temporal affairs, etc., "Let your moderation [temperance, self-control] be known unto all men." (Phil. 4. 5.) Let them see by our thoughtful (not rash and hasty), careful and considerate demeanour, in every affair of life, that we honour our profession.

(5) Am I patient under trial and discipline, keeping my feelings always under the control of enlightened reason, letting patience have its perfect work in cultivating the character, however severely the plow and the harrow may break up the sub-soil of the heart, meekly submitting to the discipline in every case? and am I submitting cheerfully under the mighty hand of God, in His work of preparing me for a place in His Kingdom soon to be established? The Greek word from which patience is here translated means cheerful endurance.

(6) Am I carefully observing and endeavouring to pattern my character and course of action after the Divine model? If a parent, or in any position of authority, am I using that authority as God uses His—not for selfish purposes, to make a boast of it, or in any way to oppress or trample upon the God-given individual rights of those under such

authority, but for the blessing and advantage of those under it, even to the extent of self-denial, with patience, dignity and grace, and not with boastful imperiousness, which is the attitude of tyrants?

If a son, or one under authority to any extent, do I consider the example of loving obedience furnished us in the example of our dear Lord? His delight was to do the Father's will at any cost to himself. As a man, under the kingdoms, authorities, of this world, and as a youth, under the authority of earthly parents, he was loyal and faithful (Matt. 22. 21; Luke 2. 51); yet all of this earthly authority was exercised by his personal inferiors, even though they were his legal superiors. How beautifully we shall be able to grace and fill whatever station we occupy in life, if we carefully study and copy *godliness* (God-likeness), whether we be princes or peasants, masters or servants!

(7) Does *brotherly-kindness* characterise all my actions? Does it cause me to make due allowance for the inherited weaknesses and circumstantial misfortunes of others? Does *brotherly-kindness* deal patiently and helpfully so far as wisdom, with a view to the correction of those faults, may dictate; and even at the expense of self-interest, if necessary and prudent?

If, as I look myself squarely in the face, I recognise *deformity of character*, do I *thankfully accept* a brother's proffered aid and meekly bear reproof, determining that by the grace of God I will overcome such dispositions, and prove myself a help rather than a hindrance to others, if it should even cost my life to do it; and that I will no longer foster my old dispositions, but will plunge into activity in the service of God with those who should have my co-operation in service, instead of being a burden to them?

(8) Have I *charity* (love unfeigned) for the unrighteous and unlovely, as well as for the good and beautiful—a love which is ever ready to manifest itself in wise and helpful activity for saint and sinner; a love which pities, helps, comforts, cheers and blesses all within its reach; which longs for the grand opportunities and power and glory of the incoming Age, chiefly for its privileges of scattering universal blessing; and which, in harmony with that sentiment, utilises every present opportunity wisely and in harmony with the Divine Plan for the accomplishment of the same end—thus manifesting and cultivating the disposition which must be found in every member of that glorious company which will constitute the King's Cabinet in the incoming Age? If this disposition is not begun, cultivated and developed *here*, we shall not be considered worthy of that office *there*.

Just as in a well-kept orchard pruning, trimming and cultivation are necessary to accomplish the desired end of fruitfulness, so must we be watchful and take necessary precautions to prevent blight and decay of character, and to guard against the intrusion of evil powers and influences calculated to sap the life of the New Creature. By resisting the Devil he will flee from us; and by patient continuance in well-doing an increasing measure of development will result. "If these things be in you and abound," says the Apostle Peter (that is, if you have them in some measure and keep on cultivating them, so that they abound more and more and rule in you), "they make you that ye shall be neither barren [idle] nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." The Truth is for such: "Light is sown for the righteous," and they are sure to get it. They shall not walk in darkness. If any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine (John 7. 17.) "But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins."

"Wherefore, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things [if you diligently cultivate this disposition] ye shall never fall." Being justified fully, by faith in the sacrifice of Christ for your redemption and sanctification (setting apart from the world and devotion to the service of God) by the Truth, your final selection to that position of glory, honour and immortality, to which you are called, shall be sure. For "so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

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.

* * *

The Christian life is a life of self-sacrifice, of self-immolation, of self-consumption, if it is to be pleasing to God. This is what we have covenanted to do—this is our compact with God. The lure of the easy chair, of sloth and lethargy is fatal to the spirit of sacrifice. It requires a white-hot glow in the heart to keep the sacrifice steadily consuming from day to day.

OUT OF THE STOREHOUSE

A collection of interesting items

Earthen vessels

"We have this treasure in earthen vessels" (2 Cor. 4. 7). It was a common practice in ancient times to hide valuable possessions, money, jewellery, etc., in earthenware jars buried in the earth. These jars are constantly being discovered by excavators or when the ground is disturbed for the erection of buildings. Jeremiah, buying a piece of land in token of his faith that houses and lands would again be possessed in safety in Israel, placed the "deeds" in an earthen vessel, "that they may continue many days". The priceless documents recently discovered in a cave on the shores of the Dead Sea were in such vessels. So Paul declares of the ministry we have had committed to us; it is in "earthen vessels," our own frail imperfect human natures. From a different point of view the unfaithful servant in the Parable of the Talents went and "digged in the ground, and hid his lord's money". (Matt. 30. 18.)

* * *

The Living Word

The sale of Bibles and Testaments in Hungary has increased steadily from 5,000 in 1945 to 54,000 in 1949—a ten-fold increase in four years, having now attained the rate at which Bibles were sold before the war. The Word of God is still the world's best seller, despite the challenge of modern materialism. And one day it will come fully into its own and be the instruction book of every man—when God arises to speak peace to the nations, "in that day".

* * *

Martin Luther on righteousness

"Why then do we nothing? Do we work nothing for the obtaining of this righteousness? I answer, nothing at all. For this is perfect righteousness, to do nothing, to hear nothing, to know nothing of the Law, or of books, but to know and believe this only, that Christ is gone to the Father, not as a Judge, but made unto us of God, wisdom, righteousness, holiness and redemption." Briefly, that He is our High Priest entreating for us, and reigning over us and in us, by grace. In this heavenly righteousness sin can have no place, for there is no law, and where no law is, there can be no transgression. (Rom. 4. 15.) Seeing then that sin hath here no place, there can be no anguish of conscience, no fear, no heaviness. Therefore John saith: He that is born of God cannot sin. I am indeed a sinner as touching the present life

and the righteousness thereof; as the child of Adam where the law accuseth me, death reigneth over me. But I have another righteousness and life which is Christ the Son of God, Who knoweth no sin nor death."

* * *

To know Good and Evil (Gen. 3. 24)

An interesting line of thought is afforded by the assertion of scholars that the expression "is become" (*hayah*) in Gen. 3. 24 is in the preterite or "past" tense and is more correctly rendered "the man who was like us as to his knowledge of good and evil. . . ." The importance of this lies in the fact that it was not the declension of humanity into sin that made him "become like one of Us"; on the contrary, it took him farther away from God. Rotherham remarks that "man" in this verse is intended to refer to the species and not to an individual (Adam) and viewed in this light the indication would be that man in his primitive state, before the Fall, was made like the "elohim"—the angels, in so far as his (progressive) knowledge of evil was concerned. The angels gained their knowledge of the distinction between good and evil by logical reasoning on the basis of the laws of God. Had man continued in harmony with his Creator he would have done the same, but he chose another way instead, and in consequence is now reaping the fruits of that way—the way of bitter experience. Therefore is man barred from the Tree of Life—the powers of ever-continuing earthly life—until he has been reclaimed from the power of sin, brought into harmony with God, and regained the standing he lost in that early Paradise.

* * *

The Flood

An interesting evidence of the widespread nature of the Deluge is afforded by the fact that the whole of London and the South of England has a stratum of alluvial mud ranging from five to thirty feet thick, shown to have been laid down under sustained flood conditions in very slow moving waters. This stratum contains man-made implements and the bones of animals such as the mammoth, hippopotamus, lion, etc. There are indications that it was laid down at a time when England enjoyed a sub-tropical climate. At Stoke Newington, London, there is an area on this stratum which was evidently devoted to the manufacture of flint implements, and there is evidence to show that the workers abandoned this area in great haste, leaving great quantities of finished tools behind. The whole of these

indications point to the same catastrophe which laid the deep bed of clay over Southern Mesopotamia, pronounced by Sir Leonard Woolley some years ago to be concrete proof of the reality of the Flood story in Genesis.

The Soul

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." The Hebrew *nephesh* has the primary significance of "breath" and points back to the account of man's first appearance on earth as a creature dependent on breathing in order to continue life. The use of *nephesh*, translated "soul", as a word descriptive of a living creature, is constant throughout the Old Testament. Animals are described as souls in Num. 31. 28. Souls are said to eat (Lev. 17. 18) to eat blood (Lev. 17. 12) to eat dead bodies (Lev. 17. 15) and to have a longing to eat flesh (Deut. 12. 20). They can be thirsty (Prov. 25. 25) and have a longing for strong drink (Deut. 26. 16). They may on the other hand have an abhorrence for meat (Job. 33. 10). It is conceivable for souls to swear or to touch unclean things (Lev. 5. 2 and 4) and although all these operations denote life and that the soul is a living entity, it is also possible for the soul to be smitten by enemies (Josh. 11. 11) and to die (Ezek. 18. 4 and 20). References such as these can be found scattered all through the Old Testament and help to refute the old familiar lie "Thou shalt not surely die" in its guise of the alleged immortality of the soul. The word occurs seven hundred times in the Old Testament and is translated "soul" 471 times, "life" or "living" 150 times, and also by such words as man, person, self, they, me, him, any one, breath, heart, mind, appetite, this body, lust, creature, and beast. Twenty-eight times is the word applied to the lower animals. The New Testament word corresponding to the Hebrew *nephesh* is *psuche* and this is translated "soul" 59 times, "life" 40 times, as well as mind, us, you, heart, and heartily; occurring one hundred and fifty times altogether of which two references are to the lower animals.

"A fire of coals" (John 18. 18)

The "coal" of scripture is charcoal, made chiefly from the root and trunk of a tree found in the desert. Amongst the well-to-do a brazier of copper about two feet high, bearing a chafing dish for the glowing mass, was usual. The charcoal was lighted outside the house in the chafing dish and burnt to a white heat until the worst of its fumes were given off, and was then brought indoors and used both for cooking and heating purposes. It was such a fire that the servants had lighted in the court of the

High Priest's house and where Peter stood and warmed himself on that memorable night when the Lord was betrayed.

A note on Luke 15. 16

The "husks" which the swine did eat, and with which the prodigal son would fain have eaten also in his extremity, were large, fleshy pods about ten inches long and one inch across, the fruit of the "kharub," a small bushy tree, which grows in profusion in Syria. The swine eat this fruit with relish, and the natives in the East used to grind up the pods and make a species of sweetmeat from the thick, sticky juice which was thus obtained. Thus to partake of the food which was gathered for the swine was degradation indeed to any honest hearted child of Israel, and so it was that when he found himself reduced to this state, the prodigal "came to himself" and realised at last how far he had fallen from his former estate.

Thank God, and take courage (Acts 28. 15).

Let us have a positive and confident faith in our privilege of calling upon the Lord for "grace to help in every time of need." Desiderius Erasmus, when confronted by Luther with the scornful assertion that "You desire to tread upon eggs without crushing them, and among glasses without breaking them," replied cautiously, "I will not be unfaithful to the cause of Christ, at least so far as the age will permit me." Where then was the faith which enabled Paul, in braving the terrors of stormy seas and unknown lands, the bitter opposition of Jews and the relentless intolerance of false brethren, to exclaim triumphantly "I can do all things through Christ Who strengtheneth me." Says one, "I will not be unfaithful," but in supreme confidence the other declares, "I know Him whom I have believed . . . I am ready to be offered." If we look down into the stormy waters upon which we are treading we can do naught else but sink, but if with quiet courage we look up to the stars and remember that away in the heavens are the things which endure, we shall forget the threatening gulf below us, and the great waters which mount up to the heavens will serve but to bring us nearer to God, for we shall be riding always upon the crest of the wave.

Chapter and Verse

The Old Testament was first divided into chapters during the 13th century by Cardinal Hugo, and then into verses by Rabbi Nathan, and first incorporated into the printed Bible by Robert Stephens in his edition of the Vulgate, published in 1555.

The Three Epistles of John

Comments on the writings
of the "Beloved Apostle"

Part XIX. I John 4. 4-6

"Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." (vs. 4.)

There is a tone of quiet confidence in this verse that strikes a note of triumph. We have overcome them! Even although our earthly pilgrimage is by no means ended, and we still have trials and tribulation, struggles and conflict, to endure and survive, we have overcome "them". Who or what is indicated by the word? Surely the antichrists of which John has just been speaking. Because we are of God, and God is in us, we have already overcome all antichrists. John is not speaking here of believers whose conflicts with the world, the flesh and the devil are now all over and who therefore have entered into the final "rest" beyond the veil. He is talking to pilgrim Christians, struggling Christians, suffering Christians, Christians who still experience only too vividly and painfully the weaknesses and stumblings of their fallen human nature, and who oft-times are tempted to wonder if after all they are going to make their calling and election sure. It seems so evident that we in the flesh have by no means yet overcome all the enemies of the spirit; we wonder if John really had us in mind when he penned these words. Or is it that those early Christians of the First Century were already in spiritual stature far above what we can ever hope to be in the flesh? Did they overcome more completely and positively than do we in this Twentieth Century? Are these words of commendation applicable to them but not applicable to us?

Not so. There is no essential difference between Christians of any one century and any other. All are faced with much the same difficulties and temptations and all react to them in much the same way. Human nature does not change much through the ages, whether the individuals concerned be children of God or children of the Devil. We may be tolerably certain that John's commendation of his own brethren in his own day is more or less equally applicable to his brethren of this our day. We, like them, have overcome the antichrist simply and solely because God is in us and abides in us and dwells in us, and whilst that remains true there can be no other outcome. The issue is already decided. Of course if the time should come when it is no longer true that God dwells in us, if we have banished His gracious presence from our hearts, then it is no longer true

that we have overcome. It is not of our own unaided strength that we have overcome; it is because of His indwelling Spirit. We supply the sincerity, the desire; He supplies the strength. We need both to make the overcoming a certainty. If we on our part withdraw our sincerity, our desire to be overcomers, then His strength of itself will no longer effect the victory. We can only be overcomers by means of His strength; we can only be overcomers by means of our own sincerity. We need both.

So it is that because "greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world", because God is greater than the Devil, we can be sure of our overcoming. God is visiting the nations to take out of them a people for His Name (Acts 15); he has called those in whom He has found some native leaning towards Him, and where the call has been heeded and answered He has accepted the consecration of such an one, and thenceforward the overcoming of that one is assured, if they continue in faith and hope. It cannot be repeated too often that once our Father has received us into covenant relationship with Himself, sealed us with the Holy Spirit of adoption and given us the honour of being called "sons of God", He will never be the One to let go first. He abideth faithful. But on the other hand we ourselves can let go; and if we of our own volition turn away and walk no more with Him then He has no alternative but to let us go. But John is not now thinking of such possibilities as that. He is writing to men and women who have every intention of living up to their new found faith. He is writing to men and women many of whom were later on to become martyrs for the Cause and the Lord to which and to Whom they had pledged their lives. And he is telling them in advance that the Holy Spirit in them is a power greater by far than anything the antichrists of this world could call to their aid, and because of that fact these simple hearted believers could already be said to have "overcome".

"They are of the world; therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God; he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." (vs. 5-6.)

"They are of the world!" The word used here for "world"—"kosmos"—means and includes everything that has to do with the ordered life of

man on this planet. It covers the political, the ecclesiastical and the social institutions of man and the lands and buildings and temples and everything appertaining thereto. It covers the cities and the factories and the ships and everything that has to do with the life of men. It covers all that men have made and built on the face of the earth and it covers all that they have said and written and painted. It covers their philosophies and their laws and all that is built upon those philosophies and laws. The *kosmos* is the world which men have made, and it is in such a world that we live as aliens—"in the world but not of the world". This is the world to which the antichrists belong, this the world of which and to which they speak, and this the world which gives them ear. It is a world in which God is not honoured and very largely is quite unknown. The Devil is the prince of this world, and Paul gave it its true name when he called it "this present evil world". The *kosmos* is evil, and not until it has been swept away and replaced by a new order of things "wherein dwelleth righteousness" will men escape from the dominion of evil and the influence of antichrist. All this has a terrifying implication to-day. The minds and hearts of men are increasingly turning to that full unity with this present evil *kosmos* that leaves God right out of the picture. There is no room for God in men's ideas to-day. "There is no God" is in all their thoughts—that expression is more true to-day than it was when it was coined by the Psalmist three thousand years ago. And the result is that the world is slipping more and more into the grasp of antichrist. In its most modern form—a form not yet fully revealed—that awful power is described symbolically in Revelation 13, where the whole world saving those who have the Father's name in their foreheads will be branded with the mark of the Antichrist—the Beast. In a day yet to come—it may be very near—we shall realise much more intensely than we do now how true it is that the antichrist is "of" the world, and the world "heareth" it.

There is another side to the question. All are not deceived by antichrist. Some there are, hidden away in this evil *kosmos*, who are prepared to listen to the voice that is raised for God. Says Rotherham in this verse 6 "He that is getting to understand God hearkeneth unto us; whoso is not of God listeneth not unto us". That indicates that in the world, in these dark times, there will be, first, those who are Christ's disciples, well-instructed in the truth and determined to defend it at all costs, and secondly, those who would hearken to the voice of God if it should be sounded. Even in the darkest hour of apostasy and the powers of evil there will be some desiring to know God who will listen if a voice is raised to speak for Him. That fact should

be a powerful incentive to us. Daniel, giving heed to the angelic visitant's message concerning the latter days, heard him say "The people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits. And they that understand among the people shall instruct many; yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, and by captivity, many days." (Chap. 11. 32-34.) That may well refer to a period earlier in the Gospel Age than is our own yet its teaching may be true teaching for the days in which we live. We too may find opportunity come our way to "instruct many" in this dark hour of the world's travail. We too may have to fight all the powers of darkness in order to snatch one brand from the burning. This verse in John's epistle ought at least to remind us that our mission still is to hold aloft the banner of Truth in the sight of all people and exhort them to repentance and acceptance of Jesus Christ. We are teachers of all nations, and the more that we see the darkness settling down over the earth the more we should seek to stab its blackness with our torches. We cannot hope to dispel it utterly—that is reserved for the coming Millennial Day—but we can at least make pin-points of fire in the gloom toward which the seekers can turn and make their way.

"Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error" says John. Surely so! If we are thus able to stand up against the prevailing antichrist worship and denounce it for what it is we have this witness that we have the spirit of truth. No other spirit or power can sustain us at the present time. The spirit of truth, which has already led us into all truth, will now be our strength and inspiring influence. Just as Elijah, in the strength of the heaven-sent food and drink, went forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the Mount of God, so shall we go in the strength of the spirit's witness the full forty years of our testing time, and emerge at the end triumphant, because we have known God. So let us continue, determined to witness faithfully for our Lord and Master, in no manner dismayed by our opponents, knowing that of a surety "greater is he that is for us than all that can be against us".

(To be continued)

To lie down is to be at rest. This is the privilege of all the Lord's true sheep. Outwardly they may be distressed and assailed by the world, the flesh and the Adversary, but as "New Creatures" they may be at rest, because of their nearness to the Lord, the Shepherd, and because of their faith in his over-ruling providence, which is able to make "all things work together for good".

Eventide

"So he bringeth them unto their desired haven"

One of the major victories in the life of faith seems to be achieved when a personal appropriation of the provisions of Divine Grace can be made by each individual, and when he can say "My God and Father is good to all, but He is extremely good to me". It has ever been the bane of controversial theology that the individual was likely to be eclipsed and forgotten in the discussion of what was achieved *en-bloc* by the Redeemer's all-sufficient sacrifice. It was not so with our beloved brother Paul. He could rejoice in the universality of the redemptive work and give God grateful thanks that it was so all-embracing, but some of his choicest and deepest thanks were offered for what it meant to himself in particular.

This fine sense of appreciation in his case was edged and pointed, of course, by the remembrance of what he had been and what he had done ere the Lord laid His arresting hand upon him. It is not an easy thing to say, and to put on permanent record against one's self, that one had been "a blasphemer, and a persecutor and injurious" (I Tim. 1. 13.) and was not "meet to be called an apostle because I persecuted the Church of God" (I Cor. 15. 9.) and that among a whole wide world of sinners "I am chief" (I Tim. 1. 15.).

Paul did not shield himself from censure and reproof and try to pass off the gravity of the indictment by saying that all the "council of the Elders" in Jerusalem persecuted the Church, and that his own share in the regrettable work was to obey the instructions he received. He came out right manfully and said "I did it—I persecuted the Church of God".

With just the same sense of personal experience he could come out on the other side and say "I thank Him that enableth me, Christ Jesus our Lord, for that He counted me faithful, appointing me to His service . . . howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy that in me, as chief, might Jesus Christ show forth all His long-suffering. . . ." (I Tim. 1. 12-16.) To the Galatians he could say the Son of God "loved me and gave Himself for me". (Gal. 2. 20.)

It is this separating of one's self out of the mass (saintly or otherwise) which gives point and power to our own appreciation of the great things that God has done. It is one thing to defend and explain the redemption of all men from sin and death; it is quite another to stand up and say this great work

was done for "me"—as though I or you (individually), was the only person needing it. And yet this attitude of self-confession is the only one to throw the entrance door of our hearts widely open and permit the joy of the Lord to find admittance there. Sentimental and emotional, does one say? It is good that the deeper sentiments should be stirred and the elevating emotions be awakened from time to time! Even the purest of pure reasons can become an ice-box to our deeper nature, if it contains and controls us all the time. Is it not well at times to sing—or say—

"O now I see the crimson wave
The fountain deep and wide;
The blood which Christ so freely gave
Which all our sins will hide.

"The cleansing stream I see, I see!
And now, by faith it cleanseth me
O, praise the Lord it cleanseth me!
It cleanseth me, yes, cleanseth me."

Perhaps our sense of what has been done for us by the Lord may have much to do with our rejoicing—and with our victory day by day! Perhaps our sense of what we have been saved from—and of what we are being saved from every hour of every day—may account for our response to His care. If our sense of help for our daily need has been blurred; if our sense of inward weakness has been largely effaced, and we have become measurably and temporarily unaware of a chill creeping through our hearts then we shall come to think we have not much for which to give God thanks; our prayer and praise could then right easily touch zero-point, and we could freeze to death.

If on the other hand, like Paul, we can see and shudder at the pit whence we have been digged, and then confess and say He loved me and gave Himself for me, the life of faith might then become a white-hot glow, and praise and prayer an inspiration to ourselves, and to all who join with us in devotion's holy hour. The secret of this rejoicing lies in the depth of one's own experience; in claiming for one's self the joys and promises set apart for all.

Surely none who can truly say "He loved me and gave Himself for me" can remain morose and heavy-hearted, let the circumstance be what it may!

Dear faithful old George Matheson, spite of his blindness, and other heartache could say :

" O Love that will not let me go,
I rest my weary soul on Thee,
I give Thee back the life I owe,
That in Thine ocean depth its flow
May richer, fuller, be."

Surely the Psalmist was right in his immortal psalm,
" The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want "

Indeed yes ! It is just that personal appropriation which makes all the difference ; that personal appropriation which adorns itself with words and makes known to others what the Love of God means to our own souls. Paul was not ashamed, or even slow, to say " He loved me and gave Himself for me ". Shall we not say to-night :—

" Christ gave His life for me,
His precious blood He shed,
That I might ransomed be,
And quickened from the dead ;
He gave, He gave His life for me,
How grateful I should be !

" His Father's house of light,
His glory-circled throne,
He left for earthly night,
For wanderings sad and lone ;
He left, He left it all for me,
Have I left all for Thee ?

" He suffered much for me,
More than I now can know,
Of bitterest agony ;
He drained the cup of woe ;
He bore, He bore it all for me,
What have I borne for Thee ?

" He now has brought to me,
Down from His home above,
Salvation full and free,
Pardon and life and love.
He brings, He brings rich gifts to me,
Lord, I give all to Thee."

The crucified self-renouncing life may not then seem too fearful an experience, nor need it rob us of our joy in Christ Jesus our Lord !

" Rejoice, and again I say, rejoice."

TWO VIEWS OF THE RESURRECTION

Julius Cæsar boldly averred, in a speech made in the Roman Senate, that man had nothing to fear, or hope for, after death. Speaking of death he says : " Concerning punishment we are enabled to speak confidently, as to what may pertain to it, that for the grieving, and miserable, death brings a state of absolute repose from all affliction, and not a state of excruciating agony. It sets mortals more absolutely free from every form of evil ; and beyond it there is no place for either trouble or enjoyment."

M. Portius Cato, an illustrious philosopher of the Stoic School, gives these sentiments of Cæsar his unqualified approbation in these words : " Cæsar a very short time ago reasoned in a happy pertinent style, in this particular manner, concerning life and death. In making his estimate of what is commonly narrated about the dwellers in the nether world he says, ' I believe it all false that the wicked make a diverse journey from that made by the good, to hideous, waste, foul, and horrible abodes ' "

In the opinion of those eminent Romans death ended all, and this was the opinion of whole schools of heathen philosophers. With these, misery has its end in the eternal insensibility and unconsciousness of the grave. To what Cæsar and Cato have said we will only add, at this time, the expression of another Roman of distinguished eminence. The Elder Pliny, speaking of the death-state, says : " From the last death-day the same state will be for

all as it was before the first birth-day. Onward from death there will never more be either bodily sensation or mental consciousness any more than there was anterior to our birth." Pliny thus makes our human existence a brief hour of sensation and unconsciousness between two eternal nights. (Plato's philosophy had not yet gained general acceptance amongst Romans). Leaving now the ancients let us see how this latter thought of Pliny was draped in figure by one of our English ancestry. Green, in his history of the English people, informs us that an aged Ealdorman once addressed Eadwine, king of Northumbria, in the following manner : " So seems the life of man, O King, as a sparrow's flight through the hall when a man is sitting at meat in winter-tide with the warm fire lighted on the hearth, but the chill rainstorm without. The sparrow flies in at one door and tarries for a moment in the light and heat of the hearth-fire, and then flying forth from the other vanishes into the wintry darkness from whence it came. So tarries for a moment the life of man in our sight, but what is before it, what after it, we know not."

Then speaking of Christianity, which was then just being introduced into Britain, he says : " If this new teaching tell us aught certainly of these let us follow it." The mysteries of life and death were pathetic themes for the bards. The language of one of these poets of the olden times warns the living in

these words: "Soon will it be, that sickness or swordblade shear thy strength from thee, or the fire ring thee, or the flood overwhelm thee, or the sword grip thee, or arrow hit thee, or age o'ertake thee, and thine eye's brightness sink down into darkness." With them life and death were controlled by "weird" or destiny. "Strong as he might be, man struggled in vain with the doom that encompassed him, that girded his life with a thousand perils and broke it at so short a span." Life had its work of "doomed deeds," closing in the fateful "weirdness" of death and the tomb. It was a "sparrow-flight through the warm light room" from an eternal winter-night out into the self-same eternal winter-night again—into endless darkness and nothingness.

How ardently we should prize the glorious gospel through which "life and immortality are brought to light"! In order to understand this let us read, in contrast to the words above quoted, some few of the triumphant expressions of the Ancient Worthies, who walked in the light of Divine revelation, and spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. Says Job: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself and mine eyes shall behold, and not another: though my reins be consumed within me." David says: "As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness." Speaking of the living God, Isaiah says: "He will swallow up death in victory; and

the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of His people shall be taken away from off all the earth; for the Lord hath spoken it." And again: "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing ye that dwell in dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." We close the contrast with the glowing words of Paul who lived shortly after Cæsar and Cato, and who was contemporary with Pliny. "Behold I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have to put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Jesus Christ is "the resurrection and the life", and He will raise up all His people at the last day. Death, to the believer, is only the briefest suspension of conscious activities, and the grave-sleep a short, deep, undisturbed and unmeasured repose, during which the unmanifested life is hid with Christ in God. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

A NOTE ON JOHN 20. 22-23

"And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit, Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." (John 20. 22-23.)

Were the disciples really given power to remit sins, a power which we normally believe to be the prerogative of God only? An acquaintance with the customs of the times can help us to a better understanding of this incident. It was a characteristic of the people of the East not many generations ago to consider it a great honour should a saintly or "holy" man breathe upon them as he passed. In ceremonial form such a holy man would deliberately perform this act toward one who came before him as a disciple or in some subservient manner. It was evidently a survival from ancient times and almost certainly the same custom existed in the days of Jesus. His breathing on His disciples was an outward sign of the authority and power He

possessed to impart the Holy Spirit to them in due time. The act was evidently connected with the charge concerning the remission of sins that follows in the next verse, and that in turn would seem to point to the commission upon which they were embarking—the preaching of the Gospel. Jesus had just been raised from the dead and the disciples were now to represent Him in the world by the proclamation of His message. The sins of men would be remitted or retained according to their response or lack of response to that preaching. Both Paul and Peter in their early sermons made it plain that acceptance of the Gospel would bring forgiveness of sins. "Repent, and be converted, that your sins might be blotted out" were Peter's words on the Day of Pentecost. Therefore the Lord was identifying the Gospel that was to be preached so closely with those who were to preach it, that instead of saying "the power of the Holy Spirit operating through the Gospel will bring forgiveness

of sins to men " it was as if He had said " the power of the Holy Spirit operating through *you* will bring forgiveness ". The disciples, empowered by the Holy Spirit, by the preaching of the Gospel would bring either forgiveness of sins to men who believed, or leave in their sins those who did not believe.

It is important to note that this " retaining " of sin on the part of the unbelievers is not final. God still has appointed the Millennial judgment day to give full and fair opportunity to all men. But so far as this Gospel Age is concerned and the imme-

diate commission given to the disciples is concerned, the word of these men, and their successors, moved by the Spirit, in preaching the Gospel " in all the world for a witness ", does have the effect of converting some and leading many such to the life of consecration, the High Calling, and leaving others just where they were, " in their sins ". All such latter must eventually, in the Millennial Day, face up to the challenge and accept the message of the Gospel, or reap the inevitable consequence of wilful sin in the final cutting off from life.

NO OIL IN THEIR LAMPS

In these times of the testing of the virgins, of which our Lord spoke in His Parable, it is wise to try to understand more clearly what is meant by the ' oil ' in the lamps.

There are two things which always go together throughout the Bible and they are FAITH and CHARITY, and we must try to remember that one is essential to the other, for without the truths of faith we cannot discern what is God's Will for us, and without the good of love or charity we can certainly not be pleasing to Him. Always therefore must these two go together. The writer recently heard a sermon given by a coloured man—a very fine sermon too—in which He wondered why St. Peter and St. John were so much together. When we realise, however, that St. John was the apostle of LOVE and St. Peter the apostle of FAITH we come to understand why these two apostles were so much together—because the two were not meant to be separated.

We will now show by the Scriptures that this is so.

Ephesians 3. 17 says " That Christ may dwell in your hearts by *faith*; that ye, being *rooted and grounded in love*, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height."

Galatians 5. 6. " For in Jesus Christ, neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but *faith which worketh by love*."

I Thess. 5. 8. " But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of *faith and love*;

I Tim. 1. 14. " And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant in *faith and love which is in Christ Jesus*."

These extracts are sufficient to show that faith or Truths of Faith alone are not sufficient to keep the lamps burning. The oil which is needed to keep them burning brightly is, therefore, Love, without which the truth is hard and unyielding. Those who have not this oil in their vessels are not yet in the

right heart condition inwardly, however much they may seem to be so outwardly. Let us see to it, then, that our lamps are filled with the oil of love—love to God first and—knowing His great love longs for wider empire till the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord—let us always remember that His loving heart yearns to all sinners, and that He came " not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved ".

We would do well to remember that to the Scribe who approved our Lord's words stating the first two great commandments, Jesus said " Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." (*Mark* 12. 34.)

If we, then, realise what great love God had for this sad, sin-sick world, we will recall that we are all sinners, except in so far as we have received His " free gift " of grace, and will also remember that " there is more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over the ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance ". We shall thus know that we have nothing of which to boast, for all is freely given, and that the Lord is able even of stones " to raise up children unto Abraham ".

Let us see to it therefore that our lamps, or vessels, or our Truths are kept bright and burning with the oil of love and that we may be kept from falling by Him who alone is able to keep us in safety, and by whom if we trust implicitly we shall be brought safely through the storms and stresses of the great testing-time which is even now sifting and sorting out the ' fish '.

We do not have to rely on anything we can do, for we know that all our own righteousnesses are as ' filthy rags ' and to place any merit in our own works is to cast aside that glorious Robe of Righteousness—the free gift won for us by our Beloved Saviour. Knowing the weakness and frailty of this human nature let us press onward in ' fear and trembling ', trusting in Him alone who is our Surety, and praying earnestly that He will keep us; and believe in His promise that " whosoever putteth their trust in Him shall never be ashamed ".

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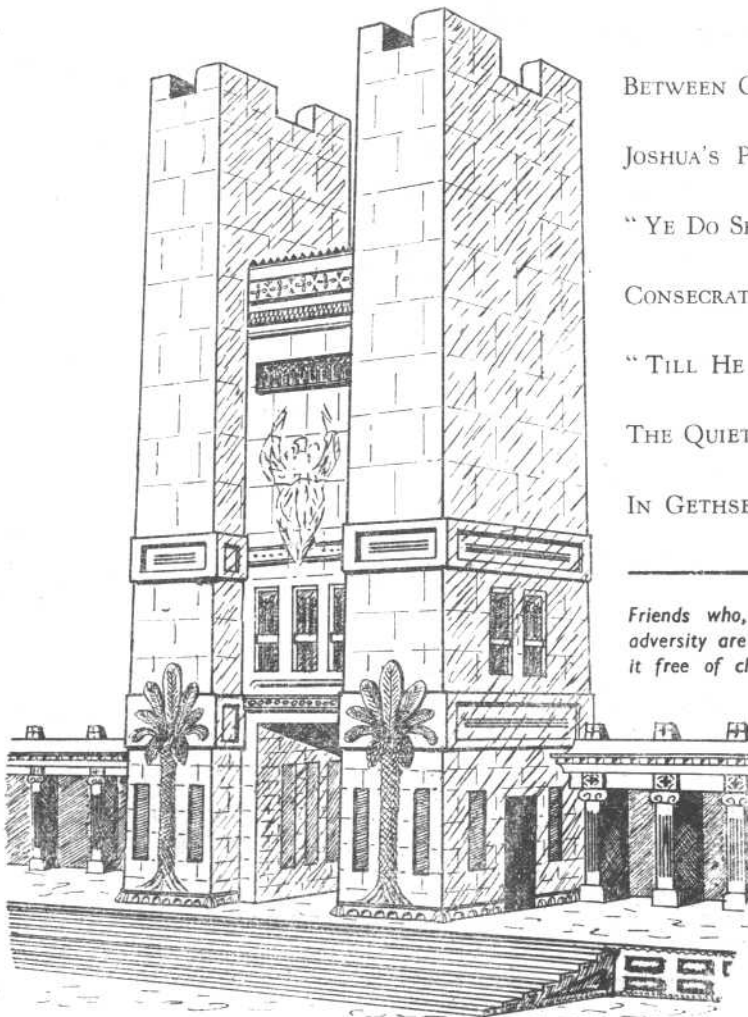
Vol. 29, No. 4

APRIL, 1952

CONTENTS

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----|
| BETWEEN OURSELVES | 50 |
| JOSHUA'S PASSOVER..... | 51 |
| "YE DO SHOW THE LORD'S DEATH" | 53 |
| CONSECRATION | 55 |
| "TILL HE COME" | 56 |
| THE QUIET TIME | 59 |
| IN GETHSEMANE | 60 |

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

London brethren (Central London, Forest Gate, Welling and Windsor classes) are arranging for a Convention this year at Conway Hall, London, W.C., and fuller details will be circulated later. In conjunction with the Convention an Immersion Service will be arranged (D.V.) and all brethren desirous of symbolising their consecration to the Lord by water immersion should forward their names early.

Convention Secretary & Treasurer :

Bro. F. H. GUARD,
74, Princes Avenue,
Woodford Green, Essex.

Accommodation :

All enquiries *re* accommodation should be sent early to :

Bro. H. CHARLTON,
Ryvers Cottage,
Ryvers Farm,
Langley, Bucks.

Hotel accommodation, more satisfactory than previously, has been earmarked and Brother Charlton should be advised of what is required by the middle of June latest.

Gone From Us

Bro. C. E. MARCH (Parkstone).
Bro. H. MORGAN (Pontypool).
Bro. J. H. SPRAY (Nottingham).

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

The Memorial

The Memorial of our Lord's death is celebrated this year on Tuesday, 8th April, after 6.0 p.m.

"This do in remembrance of Me."

The brethren of the Manchester area are planning a number of public meetings during this year, notably at Broadheath, Blackburn (in co-operation with the Bury friends), Bolton, and Sheffield (in co-operation with the Sheffield friends). Some of the titles are "The Divine Purpose", "Will God be Silent for Ever?", "World Peace—How and When?" and "The Purpose of God". The Annual Assembly of Witness is to be held in October at Bolton. Brethren desiring more information about these efforts may obtain same from Bro. F. Musk, 14, South Street, Newchurch, Rossendale, Lancs.

* * *

The April meeting at Caxton Hall will be held on Saturday 19th April, at 3.0 and 6.30 p.m., the speakers being Bros. T. Watson (London), R. J. Philip (Warrington), Geo. Van Halewijn (Holland).

The following intimation has been received from our American brethren. It will be of interest to many in this country.

The Cicero brethren, who comprise the 1952 Bible Students' Unity Convention committee, met January 20th to discuss and draw up a general plan which will serve as the basis for the daily convention programme to be drawn up later. With suggestions from brethren the country over, and also from Canada, and above all—the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the committee has prayerfully arranged the following general plan for the Third Bible Students' Unity Convention, to be held June 29th to July 6th at Hotel Macatawa, near Holland, Michigan.

1. Regular discourses will be scheduled for every convention day. Because of an enlarged programme, there will be fewer discourses than at previous conventions. As usual, the discourses will be uncensored and the topics (except for discourses mentioned further on) will be selected by the speakers themselves.

2. The many requests for more testimony periods will be heeded.

3. Two or three question meetings will be scheduled. The popularity of these periods is attested to by the letters we received concerning them.

4. Planned daily children's classes.

5. Meetings daily for our high school and teenage youth, with interesting speakers, leaders and films.

6. Three open discourse periods. The speakers would be chosen by the friends at the convention, from among friends not scheduled on the programme.

7. The "Quiet Hour" at the close of day for prayer and meditation.

8. Vesper services, which have proven their popularity at previous Unity Conventions.

9. Baptismal service and discourse.

10. Bible Studies (possibly two or more) with study leaders notified in advance on subjects selected by the committee.

11. Two open forum type meetings. Subjects vital to the interests of Bible students and speakers will be selected by the committee. Questions by the audience may be asked after the speakers present their respective views.

12. Impromptu meetings arranged on the spot by the friends will be encouraged and the use of the auditorium granted whenever it is free of scheduled services.

JOSHUA'S PASSOVER

Lessons from
long ago

"And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho."

—(Josh. 5. 10.)

A year to be remembered; the year of entering into the land! Full forty years had they wandered in the waste howling wilderness, scorched by day and frozen by night, afflicted by dangers and perils innumerable, until it must have seemed that God had quite forgotten them. But now it was all over; the trials and tribulations of the day were ended, the river lay behind them, and they were in the Promised Land. Now all was going to be well with them.

Of course it did not turn out to be like that and we who read about these happenings of old know full well that even now, thirty-four centuries later, Israel still "hath not obtained that which he seeketh for". But for the time being we are going to limit our vision to that of Israel at the time of crossing Jordan. We will share with them in that Passover which Joshua commanded them to celebrate directly they set foot on the soil of the Promised Land and we shall seek the spiritual teaching which lies behind the momentous feast which marked the end, as the first Passover marked the beginning, of their pilgrimage.

It is probable that there had been no Passover for forty years before this. Only the circumcised could partake (Exod. 12. 48) and none save those who came out of Egypt had been circumcised. During the long period of wandering to which the people had been condemned because of their unbelief and lack of faith at the time of the sending of the twelve spies, they had not troubled to circumcise their children. (Josh. 5. 5.) In consequence, now that the wanderings were ended, none under forty years of age were circumcised. This flagrant disregard of the central feature of the covenant is a matter of wonder; one is tempted to ask why Moses and Aaron were so apparently lax in their administration during that forty years. It is a question that cannot be answered. We know that Israel kept the Passover at Sinai one year after leaving Egypt; after that there is no certainty until the children of Israel have crossed Jordan and Joshua is commanding them all to be circumcised in order that they can keep the Passover in the land. It may well have been that a few of the more devout did bring up their children in the desert in the nurture

and fear of the Lord, circumcising them the eighth day and sharing with them in the annual feasts and "holy convocations", and that the rest were indifferent. The energies of Moses and Aaron, and the few who laboured with them, must have been entirely spent in the heavy task of controlling the general destinies of this mighty host of nearly three million people; it would have been a physical impossibility to ensure the individual "orthodoxy" of every one, and if the solemn feasts were observed at all it was probably by the minority. For all practical purposes therefore it may be assumed that there was no national Passover celebration during the thirty-nine years that elapsed between Sinai and Jericho.

There were, then, three great Passover celebrations in the history of Israel's journey to the Promised Land. First came that in Egypt, at the time of their departure from the dominion of Pharaoh. Next came that at Sinai, when they entered into a covenant with God and became a royal priesthood and separated people. Finally came that in Canaan, after they had crossed Jordan and had actually entered into their inheritance. It is impossible not to see in this a striking resemblance to the course of the Christian Church, and, too, of each individual believer. The first great event in the journey from "Egypt" to "Canaan" is Justification. That comes to us after we have believed but before we have left the world. In the darkness of this world's night we have light in our hearts; the sprinkled blood ensures our acceptance in God's sight and our deliverance from the condemnation that is on the world. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Justification by faith is an indispensable preliminary to our entering the wilderness journey which will lead us to the heavenly Canaan, just as that first Passover must of necessity be accepted and eaten before any Israelite could cross the Red Sea and escape from Egypt.

Twelve months later Israel was at Sinai, and the second Passover was observed. There they entered into a solemn covenant with God which made them a consecrated people, separated from the world and dedicated to the purposes of God for all time. Israel after the flesh has been a separated people ever since. Not even their own faithlessness and shortcoming has altered that. Though they have denied Him, repeatedly, yet He has abided faithful, and

the mark of Sinai remains on Israel still. That is a fitting picture of the second great step in the Christian's progress—Consecration. The second Passover, associated as it was with the making of the Covenant, is paralleled in our case by our own entering into a "covenant by sacrifice". Like Israel of old at Sinai, we too have become members of a Royal Priesthood, a Holy Nation, to show forth the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light.

But, again like Israel, the making of that covenant with God is only the beginning, not the ending, of our wilderness journey. Israel spent something like three months getting from Egypt to Sinai. After about nine months at the mountain they spent another thirty-nine years getting to Canaan—most of the time dwelling at Kadesh, on its borders, waiting for all the adults who left Egypt to pass into death in conformity with the Divine decree (Num. 14. 29-34). The spiritual is a true likeness to the material. We come to the issue of consecration very soon after our justification, but there is a lifetime of learning the lessons God would teach us before we enter the Land of Promise, the heavenly Canaan. Like Israel at Kadesh, we dwell for long almost within sight of the golden land, yet we are rigidly excluded from its joys until all that is of the old nature, of "Egypt", is consumed and replaced by that which is born in the desert of our "wilderness experiences". It is then, and only then, that God says to us, as Moses did to Israel "Ye have compassed this mountain long enough; turn you northward" and we come to the final phase of life's experience, the crossing of Jordan.

But in the meantime we do well to remember that "Kadesh"—where the Israelites spent at least thirty-seven of their forty years' wanderings—means 'Holy'. Whatever the condition in which our Lord has seen fit to leave us as we seek to make our calling and election sure, no matter how often we seem to fail in our profession, it is a condition which in His sight is "holy", because it is there that we are being fitted for the glory of His presence "in due time".

So then, at last, like Joshua's hosts, we cross Jordan into Canaan, and immediately partake of our third Passover, our Glorification. For Israel it was glorification in a material sense; they had arrived in the Promised Land after long years of wandering and now God would be always with them. For us it is the same; we shall enter into His Presence where there is fulness of joy, taking our place beside that right hand where there are pleasures forevermore.

Justification—Consecration—Glorification. These three great steps in the Christian's life and progress

are well forthshown in the three great Passovers associated with Israel's journey from Egypt to Canaan. And the story of the third one yields even further analogies for our instruction.

This Passover was different to the two previous ones. "They did eat of the old corn of the land... and the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year." (Josh. 5. 11-12). Throughout the forty long years of Israel's necessity, from Elim to Gilgal, the Red Sea to Jordan, the departure from Egypt to the entry into Canaan, the manna came consistently and regularly. It never failed. "He gave them bread from heaven; man did eat angels' food" sang the Psalmist many years later. But on the day of that Jordan Passover the manna ceased, for the people began to eat of the fruit of the land.

So it is with us. While yet we linger on this side the Vail, the spiritual manna of our Lord's providing will be our constant portion. It began to come just so soon as we turned our backs upon Egypt and began to walk in the ways of the Lord. It will continue without ever failing until the very moment we cross Jordan and need it no more. There will be a day when we shall drink of the fruit of the vine, new, in the kingdom of our Father. We shall not need the manna then.

Joshua's Passover must have been a wonderful time of rejoicing. The first Passover was one of gladness at the thought of deliverance from Egypt but it must have been mingled with some apprehension of the unknown, some fears of the difficulties and dangers awaiting them in the desert. The second Passover would have brought a certain holy joy mingled with solemnity at the thought of the covenant and all its privileges, but again there would be the knowledge that endurance and toil would be demanded of all who would reap the reward of that covenant. The third Passover was different. All the hardships and dangers were in the past, all the fears and apprehensions dispelled. God had brought them into the land—their land—and now all would be well. "The Lord hath done great things for us; we are glad."

So it will be with us. Our first Passover of Justification, our second Passover of Consecration, involve much of hardship and testing of faith, and calls for determination and endurance. Oft will we fall by the wayside, and pick ourselves up, and continue in the way pointed out for us by the guiding cloud. But the third Passover of Glorification, is the attainment of our goal, of our heart's desire. As we sometimes sing, in our services of praise, "The toils of the road will seem nothing. When I come to the end of the way".

The golden dream did not last long for Israel, for they were still living in history, and faith soon failed, and unbelief returned, and consequently it was not long before they were fighting the Canaanites, instead of enjoying the land as a free gift from the Almighty, which would have been their portion had their faith held. With that development we are not concerned. With Joshua's Passover the picture afforded by the wilderness journey is completed and the curtain falls. Israel's subsequent experiences in the land yield other pictures and teach other lessons with which we at the moment are not concerned. Suffice it that we, at this Memorial season

in 1952, take fresh courage from the pageantry of Israel's journeyings of olden time and reflect that, just as they entered their Promised Land at last, so we, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end, will receive that inheritance promised to us and reserved in heaven for us. We have lived on the manna for many a long year and we shall sustain our lives by its aid for a while yet; but the day will assuredly come when we shall gather together without the manna—for we shall indeed eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.

“Ye do show the Lord's death” *A Memorial exhortation*

Again in the ordering of the Lord's providence the due time for gathering to the table of the Lord to remember in a special manner the death of our beloved Lord draws near. This special act of remembrance we will perform in compliance with our Lord's own direction. The story has been told so many times in past years that every phase of truth associated therewith cannot but be well understood by all who see, in its true light, that our Lord was the true Passover Lamb on the higher plane of God's purpose.

But the story will always bear repetition at this season, in order to stimulate to greater intensity our appreciation of that sacrifice, and what it did (and still does) for us, and to prompt us, with greater earnestness and sincerity to renew our own covenant with our God, to die with Christ Jesus our Lord.

Every year that goes brings us a step nearer “the year of My redeemed”, when the greatest and grandest deliverance in all the annals of time will be brought to pass. Each passing year should invest the act of remembrance, therefore, with greater solemnity and beauty, enabling each participant to carry away a deeper sense of reverence and gratitude than from any preceding occasion. Another year's crucial experiences and refinements should have prepared our hearts to receive the emblems of our slain Lamb with deeper appreciation and satisfaction than hitherto.

The leadings of Divine providence should have created a keener appetite for the “true bread of God”—a sharper hungering and thirsting for the privileges spread out on the Lord's table, and though we may eat and drink our daily portions to meet each day's spiritual needs throughout the year, the very special and sacred meaning attached by our

Lord to the simple annual service of Remembrance should cause us to desire more ardently to approach, with deeply increased reverence, the Christian's festal board.

Carrying our minds back to that last eventful night when our Lord gathered the little company which God had given Him around the time-honoured Paschal board, we find them following first the ancient order of procedure, established away back in the days of Moses, and revised and augmented as time went by.

They had met privately in a room prepared for them, on the anniversary of the actual night during which their fathers had also gone behind closed blood-sprinkled doors to eat the flesh of a slain lamb, and to wait, fully robed and shod, for the Angel of God to pass through the land. Nothing that Jesus said or did in the early part of the night's proceedings changed the order or sequence or the meaning of the great event they were keeping in memory. They ate the Passover together exactly as their fathers had done down the centuries. Authorities (some of them Jewish) tell us that the Jews (in Jesus' day) partook of the flesh of a lamb, and unleavened bread, to remind them of the hasty meal prepared and eaten in Egypt; of a blend of herbs and vegetables (like a salad) consisting of coriander and endive, lettuce and horehound, thistle leaves and succory, to remind them of the bitterness of the bondage their fathers endured, and crushed fruit and nuts brought to table in shape of a brick, to impress on their minds the arduous labours of the mud-pits and the brick-kilns. They drank together the expressed juice of the vine, from a cup which from times long distant had been called “the Cup of the Covenant”.

If this assortment of fruits, herbs, bread and flesh had become the established fare at the Paschal board, no valid reason exists for doubting that these were the ingredients that had been prepared by the owner of the room and set out in order by the two disciples (Mark 14. 13), Peter and John (Luke 22. 8) in readiness for the arrival later of Jesus and the rest of the band.

As they thus ate and drank and sang their way through the ancient feast they called to remembrance the slaying of the lamb, the sprinkling of the doorposts, the extraordinary postures of the participants, the angel's midnight flight, the morning's early commotion as prince and peasant rushed to Pharaoh to tell of their sad loss, the royal audience accorded to Moses, and the imperative order to "be gone". They would remember that Israel's first-born sons had been "spared" as the angel, with flashing sword "passed over" their huts or tents. They would not fail to be reminded that God had spared those first-borns for Himself, and that He hallowed them to Himself and His purposes in the dead of that eventful night. Then with the early flush of dawn the hosts of the Lord began their march of liberty and to life with God.

The old, old story was enshrined in every drop and particle on the Paschal board, and every year, each generation (when walking with God) drew forth the same meaning and purpose. It was a memorial—a looking back—a remembrancer of the great things which God had done.

This then was the object and meaning of the early part of the Paschal repast at this last Passover which Jesus had approached with such intense desire.

The usual procedure ended, Jesus then took a piece of the remaining bread, and raising over it a special prayer, passed it on to his disciples saying "Take this and eat it—this represents my body". He then took the cup, in which yet remained a quantity of the juice of the grape and again giving thanks to God, passed it to his brethren, with the words "Drink ye all of it. This is my blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26. 27-28).

This was new procedure, and had an entirely new meaning. Yet it was superimposed on the old. It was still intended to be "the Passover". It was still intended to presage deliverance. It was like going back to the night in Egypt to start it all over again, but on a higher plane. It still required a Lamb to be slain, it still required the sprinkling of the blood (I Pet. 1. 2); it still had special application to the first-borns (as a class) among the families of Israel. It was still intended to be the prelude to the breaking of bonds, and to the start of a journey towards the land of promise and of life with God.

For the first-borns it still meant salvation (or safe-keeping) from the destroying angel's sword, when the final plague came to be poured out. For the remainder of the house of Israel it meant emancipation from a great and terrible taskmaster so that they could enter anew into covenant relationship with God.

The ultimate purpose of the Covenant is to constitute Israel a holy nation, and a kingdom of priests, that through them the outcast families of the earth may be regathered to God and blessed with eternal life. That great objective was and still is God's great purpose. But it needed a better Lamb than Israel's paschal lamb. It needed a better firstborn to be brought forth on a higher plane, and to a higher ministry.

Jesus came to earth to be God's provided Paschal Lamb. Jesus went back to heaven the firstborn among many brethren, who, with Him, constitute the Church (the called-out company) of the First-born, whose names are written in heaven.

In that quiet, upper room, a great change began. The old order, observed by Jesus to the very letter, came to its end. The new order then began. Jesus' act and claim to put Himself in place of the Paschal Lamb, and His invitation to His brethren (and followers) to eat the bread in lieu of eating Him, carried the Paschal idea and the Paschal work to a higher plane. His death that very day provided the slain Lamb for Israel's "Redemption" feast. His surrendered life (His blood) provided the Redemption blood. From that upper room on that eventful night, influences and opportunities went forth which yet will change the world. Already they have changed for good and all the lives of those few disciples, and of others who believed on Jesus through their word. And they will do much more as they constrain Israel and the nations into the way of God.

But here and now it is not this wider field of blessing and blessedness we seek to contemplate, but that one central fact on which the whole redemptive plan reposed. It required the death of the appointed Lamb, the death of our beloved Lord. There was no other way to effect release. Jesus, the Lamb of God, must die. No one in heaven or earth, or anywhere else in God's wide realms could meet the great need. All depended upon Him—upon Him alone!

Jesus knew all this. He knew the seriousness of all He said and did. He faced the greatest issue of His life, and of all time. But He was resolved to keep His covenant with God. No cost to Him was too great to ensure the success of His Father's plan. His death would make

redemption sure; so He went to His death with open eyes and understanding heart. He offered Himself without spot or stain, a sacrifice of noblest worth. He poured out His soul to death.

For one night in the yearly round it is the Christian's privilege and delight to show forth the Lord's death, to think and speak of His voluntary surrender to the will of God, and commemorate the greatest sacrifice of all time. Each child of God knows and understands that every gracious privilege he or she enjoys flows from that sacrifice. Reconciliation and redemption, hope and expectation all spring from that unique surrender. The resounding hosannas of a world restored trace back to that unblemished offering. (Rev. 5. 12-13).

That was the one event in the whole range of time which was inevitable and indispensable. "It had to be" for the honour of God's name. It was the one thing needed—the one thing all-essential to make God's "yea" YEA! God's promises, though immutable, were all made with this in view. He was accounted "slain" from the dawn of time.

It is no light thing which we do. It stands related to eternal things. Once for all the holy Lamb of God died. It can never occur again. In showing the Lord's death we make contact with the "imperatives" and "absolutes" of God's universal plan. We need to be humble and sincere in our approach to the table of the Lord. We need to purge out the least trace of the leaven of sin. We need to be hungry and athirst for Him, as the panting hart over the water brook. No matter how much the Cup may symbolise to each and all, apart from Him there could be no "bread", there could be no cup.

Let brother and sister in the Lord search the chambers of their hearts, and see to it that no earthly stain or earth-born cloud shall make them unworthy of approach to these hallowed and hallowing symbols of their beloved Lord's momentous sufferings, remembering as they eat the bread and sip the wine that they so show the Lord's death till He be come as the great Deliverer of all who are in chains.

Let them remember that that which they do, shall be done by countless thousands when the story of His deathless love shall be made known to all, and that it is honour beyond compare to have a place among them in these dark days, to know their Lord and God, and walk in the footsteps of His worthy Son. Our opportunity to do this thing is nearly run. The outlook shows us that the Church's race is almost at an end. The

last days should be the best, and to each and all, this coming commemoration should be the most solemnising and encouraging of all. May the blessing of God be with each little group or each lonely soul, as we turn our eyes and hearts to Him who died for us, that we might live with Him.

CONSECRATION

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. This is not placing the stress for their salvation upon these works, for apart from acceptance by faith of the merit of Jesus' sacrifice, there can be no acceptance by God of any man's efforts towards righteousness. But, faith in the Redeemer's sacrifice being present, these attempts to perform purer works brings the believer more nearly into harmony with God, and with God's ultimate purpose.

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 "Who-soever 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 meteyard. 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.

"TILL HE COME"

The first of a series
of studies on the Second Advent A.O.H.

"For as oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup ye do shew forth the Lord's death till he come."

—(I Cor. 11. 26.)

That word comes to all of our minds at every Memorial season, and it comes always with renewed emphasis. Year by year continually, for nearly two thousand years, groups of Christians have come together to commemorate between themselves the historic event which is the foundation of our faith and has given meaning to our lives. Even though for the greater part of that long time the majority of Christians have habitually celebrated the communion of bread and wine much more frequently than once in a year, they invariably attach more than usual importance to the Easter celebration. Some there are who never concern themselves over the fortnightly or monthly communions who would never dream of missing their Easter-Day communion. It is a well-established fact that the annual commemoration of our Lord's death on or about the anniversary of that death is an obligation laid upon all who claim His Name.

In these latter days when many of us hold that *Scriptural and dispensational evidences justify the conclusion that the days of the Second Advent have already commenced, and we are now living in the first stage of that Second Coming, an objection is sometimes raised. If it be a fact that the Lord has already returned, why do we still observe the Memorial, since I Cor. 11. 26 says that by eating this bread and drinking this cup we shew forth the Lord's death "till he come"?* If He has come, should we not logically cease to observe the Memorial?

That is at least a reasonable question and deserves reasonable consideration. Far less praiseworthy is the hasty assertion sometimes encountered: "We still keep the Memorial; therefore He has not yet come". The only possible answer to that way of reasoning is the reminder that thousands of Jews still observe the Passover, blind to the fact that He in Whom the Passover was fulfilled came two thousand years ago.

We may come then to this reasonable objection that is urged. Most of those who raise the point did at one time believe in what is generally called the "Second Presence". That which was at that time convincing evidence, is now, in the light perhaps of later study and consideration, unconvincing. This very text and this very question

may well be a factor in some minds leading to the rejection of the conviction which at an earlier date did give a joy and enthusiasm in the Lord's cause that even to-day is recollected with pleasure and maybe a little longing. So an examination of the text will perhaps be both appropriate to the Memorial season and helpful in our consideration of the most absorbing Scriptural study we can undertake in this our day—the Second Coming of our Lord.

It ought not to be necessary to suggest that no Scripture text should be considered apart from its context—that which comes just before and just after. When we feel very strongly about a matter—as so many do on the subject of the Second Advent—we are more apt to transgress along this line than at other times. There is a story of a rather bumptious minister who was fond of boasting that he could preach a sermon on any text at a moment's notice without previous warning or preparation. His challenge being taken up on one occasion, he was given Rom. 3. 1 for subject. Opening his Bible, he read out hastily "What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?" Closing the Book again, he discoursed for twenty minutes or so to show how it was that the Jew had no advantage and the reasons why there was no profit in circumcision. Pausing then for breath, he opened his Bible again to continue his theme and read out the next few words: "Much every way"; and there was a long and awkward silence.

We must turn then to the general purport of Paul's teaching in this chapter and decide what he is talking about, then place our text in its proper setting and seek to understand its purpose in Paul's argument. The first thing worthy of notice is that this eleventh chapter of First Corinthians is one of several chapters in which the Apostle is giving counsel and correcting errors in respect to the public Church life of the Corinthian believers. There were many abuses existing among them extending to various kinds of immorality which were definitely unchristian and would inevitably give the Church a bad name in the sight of its pagan neighbours. In the chapter under consideration the matters particularly discussed are the behaviour of the sisters in the Church worship meetings, and the behaviour of all the believers in the Church "love-feasts". We know that it was the custom in those early days for the brethren, rich and poor alike, to assemble together for a

communal meal to which all brought contributions, the food and drink thus offered being placed on the table and shared in common. This "agape" or "love-feast" was originally a spontaneous expression of the spirit of equality and brotherliness in the Church, but these Corinthians had degraded it into a function where class distinctions prevailed. The rich, instead of sharing their bounty with their poorer brethren, kept their own good things for themselves and feasted riotously, even to the extent of becoming drunken; the poorer ones, having little to bring, were hungry by comparison.

Now all that was a direct negation of the spirit of common union, the communion of the Body of Christ which is the Christian's most powerful witness to the outside world. These Corinthians were bringing discredit upon the name of Christ by their repudiation of that spirit in their so-called "love-feasts", in which love found no place at all. From that point, (vs. 22) the Apostle goes on to show that such behaviour was directly contrary to, and did dishonour to, the spirit of the Memorial Supper itself, which was an even more important thing than the love-feast. "I have received of the Lord that also which I delivered unto you" he says "that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread . . . and said . . . this is my body, which is broken for you . . . This cup is the new testament in my blood. This do ye as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me." (vs. 23-25). The practices of the Corinthians were bringing into disrepute the very ceremony which stands as an age-lasting evidence to the world of the truth of our faith and of the fact that Jesus did certainly die on the Cross back there at the beginning of the Age.

Consider that for a moment. In what way is the memory of great historic events or of great men of past times perpetuated through subsequent generations? Always by means of anniversaries. Once every year some celebration or ceremony reminiscent of the event or individual concerned is enacted, handed down from generation to generation, keeping alive the story that otherwise might easily perish. Take an illustration that might seem a little incongruous but is nevertheless apt and well on the point. In the year 1605, a plot was hatched to blow up the British House of Parliament. A dozen well-known men were implicated; their names are now very generally forgotten but the man selected to accomplish the purpose is immortal on the pages of British history, and to the children of every British generation better known than any of the monarchs of England from William the Conqueror to Queen Victoria. Very few people have ever heard of Robert Catesby, Thomas Winter, Sir Everard Digby and Ambrose

Rookwood, the chief conspirators. Everybody knows the name of the unfortunate Guido Fawkes—corrupted in the vocabulary of youth to Guy Fawkes—and how he was discovered sitting in the cellar waiting for the moment to apply the match. To this day the fifth day of November is marked by the smoke of bonfires ascending all over Britain to the accompaniment of the crackle of many fireworks, the shouting of many children, and the barking of many dogs. The strongest evidence that a man called Guy Fawkes did live as the history books say he did, and that he did try to blow up the House of Parliament and was captured, is the fact of that annual celebration which nothing—not even two world wars with their nightly black-outs—has succeeded in abolishing.

And that is Paul's point in our text. You Corinthians, he says in effect, are striking at the very basis of our evidence that Christ did live and die for man. Our Church life is a witness and you have corrupted it with your immoralities. Our love-feasts are witnesses and you have debased them with your greed. Our Memorial is the mightiest witness of all and you have nullified it by your repudiation of your common-union in Christ—"for" he says "as oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup" and that is every year, "ye do shew"—witness to the world—"the Lord's death till He come".

It is to the world the Lord's death is being shown, in the very fact of the annual celebration which is never missed. The strongest evidence, to the man who will not accept the Gospels as they stand, that Christ did die and rise again as the Gospels say He died and rose again lies in the obvious fact that ever since that time there has been an annual commemoration of the event. Such ceremonies do not arise from nothing. This simple ritual, performed all over the world, year by year continually, for nearly two thousand years, commemorating the death of One Who promised to come again, is a continual witness to two great truths. He died for the world, promising to come again to the world; and He will come again.

The word "shew" means, in the original, "to declare in public", "to announce publicly", or as we would say to-day "to broadcast". As oft as we eat this bread and drink this cup we are repeating our witness, not merely to each other, but to the world, that our Lord *did* die for the world and *will* come again to the world.

That being the setting of the text, it follows that the expression "till he come" has no reference to the coming of the Lord for His saints in unobserved fashion prior to His revelation to the world. It does demand that the Memorial witness will go on *until* He "come" to the world. Whether

He has or has not already returned to gather His sleeping saints to Himself or to do any other of the works associated with His Advent makes no difference to that. Even though our Lord be present, those of His Church still on earth are bidden to keep this Memorial as a witness to all men of the truth of His eventual coming to all men, until He has thus come. And that clearly means that the Memorial must and will be observed until the last members of the Church have been gathered to their Lord, for only after that—never before—will He “come” to the world and be revealed to the world in whatever fashion the Son of Man is going to be revealed, with His glorified Church, “in that day”.

Just one more illustration to demonstrate that point—another one from English annals. (Our American brethren will find ready parallels in their own history.) There is somewhere in London a statue to King Charles II, and there are in England just a very few people who regard his descendants as rightful heirs to the British throne. Once every year their representatives lay a tribute of flowers at the base of the statue in symbol of their faith that one day the throne will be restored to the surviving claimant. The world—and the police—look on, quite indifferent, faintly amused; but there is the witness to the faith of these few upholders of a lost cause. Now suppose one day—by some of course quite impossible turn of politics—the unlikely should happen and the restoration of the dynasty of Charles becomes an imminent possibility but as yet unknown to the citizens of England, and suppose the true descendant of the King should arrive unobtrusively and “incognito” from across the seas and summon his few faithful supporters for some private conference and instruction preparatory to their taking power. Suppose that time of preparation, while their king was present with them unknown to others, should occupy four or five years. Would they cease from the annual ceremony at the statue at the very time when it was approaching fulfilment, on the ground that their king had in fact come to them although he had not yet manifested himself in public or taken his power? And if they did so cease, would not the bystanders conclude that the faithful few had lost faith at last and that after all there was nothing in this talk of a new king—just at the time the event was at hand?

So with us. Even if our King has come—to us; even if our personal conviction is that He is present, we are still under the obligation to “shew forth his death” to all who observe our witness “till he come” in the only sense in which that same world will ever understand His coming.

I Cor. 11. 26 is no proof that the Lord *has* come. Neither is it any proof that He has *not* come. It offers no evidence either way. It was not intended so to do. It does tell us very plainly that whether we rejoice in the knowledge of our Lord's Second Presence with His Church or not, His followers will “eat this bread and drink this cup” continually until He has come to the world. Then, and only then, when He has been proclaimed and manifested King in the glory of His Kingdom, will the momentous ceremony first observed in the Upper Room outside Jerusalem on that fateful night so many years ago pass away and be lost in the glorious light of the Millennial Kingdom.

A PRAYER

A dear child of God in a bygone day, expressed his heart's feelings in this beautiful prayer! May it be the prayer of our hearts too!

“As Blessed Lord Jesus—Divine Master in the way of the Cross, we would be for ever choosing our own crosses, not meekly bearing after Thee those which Thou choosest for us, and layest upon us in the order of Thy good and wise Providence. We would have great crosses forsooth, romantic crosses, picturesque crosses, and lo! Thou sayest ‘No, my child, it is the small crosses, the prosaic crosses, the homely crosses, the vulgar crosses, those trials of temper, those mortifications of petty vanity—of indolence and love of ease, wherein thou must be conformed by the discipline of my Spirit to mine Image. These crosses, and not others, do thou take up daily and bear after me. Is not my choice for thee much better for thee than thine for thyself? Is it not a wise choice? Is it not a loving choice?’ Be it so, dear Lord! Precious indeed, above thousands of gold or silver, must be the cross which Thou choosest for me as the fittest, and which Thou dost lovingly adapt to my strength and powers of endurance. Truly, O Blessed Master, as Thou sayest, such a cross is an easy yoke and a light burden, in the bearing of which I may find rest unto my soul. Therefore, dear Lord, lead Thou me on in the Way of self-denial, until Thine Image is crystal clear in my heart.”

How often when we approach God do we speak to Him only about our feelings, our experiences, our sins, our trials. All this is right; we cannot be without these, and we are right to tell them to our Father. But after all, this is not of itself communion, nor will speaking of all these things ever yield it to us.

THE QUIET TIME

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

GUIDANCE

Through many a thorny path He leads
My tired feet ;
Through many a path of tears I go.
But it is sweet
To know that He is close to me—
My God. My Guide ;
He leadeth me, and so I walk
Quite satisfied,

PERSISTENCE

The Christian is running a much greater race than any earthly course could ever exhibit. We know the goal toward which we run, and we have a sense of security—that if we run faithfully we shall gain the prize of our high calling. Ours is not a race merely to the strong, and a victory to the swift. It is a race in which each one, according to the earnestness of his effort, will be rewarded. If one runs with all his soul and strength he will surely gain the prize. And never before was there such a race! never one so remarkable! never one so glorious as this race set before us!

LIFE

Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit.

"A corn of wheat!" The one and only corn of wheat in the whole wide world! "In him was life"—but it was decreed that He must die. The corn of wheat must die, or abide alone. Everything depended upon that one corn—that one life. Of what use to offer one corn to feed a world's hunger. Man said: "Come to the theatre of Demosthenes and other great orators; come, thrill the world with your wonderful eloquence and win their adherence by the potent appeal of your matchless precepts." God said: "My corn of wheat must die, or it will abide alone."

SUBMISSION

Do you know what it is just to bow before God in silent and adoring homage, to hear from Him rather than ask petitions of Him? I sometimes experience what may be thought the unusual in that a quarter of an hour spent in kneeling before God without making any request, just recognising the fact that God is, and that I am before Him, will bring a fulness of blessing and joy into the soul that no words can tell.

OVERCOMING

He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels. (Rev. 3. 5.)

How few of the consecrated have so great a love for purity, so great a desire to keep the garment unspotted from the world, that they are careful to have every wrinkle quickly removed, and thereafter to guard the robe more zealously than ever. Yet, these, and these alone, walk with the Lord in white and are overcomers, who in due time shall be glorified with Him and sit with Him in His throne—and it is their names that shall not be blotted out of the Lamb's book of life.

HONOUR

When Christ would put peculiar honour upon His servants He often suffers them to be brought low in the sight of men. If the saints are favoured to suffer reproach for Christ's sake, then they will own the honour put upon them to be thus conformed to their Master. Christ never allows any servant of His to suffer loss but He turns that loss to gain. He honours faithful servants, He comforts persecuted ones.

IN HIM

It is good to accept with open hand the gifts of God; it is better far with open heart to accept the Giver Himself. No wealth of earth is so desirable as the gifts of God; the whole world itself is but refuse indeed in comparison with possessing God.

ARE YE ABLE

Are ye able to walk in the narrow, straight way,
With no friend by your side, and no arm for your
stay?
Can ye bravely go on through the darkening night?
Can ye patiently wait till the Lord sends the
light?
Ah, if thus ye can drink of the cup He shall pour,
And if never the banner of truth ye shall lower,
His beloved ye are, and His crown ye shall wear,
In His throne ye shall sit, and His glory shall
share!

In Gethsemane

A Memorial
meditation

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

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

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

So it was that he lay now, ensconced behind his olive tree—waiting. If they did come to take the

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

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

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

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

finitely tender, "Simon, sleepest thou? Could ye not watch with me one hour?" followed by tones of greater urgency "Watch ye and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak".

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

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

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

Mark stiffened suddenly. Had he also slept, leaning there against the tree? He looked up the hill toward the place where last he had seen Jesus. He was still there, kneeling by the rock, His form picked out in silver by the brilliant moon, His face looking up to heaven, a vivid patch of moonlight playing on the rock just above His head, moving, taking shape, almost like a reflection of Jesus Himself standing beside Him—Mark drew in his breath sharply and tried to blink the sleep from his eyes; it was as if that other form had bent down toward Jesus in the attitude of strengthening and encouraging Him. Was it—could it be—an angel? The boy's mind raced swiftly through the stories of olden time that he had learned at the feet of the doctors; he thought of Samuel, to whom the voice of God had come in audible tones. But that had been in times gone by; in his own day it had not been known for a man's eyes to behold an angel. He bent his head in awe, and when he looked again the bright vision was gone and he could see Jesus walk-

ing with firm step back to His disciples. "Sleep on" he heard him say: "Sleep on now, and take your rest; it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners." He was silent, and in that pause Mark became conscious of a flashing of lights in the road below. Men were approaching, a large party of men, and they were coming into the garden, their torches moving hither and thither like fire-flies among the trees. Jesus must have perceived those torches, too, for His voice, calm as ever but with a new note of urgency, came clearly to the lad "Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand"; and at that John Mark leaped from his position behind the tree and began running towards Jesus as fast as his legs would carry him.

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

"Whom seek ye?"

"We seek Jesus of Nazareth" came the sullen reply.

"I am He."

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

Again that calm, unruffled voice: "I have told you that I am He. If ye seek me, let these go their way".

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

It was Judas who resolved the situation; Judas, who had staged this whole affair in order to force Jesus' hand and make Him declare Himself King of Jewry and the avowed opponent of the Roman and

the Jewish leaders. Full well did he know the awe in which all men stood of Jesus. The Temple guard, sent out to effect the arrest, might very well lose their nerve and return without having accomplished their purpose. The mixed rabble, drawn from the dregs of the city and armed only with sticks, would quickly melt away in the face of such a defection, and the whole of Judas' plan would come to nothing. It was necessary to act, and act quickly. He fervently hoped Jesus would understand. Glancing dubiously at Peter's threatening sword, he walked quickly up to Jesus and embraced Him.

"Hail, Master" he cried.

The words of the answer fell upon the still night air like the slow dropping of heavy rain drops from trees.

"Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?"

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

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

Peter's nerve broke. Staring, first at the sword in his hand, and then at the serene, dignified figure of his Master, an expression of bewilderment and utter despair slowly overspread his countenance. In another moment the sword was lying on the ground and Peter was gone, crashing his way through the trees. They heard his stumbling run as the twigs cracked under his feet; sudden panic seized the other disciples and they ran, too, scrambling up the hillside and over the top of the Mount to get away toward Bethany, away from the city and all its dangers, away from the Master Who had so unaccountably frustrated His own mission by submitting to willing arrest at the hands of His sworn enemies.

They had not gone unhindered. At the precipitate flight of Peter the guard had closed in and attempted to seize the unarmed disciples. For a few minutes it was difficult to distinguish friend from foe. Three men surrounded Jesus and tied His hands behind His back. At a word of command the others, pursuing the fugitives, came back into the little clearing in which stood Jesus, heavily guarded.

As they trooped back one of them stumbled over a white-clad figure crouching behind a tree. In a moment John Mark was struggling in the grip of two powerful men. As he struggled he could see that Jesus was already being led down the hill toward the city, and his heart died within him. He slipped out of his linen robe, leaving it in the hands of the man who held him, wriggled like an eel in the grasp of another who found his well-greased body too slippery to hold, and, darting like a hunted animal across the clearing, was gone.

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

How often had he heard Jesus liken the utter end of the wicked to the consuming action of these same fires. "Fear God" He had said "Who is able to kill both body and soul in Gehenna"—*Gay-Hinnom*, the Valley of Hinnom. Now those same wicked men had taken Him, and would slay Him, and all the glorious promises of the coming Kingdom on earth had come to naught, and life would not be worth living any more. So he told himself, sobbingly, as he ran on, bending his steps back now toward the city, the moonlight showing him his own home with the light that always shone so clearly from the window. He darted into his little cave, retrieved a cloak, and hastily wrapping it around himself, was in the house.

"They have taken the Master", he burst out as the women turned at his entry.

Mary the mother of Jesus went suddenly white. The others started up in alarm.

"What do you mean, boy?" cried Mary his own mother, "Where have you been? And where are the menfolk?"

"They all forsook him and fled. I was in the garden, behind the trees, and I saw them come, and men with torches came with Judas, and He is betrayed, and the others have fled away, and

He is taken into the city." The boy poured out the words incoherently.

"But did they not defend him?" asked Joanna quickly.

"He forbade them; and Peter, when he could not use his sword, threw it away and fled."

"And did the Master not destroy His enemies before they could touch Him?" demanded Joanna.

"He stood silent, and neither resisted them Himself nor suffered others to resist them."

"Then all our hopes are perished—What will become of us?" cried Salome.

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

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

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

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

"If only the men had not fled" sighed Salome.

"They will come back" announced Mary Magdalene decisively. The others looked up in surprise. This was a new Magdalene. They had known by repute the proud, imperious Mary of Magdala out of whom the Lord had cast seven demons, and the life she had lived, but during

the whole time of her discipleship Mary's gratitude and love toward the One Who had changed her life had manifested itself in a gentle, docile disposition which almost belied the firmness of character that lay beneath. She stood up now, the unconscious leader of the little band of women.

"They will come back" she repeated. "John will come first, and then Peter. After that the others will come."

"What makes you think so, Mary?" asked Salome doubtfully.

"I know men" replied Mary. "I know their weakness, and I know their strength. They do not understand Jesus as we women understand Him. They think now only of swords and crowns and a kingdom that is sustained by force. They know nothing—yet—of a kingdom that is built upon love and conversion, that only upon such foundation can God win fallen man to Himself. They think of Jesus as a leader amongst men, to go before them and fight their battles, to exalt them to be rulers with Himself that they might be seated at His right hand and His left hand in the glory of His Kingdom. They strive among themselves, who shall be greatest. They do not understand why He should minister to the poor, the simple, the unlearned. When He talked with the Samaritan woman at the well, and spoke to her heart, they marvelled. Would a woman have marvelled? When the little children came to Him, because He smiled at them, they drove them away. Would a woman have driven them away? They do not understand—yet. But they will. And they will come back."

"But if the Master is put to death" moaned Salome, "of what avail is their coming back? Are not our hopes destroyed?"

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

There was silence for a little while. Joanna looked across at Mary Magdalene. In that look there was acknowledgment of leadership.

"What shall we do, Mary?" she asked.

"We must wait" said Mary firmly. "Wait till the men come back."

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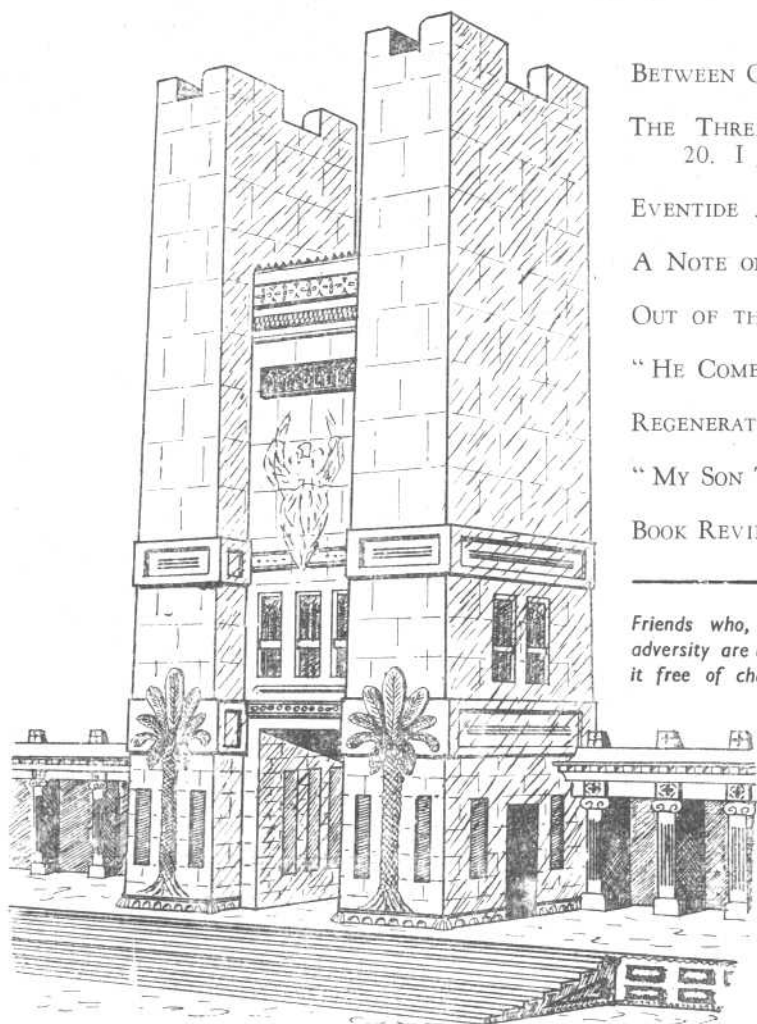
Vol. 29, No. 5

MAY, 1952

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| BETWEEN OURSELVES | 66 |
| THE THREE EPISTLES OF JOHN: 20. I John 4. 7-10 | 67 |
| EVENTIDE | 69 |
| A NOTE ON MATT. 12.43 | 70 |
| OUT OF THE STOREHOUSE | 71 |
| " HE COMETH WITH CLOUDS " | 73 |
| REGENERATION | 76 |
| " MY SON TIMOTHY " | 78 |
| BOOK REVIEWS | 79 |

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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 subject of our Lord's return is one of continuous interest. From time to time it seems to be more to the forefront than usual; the present appears to be one such time. Several treatises and publications setting forth Scripture interpretations from different points of view have appeared lately. As from last month, the *Monthly* will be featuring a fresh set of articles on the subject for some little while to come, and it is hoped that these will prove interesting and helpful to all our readers, irrespective of their own individual views on the matter. In conformity with our usual practice when subjects are presented on which wide differences of view exist, the initials of the author are indicated and our usual veil of anonymity lifted. As will readily be seen from the articles, this series has been written in the conviction that the Second Presence of our Lord has already commenced; there are probably very few of our readers who will not at least be interested to consider what can be said for this standpoint, the more especially as the opposite view has been well ventilated in various of our contemporaries of late.

* * *

"Zion's Glad Songs" was a songbook highly esteemed by our brethren in past years and although it has long since gone out of print there are many who ask if copies can be obtained. Unfortunately the answer is "No"; the few copies in existence are cherished by their owners and rarely is it that a second-hand copy comes our way.

It is not so generally known, however, that subsequent to the publication of "Zion's Glad Songs," Brother McPhail published two smaller books which between them contained many of the original songs. These are known as "Zion's Glad Songs No. 2" with 65 hymns and songs, and "Songs of Comfort" with 66. Between them about 80 of the original songs were reproduced and the remainder are choice Christian "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" of similar nature. Now through the generosity of a sister in U.S.A. we have become possessed of a goodly quantity of these two books in brand new condition, and we propose to distribute them to the friends at a nominal price to cover postage and leave a little to help the "*Monthly*" publishing fund. We feel that many of the brethren here will appreciate the opportunity of possessing these two books. Each one measures $7\frac{1}{2}'' \times 5''$, same size as the original "Zion's Glad Songs," is bound in stiff card, and of course contains words and music.

The two books will be distributed only in pairs (one of each book), as follows:

One pair (two books) - 1/6 post free.
12 pairs (24 books) - 15/- carriage paid.

Classes requiring larger quantities for congregational singing are desired to write us, stating quantity desired, for details of special arrangements under which they can be supplied.

* * *

Advice is to hand of the Annual Spring Convention of the Berean Bible Students of Cicero, to be held May 3-4 in Parkholme Community Building, 1820 South 51st Avenue, Cicero, Ill., U.S.A. Unfortunately advice was received here too late for inclusion in our April issue so that this notice will hardly be in time to be of service to our American readers; nevertheless it will just be in time for our brethren in England to remember the interests of the Convention in prayer, and this we are sure will be a concern on the heart of some. May our Master's blessing be upon the gathering.

* * *

We still have a goodly number of the special issue "God's Fulfilling Purpose" available for free distribution to all who can make good use of them, and will be pleased to forward quantities to any who will make the request. This is a useful pamphlet to pass to newly interested people and to those who are perplexed at the apparent inactivity of God in face of the world's distress; it takes the reader right through the working of God from the beginning, tracing, as one has said, "the stately steppings of our God through time." If you can make use of same, do not hesitate: ask now.

* * *

The monthly united meeting at Caxton Hall will be held this month on Saturday, 17th May, at 6.30 p.m., and the speakers will be Bros. W. R. Walton and H. E. Panteny.

Gone From Us

—○—

Bro. J. CARTER (Radcliffe, Lancs).

—○—

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

The Three Epistles of John Comments on the writings of the "Beloved Apostle"

Part XX. I John 4. 7-10

"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." (vs. 7-8).

That last phrase is rightly esteemed one of the most significant words in the Scriptures. It is certainly one of the best known. It has been the inspiration for countless sermons and it has formed the subject of scornful comment by agnostics and atheists. It has been appealed to by those who would point men to a future hope in consolation for present distress and it has been quoted bitterly by those who cannot reconcile it with their present distress. Yet it has lived; no man has been able to destroy the simple beauty of those three simple words nor tear them down from the lofty position they occupy in the world. The proclamation that God is love will always be proclaimed while Christianity itself is proclaimed—and that will be forever.

There is an almost equally important word enshrined in this text: "Love is of God". Important, because that statement connects directly with the Divine purpose in creation. If God is love, and love is of God, then it follows that all His creation is inspired and directed by love. It follows that all His creatures will have their lives guided and controlled by love and that in their lives they manifest love. If God is love, then the controlling principle of the universe is love, and whatever exists in antagonism to love is out of harmony with the spirit of the Universe and will therefore shortly pass away. We are now getting near to some connection between love and righteousness, and lovelessness and sin, and that is just what John wants for us. He is striving to show that unless we do love in sincerity and truth we are not of God, and that in turn means that we are yet in our sins.

We can well afford to linger for a while over this word "love is of God". It forges a link between the Divine and ourselves. Love is manifested in God's dealings. If love can be manifested in our dealings also then we are like God, God-like. That is our hope and ambition, to be like God in character. The Scriptures exhort us to be fashioned into copy-likenesses of "God's dear Son"; since He is like His Father, then we, if made "like Him", will be like the Father also. That takes us back in thought to the time

when God said "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness". Was that expressed intention completely carried out in Eden? Surely not. Man as then made might well have been in the image and likeness of God in many respects but certainly not in all. In His steadfast hatred of sin he was not; in His unswerving insistence on righteousness he was not; in that far-seeing wisdom, inflexible justice, all-embracing love, that constitute three of the four attributes of God, he was not. And in the fourth of the Divine attributes, that of power, weak, puny man certainly has not yet proved himself to be anywhere near the likeness of God. We have to conclude that God spoke of His ultimate purpose with man and that He intends man to be fully in His own image and likeness at the end of the Millennial Age. What He did in Eden was only the beginning.

Nevertheless what was done in Eden certainly did manifest the fact that "love is of God". Divine love prompted the creation of man and all that went with that creation. It was Mark Twain who once observed that the proof to him that God has a sense of humour is the fact that He created ducks—otherwise He would not have devised such comical creatures. In much the same way we might observe, and perhaps with greater propriety, that the proof to us that our God is a God of love is the fact that He created man. The love of God is revealed in all that He has done for man since the beginning of creation, and in all that He has promised yet to do. The very existence of this earth with all its possibilities; the fact that we have brains capable of thinking to the extent that we can think; all is evidence of the truth of John's words "Love is of God".

But all of these considerations pale into insignificance beside the greatest and grandest—the supreme—example of Divine love, the one that is always in our minds and forms the background if not the subject of every Christian sermon and discourse. "God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3. 16.) That is without doubt the most well-known verse in the Bible and by far the most often quoted. John evidently recalls those words here at this point in his own fashion. "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. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (vs. 9-10.) Is not John teaching true doctrine here when he turns as it were away from the many evidences of Divine love in creation and all that has been given to man, and points to the coming of Jesus as the evidence of God's love before which all other evidences are overshadowed. Obviously it must be so, for all those other gifts of God to man, the tokens of His love for man, can be enjoyed only if man is righteous, fully in the image and likeness of God. And only by the giving of Jesus His only begotten Son to be our redeemer can any of those other gifts be enjoyed in perpetuity. Without this supreme gift, all the other manifestations of Divine love will have been of no avail. That shows us one thing very clearly. It shows us that God would never be satisfied with an intelligent human creation the individuals of which were to live only for a limited period and then pass into death. He would not be satisfied with the praise and worship of dying creatures. He has planned for men an endless life, a life in which praise and worship will never come to an end; that fact more than any other consideration ought to assure us that God will never relax His efforts to bring each one of His wandering children back to Himself until it is abundantly evident that the case is hopeless. It is no empty phrase that the Apostle uses when he declares that God "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth". (I Tim. 2. 4.) We sometimes whittle down the force of that Scripture by suggesting it means only that God will "save" all men from Adamic death and give them the Millennial opportunity of reformation. It does mean that, but it means much more. It is God's will that all men should be saved eternally and enter into the full realisation of Divine truth that will come to the eternally redeemed. It is possible for men to defy God's will in this respect. He made men able so to defy Him. In consequence some may refuse thus to be saved. Revelation 20. 9, if taken as a prophetic foreview of a coming historical event, indicates that there will be some such. But it still remains true that it is the will of God that all men should be saved just as it is the will of God that we, the Church, should be sanctified (I Thess. 4. 3.)

In these few verses all the emphasis is on Divine love and the achievement of that love. The love of God prompted the sending of His Son into the world to be a propitiation for our sins, that we might live through Him. "O, 'twas love, 'twas wondrous love" we sing at our meetings of praise—but just how is it that this manifestation of love achieves the great work of reconciling mankind to

God? It seems rather remarkable that we in our discussions on the subject of the Atonement put the emphasis on the word "blood" whereas the Scriptures do lay considerable emphasis on the word "love". Is it after all possible that there is a mystic, a spiritual and yet for all that—perhaps because of that—overwhelming power in love that, in a fashion we do not yet understand, is a compelling force, leading men to righteousness? We tend to think of the influence of love upon another life as consisting merely in sentiment, force of example, appeal to the other's better nature, and so on. What if, after all, the declaration "God IS Love", "Love is of God" has a reality of which we have never yet dreamed, and that every exhibition or manifestation of selfless love does let loose in the world a force which influences men, even without their knowledge, more powerfully than any power of evil? If that be so, we can, maybe, see more clearly than before why the Dark Ages theology of the Atonement, that Satan demanded the life of Jesus as a ransom for condemned man, and paid that price over to Divine Justice before consenting to the release of man, has been abandoned in this our day. The Love of God required the death of Jesus because only by that death could the Love of the Father and of the Son become a mighty reformatory force in the hearts of mankind.

It is along these lines that we may look for what is sometimes called "the Church's share in the sin-offering". That we, the Lord's Church, do share with Him in all that He is to do for mankind, that we are joint-heirs with Him in the Kingdom, that in all things save the giving of the Ransom we are associated with Him, is agreed. Now if the reconciliation of the world is to be effected by the power of Love, and if Jesus our Head has already manifested that Love in His own case by the sacrificial offering of Himself in life until death—the "pouring out his soul unto death" (Isa. 53)—then most certainly we, who can only share with Him in these things by following His example in all things, must needs also manifest the same Love and allow it to lead us in the same course. It was His Love that led Him to give His flesh for the life of the world! It is our love that will lead us to do the same. And in this connection let it be remembered that that "life of the world" is not the reversal of Adamic condemnation and awaking from death and redemption from Adamic sin. That comes in consequence of the "Ransom for All" given by Jesus alone on the Cross. This "life of the world" is the reconciliation that comes afterwards, during the Millennial Age, and we, the Church, are the ministers of that reconciliation. (II Cor. 5. 18-20.)

(To be continued)

Eventide

"So he bringeth them unto their desired haven"

Acts 20 and 21 may very fittingly be styled "au revoir" chapters, no less than five of these occasions being recorded there! And incidentally we may learn what these occasions meant for the Apostle Paul. One of these farewell leave-takings recorded with considerable fullness, and if that be accepted as the pattern of them all, there can be no doubt that they were seasons of intense emotion, and of the most profound searchings of the heart. The first of these farewells occurred in Ephesus—after the rioting there—(Chap. 19) and had to be taken privately, and hurriedly. "After the uproar ceased Paul sent for the disciples, and having exhorted them, took leave of them and departed into Macedonia" (Acts 20. 1.) Many other partings are covered in the next few words—Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea perhaps—but as no detailed particulars are recorded these cannot be included in our 'five'. "When he had gone through these parts and had given them much encouragement he came to Greece. (v. 2.) Here such churches as Corinth, and others in that neighbourhood, would also find encouragement. After a three months' stay, he purposed to proceed from there to Jerusalem, but found it necessary to change his plans, owing to the Jewish plot to take his life, and proceed as far as Philippi by land. From Philippi he sailed to Troas (Troy) where his broken party was re-united.

Here on the first day of the week, when the disciples had come together to break bread,—to share together a fellowship meal in token of their oneness in Christ—Paul spake to them long and earnestly till midnight. Then an accident occurred—one of the audience, overcome by sleep, fell from an elevated seat and was taken up for dead. After resuscitating him Paul continued to converse with them till day-break, then took his leave. Detailed particulars are lacking of this leave-taking conversation, but we may be sure (Paul being what he was) they were neither meaningless nor frivolous. That they were prolonged till the early hours surely speaks their seriousness. "They took the lad away alive, and were not a little comforted" is the final comment Luke has to make.

From there by road and ship he came at last to Miletus. To this calling-place he summoned the Elders of the Church at Ephesus, and here, to them, he opened the deepest chambers of his heart. What a wonderful and searching scrutiny of his life and ministry he made before them, reminding them of

the risks and perils he had run to serve them; of the fulness of the message he had proclaimed to them; of the earnestness, both publicly and privately, with which he had testified to them, beseeching them to have repentant hearts before God, and a faithful trust in the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Holding up his hands he could claim them to be clean from the blood responsibility of any one of them, through not withholding from them any single item of the whole counsel of God. He had discharged the duties of his sacred charge dutifully and well, and none among them could say him nay!

"And now I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what shall befall me there, except that I am told in every city that suffering and persecution most surely awaits me there"—so continues the searching intimation—"and ye, among whom I have so readily gone in and out will see my face no more . . .".

How deeply these words must have probed and searched the deepest levels of their souls, while tears of sadness filled their eyes! "And now I commend you to God" (another Upper-Room leave-taking, exactly in the spirit of John 17:—a worthy repetition of the world's most solemn and serious farewell)—"and to the word of His grace"—(yes, a simple variation of the words "Sanctify them in Thy Truth, Thy word is Truth")—"which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified." How reminiscent of the Master's last night and of His High-priestly committal prayer!

And then he knelt down with them, and prayed with them, and wept with them—then the final embrace, and the holy kiss . . . and the ship! Oh! wonderful bond to affect good men thus!

And after this, Tyre—of all places—Tyre! "having sought out the disciples we stayed there for seven days" (Acts 21. 4.) Seven days of sweet fellowship, and then, the farewell. "And when our days there were ended we departed and went on our journey, and they all, with wives and children brought us on our way till we were outside the city—and kneeling down on the beach we prayed and bade one another farewell." (Acts 21. 5.) Yes! even the children too are included in this farewell! What an engrossing sight, as man, woman and child kneel down at the water's edge while Paul commends the whole company again to God and to the word of His grace!

And finally Caesarea. When Paul, bound in the spirit (Acts 20. 22.) would not be dissuaded or

diverted from his purpose by other brethren's reading of Providence, they yielded and committed him to the Will of God. (Acts 21. 8-14.)

"Commended to God"—the art and secret of the true leave-taking of saints! "When we asunder part" is no mere empty or formal episode in the lives of God's loved ones. Even if we separate with good hopes (D.V.) of re-uniting again, the farewell clasp must be serious, for so much hangs on every passing hour; and so much yet remains to be accomplished within even the best of us, that it cannot be, in any way, an empty adieu. Spoken or unspoken, the heart should say "And now I commend you to God, and to the word of His Grace . . . to build you up and to give you . . ."

What a lovely pattern of true leave-taking our beloved brother Paul affords us—God grant us to catch its dynamic and gripping spirit when we say or sing together that lovely committal prayer,

*"God be with you till we meet again,
By His counsels guide, uphold you,
With His sheep securely fold you,
God be with you till we meet again."*

*"God be with you till we meet again,
'Neath His wings securely hide you;
Daily manna still provide you,
God be with you till we meet again."*

*"God be with you till we meet again,
When life's perils thick confound you;
Put His arms unfailing round you,
God be with you till we meet again."*

*"God be with you till we meet again,
Keep love's banner floating o'er you;
Smite death's threatening wave before you,
God be with you till we meet again."*

It can never be an easy thing to say a last farewell to one we love, but if our practice has ever been to commend him or her to God, the sting has been withdrawn, and He who has kept the loved one through a single day or week, can just as truly keep them "till that day"—at least that was Paul's assuring thought, and it will surely be to our eternal good if we daily make it ours too!

A NOTE ON MATT. 12.43

"When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return unto my house from whence I came out . . ." (Matt. 12. 43).

What is the meaning of our Lord's allusion to "dry places"? Why should the dispossessed demon apparently desire to avoid the vicinity of water?

Jesus had in mind a very popular idea, prevalent in the days of the First Advent, to the effect that evil spirits shunned the crossing of water, and were, in fact, unable to negotiate the passage of rivers or streams. This idea, so obviously absurd to us with our greater knowledge of the nature and powers of both holy and evil spirit beings, was a tradition coming down from earlier ages, but very real to the people of our Lord's own day. This verse is an interesting example of the fact that Jesus sometimes spoke to the people within the framework of the common thought of their own day—not that He Himself necessarily endorsed these old fables and legends, but as using them in illustration of the truths He wished to inculcate. In referring to this popular idea of the evil spirit walking about seeking a place of rest remote from the imaginary dangers of running water, He brought before the minds of His hearers the obvious sequel—that if the cleansed man's mind has been left

empty and not occupied by a holier spirit, the Spirit of God, then the dispossessed demon would return from his uneasy wanderings, and settle down in the safety of his former home; and the last state of that man, said Jesus, would then be worse than the first.

A homely illustration, built up a Rabbinical fable having no basis in fact, but capable of teaching a vital spiritual truth. When the evil spirit is cast out, let the mind be filled with that which will prevent such a calamity as demon obsession ever befalling the man again.

We cannot see how all things will be made to work together for good, but we feel that God sees, and we have faith instilled into us to leave all things restfully with Him, and let Him unfold His plans little by little, and show us our share in them.

* * *

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.

OUT OF THE STOREHOUSE

A collection of interesting items

Amen

"Amen" is a Hebrew word meaning literally FIRM, SURE, FAITHFUL. Revelation 3. 14 says And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write: "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness." Hence it came to be used as an adverb of confirmation, placed either at the beginning of a statement to give emphasis or at the end of prayer or some important statement where it is used as a sort of spoken signature by which the speaker or hearer attests and adopts as his own what has been said. An example of the word used to give emphasis is found in John 1. 51. "Verily, verily, (Amen; amen.) I say unto you, hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." Again in John 3. 3 we read, "Verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." In I Cor. 14. 16 it is used as a signature. Paul here says in effect that if we use not our gifts so that they are easily understood "how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say, Amen, (add his signature), at the giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?" The Psalmist provides further examples of how we adopt as our own what has been said (Psalm 41. 13), "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting. Amen and amen."

* * *

Out of Galilee ariseth no prophet (John 7. 53).

"Search, and look," cried the scornful Pharisees. Had they been such genuine students of the ancient Scriptures as they professed to be, they would not have missed noticing that at least two prophets did arise out of Galilee. Elijah the Tishbite came from Tisbe and Jonah came from Gath-Hepher, both of which places were in what afterwards became Galilee. The Pharisees, blinded by expectations of Messiah arising from Bethlehem, entirely overlooked the fact that He was both of Nazareth in Galilee and Bethlehem in Judea.

* * *

The pride of Narcissus

Greek mythology tells of a youth named Narcissus, who was so beautiful that all the young men sought his companionship and all the nymphs desired his love; the wild beasts were tame in his presence, and the very flowers and trees swayed and nodded towards him as he approached. In spite of all, he went on his way in cold arrogance,

rejecting every overture until he should find one he deemed beautiful as himself. At last, seeing his own reflection in a woodland pool, he stretched out his arms to embrace whom he took to be a fitting mate, but, despite his every endeavour to clasp the handsome youth he saw before him, he could lay hold on nothing substantial. Overcome by grief at his failure, he pined away on the pool's brink and died.

How many Christians lose much by going a solitary way through life with thoughts turned ever inward upon themselves, arrogant in their own righteousness like the Pharisee who went up into the Temple to pray, wilfully blind to the friendship and fellowship their fellows would so willingly proffer, and complaining at the end that life has brought them only disillusionment. "I am among you as one that serveth," said Jesus, and good indeed is it for us when we can altogether forget self in the joy of giving our life's best endeavours for the enrichment of other lives, and receiving our gifts back in abundant measure.

* * *

A Reminiscence of Nahum

Nahum the Elkoshite (Nahum 1. i). It is generally assumed that Elkosh in Palestine is indicated, but some think that Nahum was a prophet of the Northern Captivity, and that his home town was Elkosh in the mountains of Assyria, where the Ten Tribes were taken and settled by Shalmaneser. Elkosh to-day has a synagogue which possesses a notable shrine, claimed to be the tomb of Nahum.

"Nineveh of old is as a pool of water; yet shall they flee away," cries Nahum (Nahum 2. 8). A rather obscure expression; just what does it mean? A passage in Wigram's "Cradle of Mankind" supplies the answer. Standing on the heights just outside Elkosh, he looked down across the level plain towards ruined Nineveh, 40 miles away. "It was a weird and striking effect that we witnessed from it next morning. The clouds lay low and horizontal above the plain beneath us; and many of them seemed to have sunk on to the ground, and looked exactly like lakes under the level rays of the rising sun. As his orb rose higher they lifted, and dispersed into wreaths of vapour." So must Nahum, seeing the same phenomenon thousands of years ago, seen in that effect a picture of the doom of the great city of wickedness.

Joseph in Egypt

"Only in the throne will I be greater than thou" (Gen. 41. 40). The description of Joseph's exaltation to power at the right hand of Pharaoh is well illustrated by tomb paintings found in Egypt. Joseph had evidently been raised to the position of "Prime Minister," and in the short passage from verse 40 to 45 of Gen. 41 we have a vivid description of an induction into office which was repeated with every successive Grand Vizier or "Prime Minister" in the land of Egypt. The ring upon Joseph's hand and the placing of the gold chain around his neck was the repetition of an ancient ceremony which betokened the highest possible honour which could be conferred upon the recipient. This ceremony was practised 300 years before the time of Abraham and Joseph became one of a long line of men who were thus raised to the most exalted position Egypt could offer. His marriage to Asenath, daughter of the High Priest of Heliopolis, brought him into intimate relationship with the priestly caste, and thus, like Daniel in a much later day, the simple shepherd boy from Judea became the virtual leader of a great nation, and discharged the responsibilities of his office with that integrity and diligence which should characterise every true believer in our God.

* * *

Rule of the Millennial Age

"By mercy and truth iniquity is purged" (Prov. 16. 6). How different a sentiment from the old theology, which presented God as anxious above all things to punish, to all eternity, those who were subject to iniquity. In our day, we know that God, who will not tolerate sin for ever, has provided a means whereby it may be purged away from the hearts of men. The Millennial reign of Christ is set apart in the Divine Plan for this very work, to deal with men along merciful and upright lines so that they may, if they will, come into full harmony with the Father and with His beloved Son, their King. The "rule of the iron rod" is in reality the "rule of the shepherding rod." "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd." The penalty for sin is no less certain, and no less final. "It shall come to pass, that every soul that will not hear that prophet shall be destroyed from among the people," but not until every possible approach has been made, in the mercy of God and by the truth of God, to draw the sinner from the error of his way, and bring him into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

* * *

The Sheikh's judgment

Neri is a town in Khurdistan, and Sheikh Saddik of Neri had a reputation for wisdom among his fellow Moslems. One day a perplexed true believer

presented himself with a problem. He possessed a fine fowl which unfortunately had taken to preaching Christianity. Three times in his hearing it had exclaimed, "The religion is the religion of Jesus!" The bird was produced, and repeated its message, "Din Din el Seyidna Isa," or at least what all present unanimously interpreted as being those words. That it was a miracle none doubted; but was it of Allah or Sheitan (God or Satan)? If the latter, the owner could wring the cock's neck, and the incident would be closed. If the former, ought he, a good Mussulman, to turn Christian?

The Sheikh considered the matter, and gave his answer. The miracle was declared to be from Allah; and the cock must in no wise be slain, but preserved as an honoured and sacred fowl. But there were many sects of Christians, and each one claimed that its particular version of Christianity was "the religion of Jesus." The cock had given no evidence as to which was the true one, so, until all Christians should agree together, or until the bird should give a more explicit oracle, no true believer need do anything.

A biting commentary upon the divided state of Christendom!

* * *

On the word 'Elder'

In the Septuagint version the word for Elder is 'presbuteros'—'chief men'; and was differentiated from 'presbutos'—'old men.' We still retain this term in our modern official title 'Alderman,' which carries with it a special precedence over other members of our municipal councils. The word 'Elder' does not therefore in itself indicate a 'priestly-prince' but its association with the number 'twenty-four' most certainly does. This official class among the priests is referred to in Isa. 37. 2, as Elders of the Priests; and in Jer. 19. 1, as the 'Ancients of the Priests.'

"By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."—Matt. 12. 37.

The Lord takes our words as an index of our heart condition. But since we are imperfect, it is not possible for us to be faultless in word and deed. Yet we are diligently and faithfully to seek to attain the perfect mastery of our words. We should be especially on guard in respect to evil speaking. Every tendency toward slander is to be checked. Whoever of us is reviled is not to revile again. These tendencies belong to the old nature. To be pleasing to the Master, we are to keep our hearts free from every form of evil. If this be done, the heart is rightly instructed of the Lord. Then we will know that we must make good whatever is wrong.

"HE COMETH WITH CLOUDS"

The second of a series of studies on the Second Advent
A.O.H.

One of the grandest pictures of our Lord's Second Advent is that which shows Him coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. The imagery is taken from the seventh chapter of Daniel, where one like the Son of Man comes thus and is brought near before the Ancient of Days to receive His Kingdom. Jesus made use of this symbol when declaring the certitude of His Second Coming to Caiaphas (Matt. 26. 64) and John the Revelator avowed his faith in that great event in the same terms (Rev. 1. 7). The early Christians, familiar as they were with the symbolism of Old Testament prophecy (technically called "apocalyptic") understood these allusions in the manner intended. It was inevitable that in the Dark Ages, when priestcraft had reduced Bible truth to a meaningless jumble of literal crudities and absurdities, this "coming in the clouds" should be viewed as a literal and visible event. One of the great achievements of "Present Truth" three generations ago was to make clear the true object and manner of our Lord's return, but although the *object* still remains tolerably well understood, it is to be feared that there is a considerable tendency to retreat into the old literal understanding of the *manner* of His return. The drift is quite understandable; hopes and expectations respecting the speedy coming of the Kingdom of God on earth, nurtured and cherished for a long term of years, have not been fulfilled so speedily as was anticipated, and the inevitable disappointment has destroyed confidence in many Scripture interpretations formerly held and implicitly believed. But the tendency cannot be placidly accepted for all that; we as Christian students ought to be aware that in whatever direction we have attained an advanced understanding of truth, in that same direction there will always be the forces of reaction tending to draw us back. The suggestive power of "orthodox" Christian thought, as endorsed and propounded by evangelical Christendom generally, has a greater influence on our minds than many of us realise, and it has to be resisted. All too often some claimed "wonderful new light" has proved to be traceable straight back to commentator Albert Barnes, or Doctor Bullinger, or some other worthy Christian of a century or more ago, instead of leading onward in the bright pathway that stretches before us unto meridian day (Prov. 4. 18).

In considering this subject it may well be the most profitable approach to look at the "literal" interpretation first, with all its implications. In so

doing it will be necessary to take into account the narrative of our Lord's ascension (Acts 1, 9) when, as the disciples gazed into heaven "a cloud received him out of their sight"; the various allusions to clouds in connection with the Second Advent, and Paul's intimation to the Thessalonians that at the end the Church will be "caught up . . . in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air" (I Thess. 4. 17). No apology is going to be made for treating the subject realistically and trying, within the limits of our knowledge, to visualise these events just as they are going to happen. Almost every Scripture text relating to this subject, the Second Advent, has been so dissected, analysed, classified, and explained that there is grave danger of forgetting that these words were not given to provide a kind of intellectual jig-saw puzzle for our mental stimulation and exercise, but to convey to our minds, in this generation, with the background knowledge of God and His Plan that we already have, as accurate a picture of the true nature of the Second Advent as we within our limits can receive.

The account of the Ascension in the first chapter of Acts is concise and eloquent, easy to understand. It is of course a description of an actual happening. We would call it a historical narrative, therefore we take it perfectly literally. The disciples really did go out to Olivet with Jesus, He really did ascend visibly before their eyes, there really was a cloud into which He disappeared and thereafter they saw Him no more. Two heavenly messengers did materialise into human form and speak to them and then the disciples returned to Jerusalem with great joy.

Unless God deviated the usual course of Nature, which was not necessary in this instance and is therefore unlikely, that cloud was not less than half-a-mile from the earth's surface and not more than six miles. It is only with difficulty that a human form can be plainly descried at half-a-mile distance on the level ground; we have to assume therefore that the ascending Lord was almost out of sight when He entered the cloud. Until that moment, He was visible in human form, wearing the normal garments of the day. It is hardly necessary to observe that the Lord Christ did not proceed on His way to His Father's presence still in that form and wearing those garments. The entire incident was enacted because He must needs show the disciples that He had now finally left them. A simple disappearance would not do; He had

appeared and disappeared a dozen times before since His resurrection. This visible ascent into the cloud was to show them that He was now ascending to His Father and would not be seen on earth again. The two angels "dematerialised" on the slopes of Olivet after giving their message, and returned, spirit beings, to the heavenly courts. The Lord laid aside that human form and those human trappings as He entered that cloud, and so ascended in His glorious spirit nature to the same heavenly courts.

The visible ascent must have been majestic and dignified, and therefore leisurely. The disciples must have stood, looking upwards, for at least ten or fifteen minutes while the form of their Master receded steadily into the distance. Any shorter time would have imparted a discordant note quite incompatible with the solemnity of the situation.

Now we come to the Second Advent. Jesus told Caiaphas at His trial "Ye shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and coming upon the clouds of heaven." (Matt. 26. 64.) If that statement is to be understood literally then it means that Christ returns visibly and is seen by human beholders, at His Second Coming. But is it to be understood literally?

If it is so to be interpreted, then it follows that Caiaphas and those with him must be raised from the dead before the Lord comes "in the clouds" to be seen of men, and before He has gathered His Church if that gathering is to take place at His literal appearance. That presented no difficulties to the old "twenty-four hour Day of Judgment" theology when everything took place at the signal of Gabriel's trumpet, but it certainly presents difficulty now. According to our understanding of the Divine Plan Caiaphas is not due to be raised until the General Resurrection, which takes place after the Lord's appearing and establishment of His Kingdom and not before. Whatever there is in the Divine Plan of a literal outward manifestation when the Lord takes His power and establishes His Kingdom "in the sight of all people", only the nations then living will witness it, not the dead. Certainly not Caiaphas. The Lord's words to him must be understood as having a significance that he appreciated, but not a literal one. The thought of Caiaphas being resurrected before the Church, whose is the First Resurrection, is out of all accord with the Plan as we know it.

Let us then look at the practical consideration. If "every eye" is literally to look upon Him at the time of His Coming in the clouds then He must at that time visit, as it were in triumphal procession, every part of the world where men live—which to-day is practically everywhere. We must rule out such things as films, television, etc., for the impressions gained by such means are not to be construed

as "seeing" in the true sense of the word. Neither would their use enhance the dignity and solemnity of the event. And who would be forewarned to set-up the necessary television cameras in the right spot to record the coming if it is to be "sudden—like a lightning flash"? If all the tribes of the earth are weeping and wailing at the suddenness of the catastrophe they will hardly be likely to spend time looking into the silver screen—even if by that time all peoples in all nations possess television sets. If the "seeing" is to be literal, then truly literal it must be.

Now the land surface of the earth amounts to some fifty-nine million square miles. Neglecting those who may be in ships at sea at the time of the Advent, it would be necessary for the triumphal procession of the returning Lord and His attendant angels to traverse all this area, at, say, a reasonable height above the surface of the ground, in order that "every eye" may "see Him." Such a procession, illumined by heavenly glory, certainly a wondrous spectacle of brilliance and radiance, would be distinguishable at considerably greater distance than ordinary earthly processions; even so, something like a quarter of a mile distant from observers on either side of the "route" would probably be the greatest practicable distance. Suppose it is decided and agreed that the rate of progress should not exceed three times the rate of modern earthly processions to ensure both the dignity of the event and enable men properly to witness it—ten miles an hour. With this data before us a simple calculation will demonstrate that if the returning Lord is thus to reveal Himself over all the earth to all of earth's millions, it will take more than thirteen hundred years to complete such manifestation—longer than the entire Millennium! The immensity of this world is not easily realised; the reduction of the poetic and symbolic language of Scripture to starkly literal interpretations not infrequently leads to absurdities such as the above.

Even though the Advent be reduced to the sight of some great celestial appearance reaching, like the lightning, "from the east to the west" without the Divine figure of Christ being discernible, such phenomenon, to be perceived by all men, would have to be repeated a great number of times, even though simultaneously, to be visible to all men everywhere. The insistence of Scripture that "every eye shall see him" is strong evidence against a literal seeing; it is impossible for all human beings living on this spherical earth to view the same spectacle all at the same time.

These calculations may be subjected to the criticism that they are absurdities. So they are. But they deal with real things. It is this planet earth, and the human beings living upon it, with all their

physical limitations, who are to experience the coming again of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and if we are to visualise aright how that coming is going to take place we have to take that fact into account.

Caiaphas was not the only one to whom Jesus spoke of His coming "with the clouds of heaven". He told His disciples just the same things. Speaking of the signs of His presence and of the coming of the Kingdom He said "Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming upon the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." (Matt. 24. 30, Mark 13. 26, Luke 21. 27.) The phraseology is quite clearly taken from Daniel 7, the vision of the destruction of the powers of this world and the establishment of the Kingdom of God. Jesus was telling both Caiaphas and His disciples, in effect, that He was the One Who will return and fulfil the terms of that vision. If the clouds He speaks of are literal, then the clouds of Dan. 7 are literal, and if they are literal, so is the rest of the vision of Dan. 7. We do well therefore to go back to that chapter.

Daniel 7 is quite well known. It describes four great mythical beasts who are brought for judgment before the "Ancient of Days," Who is clearly God Himself. At the same time there is One like the Son of Man, who comes with the clouds of heaven and is brought before the Ancient of Days. In that sublime Presence this Son of Man receives an everlasting kingdom which in the angel's subsequent explanation is shared with the "saints of the Most High".

No one will contend that this is a literal description of what is to happen, that God is in Person like unto a white-haired old man, that the Last Judgment is upon strange and mythical beasts having wings and horns and so on; that the dead are judged out of literal books. This is symbolic prophecy at its best. The "clouds of heaven" of the prophecy are as symbolic as the four beasts and the expressions "Ancient of Days" and "Son of Man". And if the "clouds" of Daniel 7 are symbolic, so must they be in Matt. 24 and Matt. 26 where Jesus is manifestly alluding to the same thing. So must they be in Rev. 1. 7 where John the Revelator in his exultation of spirit goes back to the language of the Old Testament and cries out, as though he actually saw the sight before him "*Behold, he comes, with clouds, and every eye sees him, even those that pierced him. Even so may it be*". John spoke there in the present tense, passive, as though the event he described was being enacted before his eyes. He did not say "He will come with clouds" as of something still future, but "Look, here he comes, with the clouds that were prophesied, and everyone is

mourning as was prophesied" and then, as if conscious that what he saw was only in the spirit of his mind, he uttered the heartfelt prayer "Even so, Amen." "Even thus let it be"—in due time.

It remains then to decide what is meant by the symbolic clouds of heaven which are associated with our Lord's Second Advent. It can be said quite simply that those clouds picture the majesty and glory and power of God manifested to men at the Second Advent. We have to go behind Dan. 7 now to trace the origin of this. These clouds are clouds of promise as well as clouds of judgment. The Second Advent is associated with judgment but when the time comes that the Son of Man is established in His Kingdom and all men are made aware of the fact, the judgment is mainly in the past and the promise of the Millennial calling, the new Age, is before them. Now that is how it was at the beginning. The first great time of judgment in man's history followed by a new Age was at the Flood. Immediately after the Flood, which was the judgment, God put His bow of promise in the cloud. In that radiant cloud was seen the promise of the future and in that manifestation of Divine power and glory men entered upon their new Age. Similarly at Sinai; God said He would be revealed in the thunders and lightnings of a thick cloud, and it was in the majesty and magnificence of that setting that Moses emerged, with his face reflecting the Divine glory, to lead the people into a new era of covenant relationship with God. The darkness of the cloud spoke of judgment; its lightnings and its glory spoke of promise. So the prophet in after days, speaking of that great event, cried "*God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. His glory covered the heavens, . . . and his brightness was as the light.*" (Hab. 3. 3-4.) The Psalmist, catching the same thought, sang of God "*who maketh the clouds his chariots, who walketh upon the wings of the wind.*" (Psa. 104. 3.) Isaiah, too, saw the Lord riding upon a swift cloud, and the idols of Egypt being moved at His presence. (Isa. 19. 1.) Note here the difference between history and prophecy. The clouds of Sinai and of the Flood were literal because the accounts in which they are mentioned are history. They became the basis for the prophetic poetry of David, Isaiah and Habakkuk where the clouds are symbolic. None of us really thinks that God literally rides on clouds as in a chariot. The language is metaphorical, poetic, symbolic, call it what we will, and it is carried into the New Testament as such.

It is on the basis of these things that both Joel and Zephaniah described the Time of Trouble that closes this Age and ushers in the Kingdom as a "day of clouds and thick darkness". (Joel 2. 2; Zeph. 1. 15.) Daniel's vision followed those of these two

prophets; his is much more comprehensive. It reveals not only the judgment but also the glory that is to follow and the whole vision has as its background the majesty and power and glory of God expressed, not only in judgment, but also in promise.

The clouds of heaven of the Second Advent, therefore, are symbolic. They picture the manifestations of Divine power and glory associated with that Advent, perceived at first only by those who are "watching for His coming," and by those who realise that He is now present setting in motion the forces which shortly shall make His Kingdom an established fact. The rainbow-promise of the Flood, the covenant-promise of Sinai, the Kingdom-promise of Daniel, and all the judgments on the evil things of this world which are associated with each of those three happenings are all enshrined in the "clouds of heaven" which accompany our returned Lord.

Those who believe in the fact of our Lord's presence now and in this day have already seen those clouds and in measure entered into them, like

the three disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration. In another respect we need to be like those disciples, who "feared as they entered into the cloud". We too should fear, being very careful as we consider these things and talk about them, realising our own limitations of understanding. Just as Peter "wist not what he said" on that wonderful occasion, so we need to realise our own insufficiency as we attempt to "touch things that involve so much". But of this we may be sure; the clouds of heaven, of our Lord's coming, already overspread the sky; it is not given to all to see them as yet, but all in their turn will see them and rejoice at the Coming of the Promised One. Even in their "wailing" they will rejoice, for that universal mourning is not one of terror but of remorse. And they will all thus look upon the One whom they pierced. Even Caiaphas!

* * *

There remains the text concerning clouds into which the Church are gathered at the Second Advent. That must be considered next month.

REGENERATION

*A short essay on
a vital subject*

"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (John 3. 5 & 6.)

There are many to-day who, like Nicodemus, are unable to comprehend the meaning of these words, and how it can be possible for a man to be "born again". Yet it can and does happen and there are many who have experienced this "re-birth" and to whom the secrets of the Lord and of His Kingdom are being revealed. Some deny the possibility of it, not realising that it is the operation of God's Spirit working upon the "natural" man, and that without this operating of the Spirit it is impossible to understand the spiritual things. Others contend that it is only after the resurrection that this re-birth takes place, and that we are only "begotten" of this spiritual life here. That this is not the case it is now desired to prove beyond all doubt.

Our Lord was speaking of spiritual things when he made the statement above to Nicodemus, and in the spiritual sense the water represents the true doctrine—truths of faith unadulterated. The Spirit is the operation of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and lives, for we are plainly told that "If ye live after the Spirit ye shall live, but if ye live after the flesh

ye shall die." (Rom. 8. 13.) There are many texts to prove that this "living after the Spirit" is the spiritual life, and that without this we are but natural or carnal, and as the Apostle Paul plainly shows "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned." (I Cor. 2. 14.)

The "begetting of the Holy Spirit" eventually results in a "re-birth," and, although it is not always discernible just when this re-birth has taken place, we know that it has, because we realise that life has taken on a new meaning for us. "Old things are passed away and all things are become new." We are now "new creatures" and it is from this time that the great battle within commences, of which St. Paul writes in Romans—Chapter 7. He knew that the battle was hard and that the "new man" or "spiritual man" or mind, was working against the "old man," and the "old man" was setting up a strong resistance. That this battle cannot be fought by a man alone he shewed plainly also. "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" So the Apostle cries out in despair—but, with a sudden spiritual illumination, the despair gives way to faith and hope when he remembers who is fighting this battle with

him—"I thank God through Jesus Christ, our Lord." The old man was warring against the new man, but "whosoever shall put their trust in Him shall never be ashamed."

It is true that the renovation of our bodies does not take place until the great Day when Jesus Christ shall come with His saints and St. Paul says that "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now . . . waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." He then goes on to say that at present this renovation of our bodies is "by hope" but he refers to us as those who "have the firstfruits of the Spirit."

Having then been "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, of the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." (I Peter 1. 23), St. Paul elsewhere urges us as "new-born babes" to desire the sincere milk of the work that we may GROW thereby. In the Epistle to the Hebrews St. Paul appears to be disappointed that his followers do not seem to have grown—or pressed forward—but have stood around the foundation things, as "the principles of the doctrine" which he enumerates in the second verse, instead of growing up and building that temple made without hands. How sad it must have made him to have to say that when he should have been feeding them with meat for strong men, it was necessary to teach them again the first principles of the oracles of God (5. 12), and that they had need of milk, which was a food for "babes" instead of meat which was for "those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." (5. 14.)

The Bible gives many examples of this growth which are very lovely. Jeremiah 17. v. 7 & 8 give a particularly lovely description of the flourishing state of our spiritual life:—

"Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is.

For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit."

As we grow thus from childhood to "full age" we are led by many unknown ways by the Lord, and often we may feel inclined to think we are, perhaps, wrong after all, because others do not understand our different way of life, and we sometimes find, too, to our consternation and dismay that many turn away from us or do not find our companionship desirable any longer. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." (Psa. 34. 19.) If He graciously

shows us that His Presence is going with us as we journey, we can count all other things as did St. Paul as "but dung, that I may win Christ."

We must remember, therefore, that Christ was and is the Bread of Life, and as we pray "Give us this day our daily bread" knowing that the word "bread" is a comprehensive word, meaning all our food and drink, so His Word is the Bread of Life, and all that does not reconcile with this, we must cast aside, for we must learn to "prove all things" and to "rightly divide the word of truth" as good workmen.

We must remember also that while faith is a very essential part of our life there is also another very essential part, which is love or charity, and many are the admonitions that our faith must be rooted in love, the only soil in which we can grow and multiply and bring forth fruit.

Above all things we should bear in mind that it is our "hearts" which God looks to, and the circumcision of the heart is the true circumcision. This brings our "new" wills into conformity with the Father's will for us, and as St. Peter says, these things will make us to be "neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ," and an entrance will be given us into the "everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (2 Pet. 1. 4-11.)

We shall then be partakers of the "marriage supper" and, being united to our glorious Lord in the wonderful mysteries of the "heavenly marriage," may thus have the joy and honoured privilege of bringing forth fruit unto God, and serving Him in His Kingdom and helping to bring others to Him that they, too, may be blessed as we have been and "go in and out and find pasture." We would do well to remember Jesus' own words that he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance, and that there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over the ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance. (Luke 15. 7.)

Let us, then, press on to our heavenly home, feeding on Him as our true Bread and asking Him humbly and gratefully to lead us onward and so work in us that we bring many more to Him also for His Blessing. He will give us discernment and keep us from falling if we trust in Him, and we shall find help and comfort from all those who have been used as His instruments also, learning to "choose the good and refuse the evil."

And if we likewise recall that everything we have is given by Him and is open to every other sinner to receive in God's good time, we shall be very humble, for without Him we can do nothing, and He only can keep us from falling.

"MY SON TIMOTHY"

*The love of a great man for
a lovable son in the faith*

One of the most beautiful experiences recorded in the life of the Apostle Paul began at the commencement of his second missionary tour. It was at Lystra that he met one who was to be his close and dearly beloved companion for the remainder of his life. *"Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed, but his father was a Greek: which was well reported of by the brethren which were at Lystra . . . Him would Paul have go forth with him"* (Acts 16. 1-3). Paul had recently parted from his former companion, Barnabas, who had sailed to Cyprus with Mark, and Paul had chosen Silas to accompany him. It is perhaps significant that of Paul and Silas it is recorded *"they departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God"* (Acts 15. 40).

Of this visit to Lystra made by Paul and his companion only one incident is told us but it happily affected all the future of the great Apostle. In his former visit he had converted the young Timothy and it was in the house of the boy's mother, Eunice, and his grandmother Lois that he and Silas were probably received. These two women were Jewesses who had accepted the Christian faith. We are led to suppose that Eunice was a widow and if so, she showed a beautiful spirit of self-sacrifice in parting with her only son.

The youthful Timothy is one of the best known and most lovable of that little circle who were henceforth associated with the wanderings of Paul. Of the many who Paul loved, none was dearer to him than this young disciple of Lystra. He adopted Timothy and regarded him as a son in all affectionate tenderness. Hear the terms with which he addressed him, *"Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith."* (1 Tim. 1. 2.) *"To Timothy, my dearly beloved son . . . I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day."* (2 Tim. 1. 2-3) and he reminds the Philippians how well they knew *"that, as a son with a father, he had served with him for the Gospel."* (Phil. 2. 22). In spite of his shyness and timidity, which were increased by his youthfulness, he was so entirely united in heart and soul with the Apostle that among his numerous friends and companions he found no one so genuine, so entirely unselfish, so sincerely devoted to the furtherance of the cause of Christ. *"For I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your state."* (Phil. 2. 20). He was in fact, more than any other,

the 'alter ego' (other self) of the Apostle. That their knowledge of each other was mutual is shown in Paul's letter to Timothy, *"But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long suffering, charity, patience,"* etc. (2 Tim. 3. 10). One whose yearning and often lacerated heart had such deep need of a kindred spirit on which to lean for sympathy, and whose distressing infirmities rendered necessary to him the personal services of some affectionate companion, must have regarded the devoted tenderness of Timothy as a special gift of God to save him from being crushed by overmuch sorrow.

Much as Paul loved Timothy, he loved the churches more, and if any church needed warning or guidance or Paul himself desired to know how it prospered, Timothy was required to overcome his shrinking modesty, to console the persecuted churches of Macedonia (Acts 19. 22. 1 Thes. 3. 2) or face the conceited turbulence of Corinth (1 Cor. 4. 17. 1 Cor. 16. 10) or to be the overseer of the Church of Ephesus (1 Tim. 1. 3). In fact no name is so closely associated with Paul's as that of Timothy; not only were two epistles addressed to him but he is associated with Paul in the superscription of five. *"Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother."* (2 Cor. 1. 1. 1 Thess. 1. 1. 2 Thess. 1. 1. Phil. 1 and Col. 1. 1).

Timothy was with the Apostle Paul during the greater part of his second missionary journey; he was with him at Ephesus (1 Cor. 16. 8-10), he accompanied him on his last voyage to Jerusalem (Acts 20. 4), he helped to comfort his first imprisonment at Rome (Phil. 2. 18-20), he was urged in the second epistle Paul addressed to him to hurry from Ephesus, to take with him the cloak, books and parchments which Paul had left with Carpus at Troas and to join him in his second imprisonment before it was too late to see him alive. (2 Tim. 4. 9 and 13). Some sixteen years had elapsed between the days when Paul took Timothy as his companion at Lystra and the days when, in the weary desolation of his imprisoned age, he wrote once more to his beloved disciple, yet even at that latter date Paul addressed him as though he were the same youth who had first accompanied him to the hallowed work. (2 Tim. 2. 22. 1 Cor. 16. 11). Surely it is obvious that if Timothy, when first Paul won him over to the faith of Christ, was not more than

sixteen or seventeen years old, he would be still far short of the prime of life when the second epistle was addressed to him; and that, even if he were older, there is no more familiar experience than an old man momentarily forgetting that those whom he had known as boys have grown to full manhood.

This was the youth whose companionship Paul now secured. Young as he was, the quick eye of Paul saw in him the spirit of loving and faithful service. He read the indications of one of those simple faithful natures which combine the glow of courage with the bloom of modesty.

Book Reviews

The Seven Churches. (E. M. Blacklock.) Marshall, Morgan & Scott. 80 pp., paper cover. 4/6. By post 5/-. (75c.).

This is by far the best exposition of the seven messages to the Churches in Asia that we have seen. Each message is preceded by a most informative and interesting history of the city concerned, and following the message itself comes a well-written and discerning comment on the salient features of the message, related to the physical facts of the city and its history in so marked degree as to betoken a great deal of study and research on the part of the writer.

A Key to Genesis. (Cleverley Ford.) S.P.C.K. 72 pp., paper cover. 3/6. By post 4/-. (60c.).

As believers in the overruling power of the Holy Spirit recording the true history of earth's earliest ages for our profit we cannot altogether commend this little book. It draws some most instructive and uplifting lessons from the Genesis narratives but the doubts thrown upon the historical nature of the books is in our opinion a detraction. We must certainly differ from the writer in his statement that "according to Genesis, the earth was made before the sun." The lessons which are so ably taught in this book do have so much more appeal when it is realised that the events and experiences from which they are drawn did in fact happen to flesh and blood men and women like ourselves. It is difficult to understand why the author so readily accepts the Babylonian story of the Flood as the record of a historical event whilst denying a similar foundation for the Genesis story of the Flood.

God spake by Moses. (O. T. Allis.) Marshall, Morgan & Scott. 159 pp. cloth. No index. 9/6. By post 10/6. (\$1.50).

A general survey of the Five Books of Moses. Much of the matter is interesting to students but the attempt to compress what amounts to a commentary on all five books within the compass of this volume is too ambitious. Perhaps the principal value of the book lies in its quiet insistence on the strictly historical character of the writings. These things did happen, and these things were written, just as the records claim for themselves. There is a useful appendix dealing with the "Interval Theory," i.e., the claim that a prior world of man existed before Adam and was brought to an end by catastrophe.

"Putting Ten Thousand to Flight." (Jean Rees.) Marshall, Morgan & Scott. 160 pp., cloth. 7/6. By post 8/-. (\$1.25).

There can be few Christians who have not heard of evangelist T. B. Rees and the Albert Hall rallies conducted under the motto "Get Right with God." This is a narrative of the life of Christian service which has led to these rallies, attended now by many thousands of young and old. This book will interest all whose hearts are set on bringing the unconverted to Christ. It is also well worth the attention of those among our readers who wonder why their own efforts to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom seem so barren of result compared with earlier days. The most noteworthy feature of the book is the emphasis it places upon prayer; if the narrative is anything to go by, there certainly is great truth in the saying we use so often among ourselves, "Prayer changes things."

It is in prayer that God shows his face to His children, that they have visions of His beauty, and glory, that the sweet things of His love come down as gifts into their hearts, and that they are transformed into His likeness.

Let us as the lilies of His planting, bloom for the glory of our Heavenly Husbandman.

God has placed us in the world to be Lighthouses, to reflect His Light and to shed radiance wherever we go.

When we depend upon organisations, we get what organisation can do; when we depend upon education, we get what education can do; when we depend upon man, we get what man can do; but **WHEN WE DEPEND UPON PRAYER, WE GET WHAT GOD CAN DO.**

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.

True prayer is the process by which we learn to know God and to realize what He wants to be to us, and to take possession of the wondrous inheritance of riches and power which are ours in Christ Jesus and which He is waiting to help us work out in our experience.

Daniel could sleep better in the den of lions than Darius in the royal palace; he who could not find rest in the lion's den, when *that* was the place for him, could not gain rest by a mere removal to a palace.

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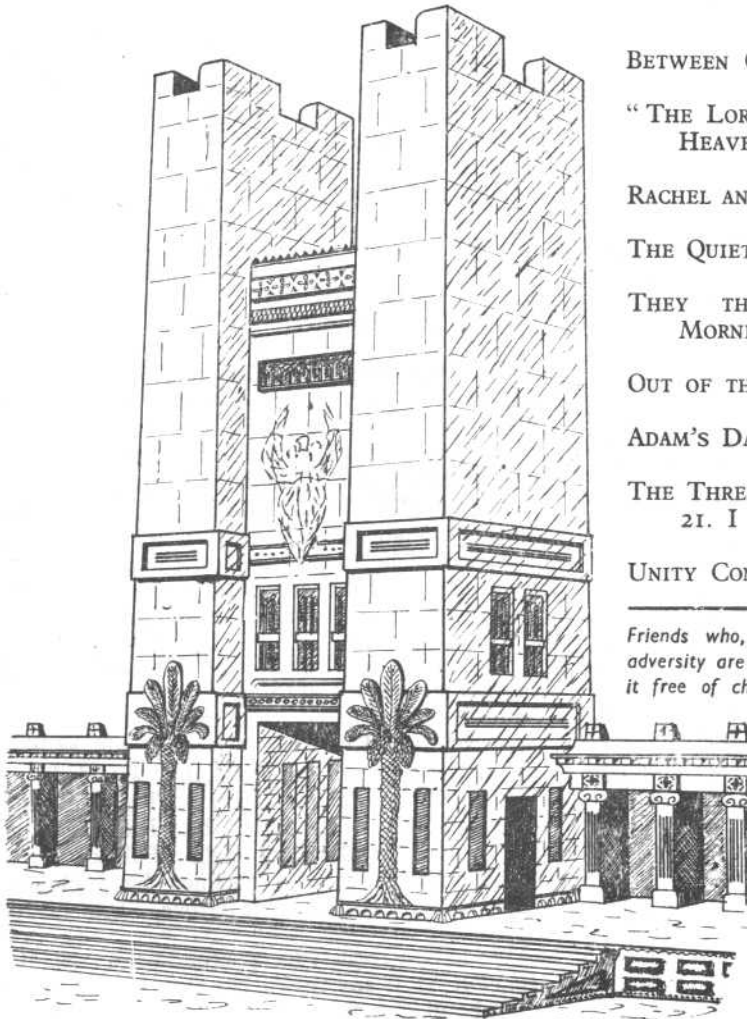
Vol. 29, No. 6

JUNE, 1952

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| BETWEEN OURSELVES | 82 |
| "THE LORD SHALL DESCEND FROM HEAVEN" | 83 |
| RACHEL AND THE STOLEN IMAGES ... | 87 |
| THE QUIET TIME | 88 |
| THEY THAT WATCH FOR THE MORNING | 89 |
| OUT OF THE STOREHOUSE | 91 |
| ADAM'S DAUGHTERS | 92 |
| THE THREE EPISTLES OF JOHN 21. I John 4. 11-16 | 93 |
| UNITY CONVENTION | 94 |

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

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BETWEEN OURSELVES

London brethren (Central London, Forest Gate, Welling and Windsor classes) are arranging for a Convention this year at Conway Hall, London, W.C., and fuller details will be circulated later. In conjunction with the Convention an Immersion Service will be arranged (D.V.) and all brethren desirous of symbolising their consecration to the Lord by water immersion should forward their names early.

Convention Secretary and Treasurer:

Bro. F. H. GUARD,
74, Princes Avenue,
Woodford Green, Essex.

Accommodation:

All enquiries *re* accommodation should be sent early to:

Bro. H. CHARLTON,
Ryvers Cottage,
Ryvers Farm,
Langley, Bucks.

Hotel accommodation, more satisfactory than previously, has been earmarked and Brother Charlton should be advised of what is required by the middle of June latest.

* * *

"Zion's Glad Songs" was a songbook highly esteemed by our brethren in past years and although it has long since gone out of print there are many who ask if copies can be obtained. Unfortunately the answer is "No"; the few copies in existence are cherished by their owners and rarely is it that a second-hand copy comes our way.

It is not so generally known, however, that subsequent to the publication of "Zion's Glad Songs," Brother McPhail published two smaller books which between them contained many of the original songs. These are known as "Zion's Glad Songs No. 2" with 65 hymns and songs, and "Songs of Comfort" with 66. Between them about 80 of the original songs were reproduced and the remainder are choice Christian "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" of similar nature. Now through the generosity of a sister in U.S.A. we have become possessed of a goodly quantity of these two books in brand new condition, and we propose to distribute them to the friends at a nominal price to cover postage and leave a little to help the "Monthly" publishing fund. We feel that many of the brethren here will appreciate the opportunity of possessing these two books. Each one measures $7\frac{1}{2}'' \times 5''$, same size as the original "Zion's Glad Songs," is bound in stiff card, and of course contains words and music.

The two books will be distributed only in pairs (one of each book), as follows:

One pair (two books) - 1/6 post free.
12 pairs (24 books) - 15/- carriage paid.

Classes requiring larger quantities for congregational singing are desired to write us, stating quantity desired, for details of special arrangements under which they can be supplied.

* * *

We still have a goodly number of the special issue "God's Fulfilling Purpose" available for free distribution to all who can make good use of them, and will be pleased to forward quantities to any who will make the request. This is a useful pamphlet to pass to newly interested people and to those who are perplexed at the apparent inactivity of God in face of the world's distress; it takes the reader right through the working of God from the beginning, tracing, as one has said, "the stately steppings of our God through time." If you can make use of same, do not hesitate: ask now.

* * *

The receipt of an anonymous donation of £1 to the Benevolent Fund is acknowledged through these columns, with sincere appreciation, by the Benevolent Committee.

* * *

The June meeting at Caxton Hall will be of an important nature, in that a general discussion and review of meetings is to be conducted by Brother A. J. Lodge, in which the future arrangements are to be considered in the light of the past six months' meetings. All brethren who are interested in these meetings should make a point of attending if at all possible. Following the discussion, the friends will be addressed by Bro. G. H. Jennings. Meeting commences at 6.30 as usual, 21st June.

* * *

The friends at Sheffield wish it to be known that special meetings are to be held in that city on Saturday and Sunday, 14th and 15th June. On Saturday Bro. Kirkwood (Glasgow) will address a public meeting on the subject "World Peace—When and How", at the Library Theatre, Sheffield, and on Sunday will address the friends at 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. at the City Hall. Full details and accommodation can be obtained by applying to Mrs. McNerlen, 32, Stone Grove, Sheffield 10.

* * *

We have a request for a second-hand "Emphatic Diaglott". If any reader has one to dispose of we shall be glad to have details of condition and price asked. We are in fact always ready to purchase good second-hand copies of any Bible translation, and at present would like to acquire copies of the "Variorum".

"The Lord shall descend from heaven"

A.O.H.

The third of a series of studies on the Second Advent

One of the most vivid passages of Scripture describing the Second Advent is that which enshrines Paul's words of comfort to the Thessalonian Christians who were fearful that their departed brethren might be forgotten when the Lord should come again. His words have been the inspiration of all succeeding Christian generations and they are a stimulus and ground of confidence to us today. The fact that some understand their background literally and others spiritually makes no difference to the comfort and incentive we all derive from them. The very fact that there are differences of thought on the meaning of the passage, however, renders it almost certain that no matter how sure one may be of the matter, a fresh approach to the question will be of interest.

The gist of the whole passage is that, at the time ordained, our Lord Jesus will descend from heaven, raise the "sleeping saints" from the dead, "change" the living ones, gather all to Himself "in the clouds" and "in the air"—"and" says the Apostle "so shall we ever be with the Lord". All who love the Lord ardently desire a share in that sublime experience and all rejoice together in that hope. There is no disagreement upon the principles of the doctrine itself, only differences of view as to precisely how and when the event will come to pass.

Let the glorious beauty of the words rise before our minds once more as prelude to our consideration of all that they involve.

"If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so" (we must believe) "them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming (presence) of the Lord shall not prevent (precede—go before) them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." (I Thess. 4. 14-18.)

This is the chapter that has given rise to what is called the "doctrine of the rapture of the saints"

—a belief that is many centuries old, is still held by very many evangelical Christians, and is incorporated into the official theology of more than a few denominations. It is said, on the authority of these words, that one day yet to come, at the "end of the world", the Lord Jesus will suddenly and without warning appear in glory, like a lightning flash, cleaving the heavens in His meteoric descent, accompanied by loud shouts, archangel's voice, and the piercing note of the Seventh Trumpet. At the same instant, the graves will open and reveal the Christian saints of past ages, clothed in resurrection bodies, swiftly winging their upward flight to their Lord in the heavens. In that same moment the still-living Christians will experience the miraculous transformation of their bodies into conformity with the Lord's own physical frame—this belief demands that the Lord return visibly in human form—and join their resurrected comrades in joint ascent to a place of meeting in the upper atmosphere, shrouded from mortal sight by the all-enfolding clouds of heaven. The abrupt "catching away" of living men and women will inevitably cause disorganisation and catastrophe on earth—some evangelical tracts picture the results of Christian engine-drivers being "caught away" from the footplates of express trains and so on—and this is hailed by some believers of the more thoughtless type as a witness to the world that God is moving toward judgment and punishment for mankind's indifference to Christ and their rejection of Him.

The two or three generations just past saw a much saner and more dignified view of the passage find acceptance among more serious students of the Scriptures; there is now quite evidently a tendency to swing back to the older view in part if not in whole and it is a pity that this is so. The old crudely literal view has little to commend it. All too often it is suggested—in all sincerity, be it conceded—that we should "take the Scripture to mean exactly what it says" and use that rather overdone catch phrase as excuse for pinning the most fantastic of literal interpretations to plainly prophetic or poetic utterances. It certainly is true that we must take the Scripture to mean exactly what it says; it does not always follow that in our reading we understand what the Scripture is saying. One would hardly interpret in a literal sense the

Scriptural statement that the earth is God's footstool!

It is quite evident that we must associate with this passage the noteworthy words in I Cor. 15. 51-52 "*Behold, I shew you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*" In both passages there is a distinction between the "sleeping" and "living" saints. The former are "raised" to the glory of immortal spiritual nature, the latter are "changed" to the same.

"Exactly" say some "and Paul's words mean just what they say. Christ's first work when He comes will be to gather His elect from the graves of earth, and then the living will be changed and both caught up together to meet the Lord in the air."

And what is there in the graves of earth, it may be asked, that will come forth at Christ's bidding, to form the glorious spirit beings who are to be with Him through all eternity?

In the old days men believed in the resurrection of the body and they could easily visualise such a happening. Do we now believe in the resurrection of the body? Is that a feature of the First Resurrection?

Seventy years ago there appeared a book which, among many things that have since powerfully influenced our thoughts, contained a chapter entitled "Spiritual and human natures separate and distinct". In that chapter the writer defined more clearly than had ever been done before the essential difference that exists between creatures of earth and creatures of heaven. He stressed and expounded the fundamental truth of Paul's saying here in I Cor. 15 "*flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God*". That fundamental principle has to be kept in mind when we come to consider Paul's Second Advent teaching. The First Resurrection is to spirit nature, having nothing whatever in common with the old body of flesh. That old body was covenanted to destruction anyway; that is one of the terms of our consecration by which we become members of Christ's church at all. When the time comes that the Lord "descends from heaven with a shout" and the First Resurrection takes place, there is certainly nothing in the graves of earth, nor the waters of the sea or the winds of heaven for that matter, to "come forth".

From whence, then, do the risen ones come?

"We know" says Paul (II Cor. 5. 1-4) "*that if our earthly house . . . were dissolved, we have a building of God . . . eternal in the heavens.*

. . . we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven . . . that mortality might be swallowed up of life." Again does the great Apostle teach (I Cor. 15. 37-44) "*Thou sowest not that body that shall be . . . but God giveth it a body . . . to every seed his own body. . . There are celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial . . . so also is the resurrection of the dead . . . it is sown a natural (terrestrial) body; it is raised a spiritual (celestial) body . . . as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.*" It is clear that in the resurrection there is nothing contributed by earth toward the making of those glorious beings who are to live and reign with Christ a thousand years; all is of heaven. The identity, the character, of the one who once lived and died, has been safe in God's keeping ("*The spirit shall return to God who gave it.*" Eccl. 12. 7) and the new spiritual body is also from heaven, and if the resurrection is to take place on earth, well, it looks almost as if the returning Lord must bring those candidates for resurrection with him when He comes.

Which, of course, is exactly what Paul does say in I Thess. 4. 14. "*Even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.*" But let no one hastily conclude on this account that the resurrection takes place in heaven and not on earth; we have much ground to explore in this Scripture before we can begin to appreciate what Paul really does mean. It is necessary to pause for a moment, though, to examine this word "bring".

The Emphatic Diaglott has it "will lead forth with him." The word used means to "lead with one's own self," to "attach to one's self as an attendant" and is used in 2 Tim. 4. 11 "Take Mark, and bring him with thee." It occurs in Rom. 8. 14 "As many as are led by the Spirit of God" and one example in Josephus (*Ant.* 10. 9. 6) is to the point. Speaking of the days of Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of Jerusalem and the Captivity, Josephus says "The people and Johanan disobeyed the counsel of God, and removed into Egypt, and carried Jeremiah and Baruch along with them." These words "and carried with them" are from the same Greek word as "bring with" in this text. The thought therefore is that the "sleeping saints" are as it were found in company with Jesus at the moment of His Advent. In other words, the moment of His Advent, and the place of His Advent, is marked by the wakening to conscious existence, in His presence, of all His saints who by that time have already passed into the sleep of death. There is nothing for the world to see, for this resurrection is to spiritual nature, invisible to man. No indication of the momentous happening can be given on

earth below, for the creation of a celestial body by God, and the impress thereon of the identity of a saint who died long ages ago, is a matter that can be appreciated and known only in the celestial world. Wherever and however the First Resurrection takes place, those thus raised will be "seen" only by the citizens of Heaven.

The resurrected "sleeping saints", then, will not rise out of earthly graves, will not stand upon earth to be seen of men, and consequently will not ascend into literal clouds to meet their Lord in literal fashion. The whole process of their resurrection is "beyond the Veil" and it is there that they awaken to meet their Lord.

What then means the categorical statement that the Lord will descend from heaven with a shout and the dead in Christ will rise first? If they do not in fact rise from literal graves on earth what becomes of His descent to raise them? Before attempting to answer that question let us consider with care that Paul and other Scripture writers frequently used "figures of speech" to convey a meaning perfectly well understood by their readers, just as we do ourselves. For example, we often refer to the fact that an aged believer of our acquaintance has "passed beyond the Veil". Do we mean that there is a literal veil which has to be passed to gain entry to the spiritual world? We speak of our hope—as does James also—of receiving a crown of life if faithful. Do we expect a literal crown? Jesus promised He would one day drink new wine in the Kingdom with His disciples. (Matt. 26. 29.) Do we expect to see spiritual beings drinking literal grape-juice? Is the marriage feast of the Lamb to consist of the material viands seen at earthly banquets, and the "overcomers" arrayed in linen robes of earth? All these allusions are commonly used without further explanation and no one ever thinks of taking them literally. So when Paul declares that the Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout He is clothing the truth that we imperfect human beings cannot comprehend in literal terms that we can understand.

We must be frank and confess that we do not know *how* our Lord returns at His Second Advent or from whence He comes; what we do know is that He *does* come to earth in this our time. We cannot understand the nature of the celestial world and we do not know where it is nor how one gets there. It is true that a hundred years ago Rev. Joseph Seiss suggested that heaven was on one of the stars of the Pleiades group and on that basis someone else calculated how long it would take the Lord Jesus to make the journey back to this earth at the appointed time, but all that does not show much advance on the ideas of the Sumerians soon

after the Flood, who believed heaven to be situated fifteen days' journey across the sea from their own south country, in just about the spot where the British and the Americans are at present competing for the world's latest oil field!

It might well be, then, that Paul means nothing more than that the Lord will come from the celestial world to the terrestrial world; that a time comes, the time of the commencement of His Second Presence, which is to continue for a thousand years, when He transfers Himself, as it were, from the spiritual creation, and the company of His Father and the heavenly angels, and all of which that creation consists, to this material creation, with its stars and suns and circling planets, and this earth with its inhabitants, the physical world of which He was a member for a short space two thousand years ago. That "descent from heaven" may be something more akin to the "coming in" of radio or television programme on a receiver tuned to receive it than a journey through space from star to earth, for all we may know; but then, we really do not know. He comes to us from the unknown from "beyond the veil", and the moment he has come as it were within the time and space framework of this our world, the sleeping saints are with him, in fullness of life.

What then of the living ones who are to be changed? There is no doubt about *their* being on solid earth, on *terra firma*, at the moment of His Advent. Neither is there any doubt that whilst still in possession of their human bodies, they cannot go to meet their Lord. They too can meet Him and see Him only as celestial beings, made like Him; and that happy state can only be obtained by leaving the flesh behind. So Paul says that all such must be "changed".

Here again there are misconceptions inherited from older times. It used to be thought that the "change" consisted of some supernatural incorruptibility and glory imparted to the human body, which then would ascend into the clouds to meet the Lord, the believers retaining that "glorified" human body to all eternity. That, after all, was consistent enough when heaven itself was supposed to be built of solid gold and plate glass, and the eternal occupations of the redeemed restricted to the alternative of playing a harp or blowing a trumpet! We have a much wider view of the Divine purposes to-day; knowing also that flesh and blood cannot inherit that world we are compelled to look more closely into the nature of this change.

An important thing to notice here is that it does not imply exemption from death. One would hardly think it necessary to make this point, yet it has been stated quite recently that I Thess. 4

teaches that there will be a class who will not die and that Paul in I Cor. 15 is plainly saying "We shall not all die." The writer feels that to be a very rash and a very dangerous statement to make. After all, we have covenanted to be dead with Christ; not only to live the life of sacrifice as He did but go into death as He did that the human life be "poured out unto death." (Isa. 53. 12.) The fact that the moment of death of the "living ones left-over" becomes the moment of resurrection makes no difference to the reality of that death. Since there is no consciousness in death the moment of awakening is but the "twinkling of an eye" after the moment of death for both sleeping saints and living ones, and there will be no difference in the apparent experience of both in that respect.

The Greek word for "change" in I Cor. 15 is "*metamorphoo*" which means to transform one thing into another. It is used in English to define the change of a chrysalis into a butterfly but the fact that there is no death in that case is no argument for the matter under discussion. Paul says that we shall not all sleep like the sleeping saints, but he does not say that we shall not die. Some at the end, instead of spending a long term of years in the grave awaiting resurrection, will be resurrected at the moment of death. There will be no waiting time. The change is from an earthly body under earthly conditions to something entirely different, a spiritual body under spiritual conditions. The earthly body will be left behind on earth. It is not that which will ascend to meet the Lord in the air. The spirit, the identity, call it what we will, will be clothed upon, in that moment, with its "house from heaven" and so meet the Lord.

It therefore follows that since no literal bodies are to be "caught up" at His Coming, the "clouds" into which they are taken need not be, and indeed cannot be, literal clouds. The idea of spirit beings ascending into literal clouds in order to be concealed from the gaze of the world—which is the idea behind the reference, similar to the ascension on Olivet—is incongruous and absurd. The clouds, then, are the clouds in which the returning Lord comes at His Advent, the clouds of judgment on the one hand and glory on the other. It is into these clouds that the resurrected Church is pictured as being taken. In other words, they join their Lord during the glory of His coming, and are with Him before that glory is revealed to the world. The whole of I Thess 4 has to be fulfilled before the world knows anything about the Second Advent. That is evident from the fact that when Christ appears or is made manifest to the world, the saints are similarly to appear with

Him; that cannot take place until they have been all gathered to Him and it is I Thess. 4 which describes the gathering.

"*To meet the Lord in the air.*" A strange word, the only occasion on which the "air" figures in connection with the Advent. Of course Paul might only have meant that the meeting is to take place several miles above the earth's surface instead of on the ground itself—that part of the atmosphere sufficiently dense to call "air" only exists for ten miles or so above the ground so the limits would have to be fairly narrow—but that would seem a strange stipulation for spirit beings who are not subject to the geographical and physical limitations of humanity. He might have used the term in its Scripturally symbolic sense as meaning the powers of spiritual control, as in "the prince of the power of the air" of Eph. 2, 2. Or he might have used the word deliberately because to Greeks—and he was writing to the Thessalonians—it would immediately convey a thought that it does not so readily convey to us, albeit a thought that rounds off his teaching in a truly wonderful manner.

The word "air" is taken by us direct from the Greek and is used by us exclusively to denote the gaseous medium which we breathe and in which we live. The Greeks used the word to define something more than that. They used it to describe the mythological upper levels of the earth in which, they believed, there dwelt the gods and goddesses, and the spirits of departed great men, in conditions of unparalleled felicity. Only the tops of the highest mountains penetrated this higher plane of being and no mortal could attain it except through the gates of death. Only by the favour of the gods could man ever rise to those elevations. Just to illustrate what the word "air" meant to the Thessalonians, the following words uttered by the Greek philosopher Socrates shortly before his death, and recorded by Plato, are quoted—"this earth which we inhabit, and the whole region of our abode, are all corrupted . . . but those upper regions of the earth are far more excellent than those which we inhabit . . . it is well worth hearing what kind of places those are *in the upper earth, situated under the heavens* . . . (some) dwell about the air, as we do about the sea, and others reside in islands which the air flows round . . . In one word *what water and the sea are to us, the air is to them*; but what air is to us, the ether is to the inhabitants of that pure earth. The seasons there are endued with such an excellent temperament, that the inhabitants are never molested with disease, . . . and surpass us in sight, hearing, and wisdom, as much as air excels water in purity. They have groves and temples of the gods, in which *the gods*

dwell in reality, and they behold the gods, and associate with them . . . ”

Now that is quite a fair description of the orthodox Christian view of heaven, a place up in the sky where the happy righteous live forever with God. When Paul told the Thessalonians that they would be taken to meet the Lord “in the air” that was what they immediately visualised in their minds; not a short ascent into the midst of a wet, clammy cloud mass a mile or so above the earth where visibility would be reduced to nil, but a swift transfer to the golden regions of the sky where the righteous dead lived in eternal felicity with those to whom they had given their lives’ worship and service. Had the A.V. translators caught the true nature of the allusion they could more correctly have rendered the phrase “to meet the Lord in heaven” which would have made it more intelligible to us and brought it into textual harmony with other Scriptures.

That at any rate, is the meaning. We shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the glory land beyond the veil, where sorrow and crying, sickness and pain, shall be no more. Whether the place

of meeting is located ten miles above the earth’s surface, where there is both literal air and literal clouds, or a thousand miles above, where there are neither, or whether that place of meeting in the spiritual world cannot be defined geographically at all, is of no consequence to us. We shall be with Him, and we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. The gathering of the living and the dead saints together in union with the Lord the Head, in the radiance of immortal spiritual nature, unseen by and unknown to the world, will be glory far excelling. It is for *that* the world must wait; for *that* the establishment and manifestation of the Kingdom must wait. Nothing can be done in the further outworking of God’s Plan until the “marriage of the Lamb” has taken place, and it is for that marriage that the Lord comes first, to gather His saints. “Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

* * *

Nothing has been said in the foregoing about the time-feature of this gathering. How long do these things take to complete? That will be the subject of next month’s article.

RACHEL AND THE STOLEN IMAGES

The story of Jacob’s flight from his uncle Laban, when with wives, children and cattle, he determined to return to his own country, comes readily to mind and one remembers how Laban pursued the runaways greatly distressed at the loss of his images or “teraphim” which Rachel had stolen. Gen. 31; 19 tells us “And Laban went to shear his sheep; and Rachel had stolen the images that were her father’s.” Rachel had the images, and Laban had to return home without having found them.

What were those images? Why did Rachel steal them, and why did Laban, going to shear his sheep, discover his loss and manifest such distress of mind?

It has been known for many years that these “teraphim” were miniature images of gods and were kept in the house to be a kind of guardian deity. They were thought to ward off evil and to keep the household in health. When any undertaking was planned special ceremonies were conducted before them, and thus Laban, prior to commencing his sheep shearing, which was always an important event, found to his dismay that the usual ceremonial could not be observed, for the deities of his household were gone.

The discoveries of recent years have given the clue to Rachel’s object. Some years ago, research in Northern Mesopotamia revealed written records of a great nation which in Jacob’s time occupied the region in which Laban and Jacob lived and kept

their flocks. These people have been given the name “Hurrians,” and they are the same as the Horites and the Hivites of the Old Testament. Laban, living among them, was subject to their laws and must have adopted many of their customs. Among those laws there is one which states that possession of the family gods or “teraphim” entitled the holder to a son’s share in the father’s estate. Here then is the reason for Rachel’s theft. By securing and retaining possession of Laban’s teraphim she could justly demand a share in her father’s property at his death. Doubtless she was anxious to provide for the future of her son Joseph, fearing that Jacob’s other ten sons might deprive him of a share in Jacob’s possessions. It may have been that the jealousy which was openly manifested in later years was present even then, and Rachel sought this means to ensure that her own son would not be “left penniless.”

Her theft was of no avail. Soon afterwards Jacob commanded all the “strange gods”—“the teraphim”—in the hands of his people to be given up and had them buried; a sign that the old beliefs of Laban’s house were banished for ever. (Gen. 35; 2-4). A little while longer and Rachel herself was dead. Neither was her scheming necessary, for Joseph eventually became the most powerful man in the most powerful empire of his day—Prime Minister in the land of Egypt—and so far from losing his inheritance amongst his brethren, he became their preserver and the means of establishing Israel in the place where they grew into a great nation.

THE QUIET TIME

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

TRUST

*Build a little fence around To-day,
And therein stay;
Look not through the shelt'ring bars
Upon To-morrow,—
Sufficient for each day, the evil
And the sorrow.*

SANCTIFIED

Our lives, our all, every moment is sanctified to Him and "the daily round, the common task, can furnish all we need to ask. Room to deny ourselves, a road to bring us daily nearer God." Is it not worth all, to be nothing in this life that we might know the transcendent joy of being transformed by the power of God into radiant perfection, fitted for eternal life in heaven and companionship with God and Christ?

PRAYER

Prayer pulls the rope below and the great bell rings above in the hearing of God. Some scarcely stir the bell, for they pray so languidly; others give but an occasional pluck at the rope but he who wins with heaven is the man who grasps the rope boldly and pulls continuously with all his might.

FAITH

Our faith will be in proportion to our knowledge of the character of God. We shall find, upon observation, that in proportion to our faith we can endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. God is subjecting our faith to a great heat in order to separate the dross. If we had not the faith, we might fear to take the steps which would bring us into this crucial position. Fear would lead us to decline to take the course that God indicates to be His will. Without faith we would shrink from the fiery trials, the heated furnace. If we have not the faith to stand the trials, then we are not of the kind for whom God is at the present time looking.

POWER

At Pentecost the Christian's armament was changed, so to speak, from arrows to artillery. On that day God placed the dynamic power of the Holy Spirit at the disposal of the simplest, most humble believer. Thus we need not a strong right arm to bend the bow of the flesh, not a dominating personality, but a sanctified finger to press the trigger of faith, and release the stored up enormous and mighty power of Pentecost.

PURITY

The purer the person, the more surely will he be the target. You notice that the speckled birds are more a mark for the huntsman than are the others. Thus all who are bearing the vessels of the Lord's House are special targets for the fiery darts of the wicked one. So we must contend against the world, the flesh and the adversary. Those who are in the right condition of heart, the pure in heart, earnest as the Lord's children, watch to keep their garments clean. Unless they watch, they will surely get their garments defiled. Satan is specially endeavouring to touch them; and we know that wherever he would touch there is defilement.

UNITY

Christ Himself is the Vine, and each disciple is a branch. Not a cutting from the Vine planted and left to develop its own independent life, but a branch that still is part of the Vine itself. The one life flows through every branch, out to every tiny twig and tendril. It is a true symbol of the Christian life, a derived and a dependent life, not only at its beginning but throughout its course.

GRACE

There is no promise of Grace in advance of the need. God did not make a way through the Red Sea before Israel arrived on the shore. He did not divide the waters of the Jordan while the people were at rest in their Camp, nor even when they first began to march.

He did not sow the wilderness with manna while Israel dwelt in Egypt. He did not send His Angel till the Syrians were at Jerusalem's gates. It was only as they came abreast of their need that the supply was ready—not one moment before!

Grace to help arrives at the same moment as the need! Grace synchronises with need.

UNDERSTANDING

*Wondrous mystery, long concealed,
Unto us has been revealed.
Herald wide the gracious story—
Christ in you, the hope of glory!*

*Christ in you the world's sore need,
Christ in you the promised Seed.
Canst receive it? Then thou art
Of the Christ, indeed, a part.*

They that watch for the morning

An Exhortation

The life of every human being has its lights and shadows, its seasons of joy and its depths of sorrow. These make up the warp and woof of experience, and the web of character that flows from the active loom of life will be fine and beautiful, or coarse and homely, according to the skill and carefulness with which the individual appropriates and weaves into it the thread of experience. In every life, under the present reign of sin and evil, the sombre shades predominate; and to such an extent that the Scriptures aptly describe humanity in its present condition as a "groaning creation." Nor is the Christian exempt from these conditions that are upon the whole world; for "we also groan within ourselves, waiting for deliverance." (Rom. 8, 22, 23.)

But while we are waiting for the deliverance, the daily experiences of life have a most important mission to us, and the manner in which we receive and use them should be a matter of deepest concern to us; for, according to the use we make of them, each day's prosperity or adversity and trial bears to us a blessing or a curse. Those experiences which we are accustomed to regard as prosperous often have in them subtle dangers. If wealth increase or friends multiply, how almost imperceptibly the heart finds satisfaction in earthly things; but, on the other hand when the keen edge of sorrow and disappointment are felt, when riches fail and friends forsake, and enemies take up a reproach against us, the natural temptation is to despondency and despair.

Just here is an important part of the great battle of the Christian's life. He must fight the natural tendencies of the old nature and confidently claim and anticipate the victory in the strength of the great Captain of his salvation. He must not succumb to the flattering and deceptive influences of prosperity, nor faint under the burden of adversity. He must not allow the trials of life to sour and harden his disposition, to make him morose, or surly or bitter, or unkind. Nor may he allow pride or ostentation or self-righteousness to grow and feed upon the temporal good things which the Lord's providence has granted him to test his faithfulness as a steward.

Sorrows indeed may, and often will, come in like a flood, but the Lord is our helper in all these things. The soul that has never known the discipline of sorrow and trouble has never yet learned

the preciousness of the Lord's love and helpfulness. It is in seasons of overwhelming sorrow, when we draw near to the Lord, that He draws specially near to us. So the Psalmist found it, when, in deep affliction, he cried to the Lord and reasoned of his righteousness, saying: "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice: let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications." Feeling his own shortcomings and longing for full deliverance from every imperfection, and prophesying the bountiful provisions of the Divine plan of salvation through Christ, he adds: "If Thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities (imputing them to us), O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared (reverenced)."

How blessed are such assurances when the soul is painfully conscious of its infirmities and of its inability to measure up to the perfect law of righteousness. When the heart is true and loyal, God does not mark our infirmities in a record against us. They are not imputed to us, but are freely forgiven through Christ in Whose merit we trust and Whose righteousness is our glorious dress—arrayed in which we may come with humble boldness, even into the presence of the King of kings and Lord of lords.

If God thus ignores the infirmities of our flesh and receives and communes with us as new creatures in Christ, His children should also regard one another, considering not, and charging not against each other, the infirmities of the flesh, which all humbly confess and by the grace of God strive daily to overcome. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" The case is different, however, when the infirmities of the flesh are cultivated, indulged and justified that the errors may be continued. Then, indeed, they are charged against us, and if we do not speedily "judge ourselves," the Lord will judge and chasten us. (1 Cor. 11, 31, 32.)

"I wait for the Lord," the Psalmist continues, "my soul doth wait, and in His word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning." How necessary is this patient waiting for the Lord! In the midst of cares, perplexities, difficulties and infirmities we may remember that all the jarring discords of this life are working together for good to them that love the Lord, to the called according to His

purpose. But for the consummation of this purpose of God towards us we must "wait", and while waiting patiently, endure hardness as good soldiers. "Trust in the Lord and wait patiently for Him, and He will bring it to pass." Time is an important element in all God's plans: we are not, therefore, to be disappointed when the test of endurance is applied while the blessings we crave tarry long. God took time to frame the world and to fit it for human habitation; to give the world its necessary experience with evil; time to prepare for the advent of Christ as the world's Redeemer; time for the preparation of the church to share in His glorious reign; and time must be allowed for the shaping and adjusting of the individual affairs of all His people. God has not forgotten when the answers to our prayers seem to tarry long. He who heeds the sparrow's fall and numbers the very hairs of our heads is not indifferent to the faintest call or the smallest necessity of His humblest child.

"My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning—I say more than they that wait for the morning."

The brethren are not in darkness respecting the dawn of the Millennial morning, because taught thereof by the Comforter (see 1 Thess. 5. 4), and because to their eyes of faith the Day Star (the Day-bringer—Christ) has already appeared, and they rejoice in the inspired testimony that, although *"weeping may endure for the night (of sin's pre-dominance), joy cometh in the morning"* of the great day of the Lord. And as the dawn of the new day, "the day of Christ", becomes more and more distinct, many besides the brethren can and do see signs that "the night is far spent and the day is at hand"; and by and by, notwithstanding the dark clouds and terrible storm of trouble that will temporarily hide the signs of morning from them, all the world will awake to the fact that "The morn at last is breaking".

But many of those who are now watching for the morning from the standpoint of earthly philosophies are not waiting for the Lord; in fact, they do not know the Lord, His character and His Kingdom having been so sadly misrepresented by those who claimed to be His mouthpieces. They rejoice in the morning because it ushers in the age of human equality, general education, decreased toil, and increased privileges, comforts and luxuries. *"God is not in all their thoughts"* when they look for the morning. Looking from a more or less selfish standpoint, and unguided by the Divine revelation—for no man knoweth the mind of God save he who has the spirit of God (1 Cor. 2. 11, 12)—they fail to see the real object and chief characteristic of the coming age of blessing, and

are merely championing the interests of the masses as against the special advantages of the wealthy. They see not the greatest blessings of the dawning day; that with earthly comforts and privileges it will bring the great blessing of a trial for everlasting life; that it will be the world's Judgment Day, to determine who, under those favourable conditions, will develop characters in harmony with God's character.

But with the brethren it is different. While they appreciate the coming earthly blessings none the less, but the more intelligently, the Lord, His character and the work which will be accomplished for men by the great Physician—as Prophet, Priest and King—these more weighty and more valuable considerations outweigh by far the earthly favours which will attend His kingdom's rule. The brethren wait for the Lord Himself, longing to see the King in His beauty—the fairest among ten thousand, the one altogether lovely. Yes, truly our souls *"wait for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning."*

Then let all the Israel of God hope in the Lord (verses 7, 8), for with the Lord there is mercy; mercy not only in dealing with our infirmities, but also in shielding from overwhelming trials and in granting grace to help in every time of need—to those who "abide in the Vine" by faith and obedience.

JOSEPH IN EGYPT

"Only in the throne will I be greater than thou." (Gen. 41. 40.) The description of Joseph's exaltation to power at the right hand of Pharaoh is well illustrated by tomb paintings found in Egypt. Joseph had evidently been raised to the position of "Prime Minister," and in the short passage from verse 40 to 45 of Gen. 41 we have a vivid description of an induction into office which was repeated with every successive Grand Vizier or "Prime Minister" in the land of Egypt. The ring upon Joseph's hand and the placing of the gold chain around his neck was the repetition of an ancient ceremony which betokened the highest possible honour which could be conferred upon the recipient. This ceremony was practised 300 years before the time of Abraham and Joseph became one of a long line of men who were thus raised to the most exalted position Egypt could offer. His marriage to Asenath, daughter of the High Priest of Heliopolis, brought him into intimate relationship with the priestly caste, and thus, like Daniel in a much later day, the simple shepherd boy from Judea became the virtual leader of a great nation, and discharged the responsibilities of his office with that integrity and diligence which should characterise every true believer in our God.

OUT OF THE STOREHOUSE

A collection of interesting items

Parables and Apologues

An *apologue*, (or apologue), is a fable or parabolic tale, with a moral truth; animals, trees, etc., are used as characters, and as it progresses towards the end the moral lesson can be deduced. A celebrated apologue is that of the trees called upon to choose a king in Judges 9. The apologue is in verses 8-15 and the moral in verses 55-57 though the whole chapter is a frame-work for the subject.

A *parable* is different, in that it is in itself a pictorial narrative, with a cryptic meaning not so easily understood without a key to the cypher. After His series of word-pictures Jesus privately explained them to His disciples, as is evident from Matt. 13. 10, 11, 16, 51, 52.

* * *

Light On An Old Testament Story

The mysterious destruction of Sennacherib's army outside Jerusalem (II Kings 19) has provoked considerable speculation as to the agency used by God to bring about so remarkable an event. It has been suggested that the *sirocco*, or hot desert wind, was responsible for the untimely death of these men; on the other hand doubts have been expressed as to the likelihood of any such result attending the hottest of hot winds. It is interesting, therefore, to know that Marco Polo, the Venetian traveller who explored oriental countries as far as China in the 13th century, relates how sixteen hundred horses and five thousand men in the Persian province of Kirman, at the southern end of the Persian Gulf, were caught by this same desert wind and suffocated, not one of them escaping. The fact that there is at least this independent instance in history goes far to establish the reasonableness of the supposition that when the "Angel of the Lord went forth", that angel, or messenger, or agency, was in fact the dreaded *sirocco* from the southern deserts, and that the vast host encamped in the open plains around Jerusalem, having no protection, quickly fell victims to its hot breath, so that "when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses." (II Kin. 19, 35.)

* * *

Prophetic Words

"All confirm one conviction, that we are now at the verge of the pouring out of the Seventh Vial. Our children, if not we ourselves, are destined to

see events and manifestations which sceptics may sneer at, and even reluctant Christians undervalue; but thereby they only confirm the truth, 'For as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be at the Advent of the Son of Man.' 'Behold I come as a thief,' is the watchword of the present hour. God grant 'the Lamb's wife,' may make herself ready." (Rev. John Cumming, D.D., 1848.)

* * *

Worship

"I fell at His feet to worship Him." (Rev. 22. 9.) This act of worship so often mentioned in the Scriptures was in fact merely a humble obeisance or act of reverence. Even to-day in the Holy Land the recipient of a favour will throw himself on his knees, bow his head to the ground, and kiss the lower part of his benefactor's clothing. Thus did Cornelius fall down and worship Peter (Acts 10, 25) and the servant in the parable worship his Lord (Matt. 18, 26) and the three wise men worship the infant Jesus (Matt. 2, 11). To the Philadelphia Church came the promise that their enemies would come and "worship before thy feet" (Rev. 3, 9) and probably this is what is meant when Satan desired Christ to fall down and worship him (Matt 4, 9) to submit to him, to engage in his service, and to acknowledge him as overlord.

* * *

The Half Was Never Told

Strabo, the Greek geographer, of our Lord's day, offers an interesting sidelight on the culture of the Sabaeans, the people of the land from which the Queen of Sheba came to see the magnificence of Solomon. Strabo says of them "By the trade in aromatics they have become the richest of all the tribes, and possess a great quantity of wrought articles in gold and silver, as couches, tripods, basins, drinking vessels, to which we must add the costly magnificence of their houses; for the doors, walls and roofs are variegated with inlaid ivory, gold, silver and precious stones." If this was the luxury to which the Queen of Sheba was accustomed in her own land, how much greater must have been that of King Solomon, for she said of his treasure "The half was not told me." (I. Kin. 10, 7.) And it was the possession of these treasures of earth that turned his heart away from the Lord.

ADAM'S DAUGHTERS

A Digression

The reason for this short note on a somewhat unusual topic is the request of one reader for information regarding a subject to which reference was made in his local newspaper. The cutting which is before the writer makes a surprising and altogether inaccurate statement, namely, that "the bishops of the Church have cut various books out of the Bible which they for some reason or other did not like . . . One of the books thus taken out is the Book of Jubilees." The extract goes on to say that the Book of Jubilees supplements the Bible record by giving the names of Adam's daughters, continues the brief story of Genesis, and reveals the solution of that age-old problem posed by the agnostic and the would-be humourist "Where did Cain get his wife?"

Our correspondent asks "What is the 'Book of Jubilees' and is it a genuine book regarding the Creation story? Can you give some information in your columns regarding the matters mentioned in the cuttings?"

* * *

The "Book of Jubilees" is a work that is thought to have been composed by some pious Jew in the time between the return from the Captivity and the First Advent, probably about 400 or 300 B.C. It is certainly not part, and never was part, of the Bible. It is one of the numerous "apocryphal" works which were produced at that and subsequent times, based on the Bible narratives amplified with much legendary material. The book is interesting and can be useful to the research student but has no Divine authority and stands on the same level as many other literary works produced by godly men.

The book was apparently originally written in Hebrew and translated into Greek a century or so later. It professes to be the account of a Divine revelation to Moses comprising a history of mankind from Creation to Exodus, with a "dating" system expressed in jubilee periods of forty-nine years each, whence the title of the book. The account follows that of Genesis but is embellished by much material gathered from Jewish traditions. It has been observed by scholars that the source from which "Jubilees" apparently takes its information points to a Hebrew original midway between the Masoretic text, which forms the basis of our

Authorised Version, and the Septuagint, which fact sometimes renders "Jubilees" useful in considering difficult Old Testament texts. This however is likely to be more of interest to the student than the general reader.

According to the Book of Jubilees Adam had twelve sons and two daughters. Cain is said to have been born sixty-seven years after the Fall, followed by Abel seven years later, and then Eve's first daughter, Awan, seven years after that. It goes on to say that the murder of Abel by Cain was ninety-nine years after the Fall, Seth was born in the year 130 (as stated in Genesis) and the second daughter, Azura, in 137. Eve subsequently bore nine more sons. Cain married his sister Awan in 193 and Seth married Azura in 228. These figures would imply that Cain was 32 and Abel 25 at the time of the tragedy, that Cain was 126 and his wife 112 at their marriage, and Seth 98 when he married his younger sister, all of which almost certainly has its origin in the fertile imagination of zealous Bible students in very ancient times anxious to clothe the brief accounts of Scripture with additional details explanatory of questions that are still propounded to-day.

If the Genesis story of our first parents is literally true then obviously both Cain and Seth—and probably other of Adam's sons—did take their sisters to wife. In those early days, with human physique so near its primeval perfection, there would not be the biological objection that does obtain now. In fact it seems from Jewish tradition that such unions were normal up to the time of the Flood and it is clear from the Scriptures that the marriage of half-sisters and brothers was usual in the days of Abraham, which is roughly half-way between Eden and the present time. None need decry the accuracy of the Eden story on this account therefore.

Gen. 5, 4 tells us that after the birth of Seth Adam "lived eight hundred years and begat sons and daughters". The traditions of the Book of Jubilees, therefore—apart from the fairly obviously "manufactured" dates—rest upon quite reasonable grounds and need not be dismissed completely. They really represent the reasoned conclusions of some long since departed student on what was the probable general outline of happenings in the far-off days with which he was dealing.

The Three Epistles of John

Comments on the writings
of the "Beloved Apostle"

Part XXI. I John 4. 11-16

"Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us." (vs. 11-12.)

We cannot repay God for His love, there is no recompense we can make that will in any way match His infinite goodness and mercy extended toward us. The only thing we can do to express our gratitude and appreciation is to love others of our fellow men in the manner He has loved us. No man has ever seen God, has stood in His presence in the flesh, that he might there declare his love for God and his appreciation of all His benefits; his gratitude must therefore be expressed in deeds directed towards the benefit of fellow men rather than in words directed toward God. Perhaps there is a Divine purpose in that. How easy it would have been if, immediately following our conversion, justification and consecration to God, we had been taken up into the Divine presence, away from all the vicissitudes and hardships of this workaday world. How pleasant then to stand before the heavenly throne and praise God for His great love manifested toward us in taking us away from the world of sin and death, all its ugliness and all its misery and all its dangers, and setting us down in the light and peace of the heavenly realm. And how useless we would then be so far as any future work for mankind is concerned—or, indeed, any work of any kind for God. No man hath seen God, that he might express his love for Him in person, at any time. There is a deep and vital truth in that brief statement. God does not want any of us round His throne until we have proved ourselves on the field of battle. There is no place for smooth-tongued sycophants in the heavenly courts. Those who can glibly say "Lord, Lord" but have no works of faith or life of endurance wherewith to support their words will never find entrance. It is in the manner that we demonstrate the sincerity of our love by our behaviour toward our fellows that we find the pathway to the golden door, and those who are ultimately received "into the presence of His glory with exceeding joy" will have been so received because the tenor of their lives here below has already demonstrated their loyalty and love in the council of heaven far more effectively than any spoken word can do.

"Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." (vs. 13-14.)

Here is a reminiscence of Pentecost. Why was John so sure that he was dwelling in God and God in him? "Behold" cried Solomon at the dedication of the Temple "heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have built." Yet John tells us with perfect assurance that God dwells in each one of us and we each may have that assurance, and in earnest thereof we have the witness of the Spirit. Writing to the Christians at Rome nearly a quarter of a century earlier, Paul had said "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." Both Paul and John were merely voicing what was at that time and had always since Pentecost been the fixed conviction of the Church, that God, by His Holy Spirit, was indwelling each one of His children. "Your life" says Paul again "is hid with Christ in God." Can there be any closer expression of that intimacy with the Most High into which we enter when we come unto Him through the appointed way? It may be true, and it is true, that no man hath seen God with the natural sight at any time but we have entered into His presence, and stand in that presence, in a spiritual sense that is of far greater moment and means much more to us than any kind of visual appearance can do. There is all the difference in the world between being before the Throne and being in the Throne; between standing before God and dwelling in God. And it is that to which John is leading up. "*Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.*" (vs. 15.) In these few verses we have the true relationship—the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit. We dwell in the Father, we confess the Son, and we receive the Holy Spirit. We have the love of the Father because we dwell in Him, the grace—favour—of the Son because we confess Him, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit because that Spirit is indwelling with us. The familiar benediction is an expression of the truth—but all these things are true only because in the first place we have loved God and He has loved us.

This confessing of Jesus Christ is a matter of the heart as much as of the lips. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead" says Paul in Rom. 10. 9 "thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." We are very apt in our enthusiasm to give honour and credit to the one who is fluent in tongue and can readily give voice to his belief in Christ; such an one, it is often thought, is the most effective missionary. It does not follow. Many a time the sermon of a quiet and consistent Christian life has reached into a heart that has never been moved by the spoken or the printed message. We can confess the Lord Jesus very effectively by believing in our hearts and letting that belief work out its fruits in our daily lives. When Jesus said "Whoso shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father and his holy angels", He was surely not thinking only of verbal confession. He was almost certainly particularly thinking of those whose lives give evidence that they walk "as He walked", those of whom men take note that they have been with Jesus and learned of Him. The Apostle Paul tells us in one place that we are a spectacle—a theatre—to angels; we are no less a spectacle to men. And what they see of us now is going to have quite an influence on the manner in which they will react to the earthly Kingdom and its laws when that Kingdom is established and those laws are put before them.

"And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." (vs. 16.)

John has said all this before, several times. He

writes in the spirit of the off-quoted modern saying "expression deepens impression". Our own lives' experiences testify to the need for constant repetition of these exhortations to love; we forget them so easily. Jesus impressed His disciples, before leaving them, with the truth that no more important thing could feature in their lives than the being made perfect in love. St. Paul declared unequivocally that without love he was as nothing despite all his other attainments and accomplishments. Love is the greatest thing, greater because more enduring than either faith or hope. Love is the end and aim of our moral progress, and is therefore clearly much more vital than doctrine, which is only a means to that end. Doctrine, like faith and hope, will vanish away when "that which is perfect is come" but love will never fail. We have appreciated and accepted the fruits of God's love to us; that is one part of John's thought in this verse. Now we who have thus accepted the Divine gift find that by that acceptance we have been brought into tune with the Divine. God dwelleth in us; we dwell in God. We have already been over this ground but it is characteristic of John in his Epistle that he continually works round as it were in circles, bringing us back to thoughts previously expressed, but approaching from the opposite direction. But from whatever angle John comes to his subject the centre of his thought is always the same. God is love. In that great truth is enshrined the philosophy of the entire Plan of salvation and the assurance that it will be carried out. We who know of this love, who are persuaded of its reality and have seen evidence of its power, know that it will accomplish all that is promised. In that confidence we rest content.

To be continued.

UNITY CONVENTION

The spirit in which the following words are written renders them well worthy of reproduction for the benefit of all our readers.

* * *

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward." (Exod. 14. 15.)

Amid adverse criticism and anxious fears of many brethren for the welfare of the 1952 Unity Convention, the words of our text are a comfort to the Cicero Ecclesia, "Go forward".

At the time these words were uttered the children of Israel were just beginning to breathe the air of freedom after many years of bondage. But now they were in a most difficult position—Pharaoh's army to the rear, and before them the Red Sea. With fearful hearts they murmured to Moses. Yet

in this seemingly impossible position the word of God to Moses was, "Go forward".

The Cicero Ecclesia stands, as it were, in the same position with the planning of the 1952 Unity Convention. We cannot go back, and yet past experience seems to tell us it is impossible to overcome the insurmountable difficulties that face us in this undertaking.

We stand at this point with the firm conviction that we are serving God by serving our brethren. His words echo in our hearts, "Go forward"—leaving the seemingly impossible problems in God's hands.

We are confident that "Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty". This spirit of the Lord, as it enters the heart, purifies the nature, lingers with him who judges not his brother, inspires him

who tramples egotism under foot, embraces him who frowns upon the habits of criticism, condemnation, and the personalising of evil, and crowns him with power from on high who loves God and his brother with true affection, loyalty, and sincerity. The liberty which "the spirit of the Lord" includes and begets knows no taint of personal ambition for place or power, no enslaving jealousy, hatred, or resentment, which is but evil for evil, wrong for wrong; or error sent back in its kind in act or thought, instead of error destroyed through the sending back of its opposites—goodness, kindness, and mercy.

Our hope in this gathering is to bring to light heart unity and understanding. "To understand"—what a world of meaning exists in these two words! To understand; to stand under, as it were, and through clear-eyed vision observe and appreciate, yea, correctly comprehend that which bases every action, motive, and word of our brother. Understanding cannot be purchased by coins in human use which have for their standard the fluctuating valuation of fictitious character and unprincipled action, motive and speech. To understand our brother—a proposition as simple as it is grand, and as inspiring as it is simple. It represents the very goal of mental and spiritual achievement. It involves pure intuition, spiritual discernment, patience, impartiality, justice, loving kindness, affection. The sacred and sanctified privilege of understanding is summed up in the word "Ministry". With the ministry of understanding comes the responsibility of being our brother's helper and keeper. The critic must be lost in the patient helper, the opposer and obstructionist in the kind brother, the fault-finder in the loving inspirer, and the selfish and indifferent person must be lost in the nobility of solicitous affection and ministering love.

We welcome all our liberal brethren, for the liberal brother is one who depends more upon the unfolding of the mind of God within his own heart and purified mind than upon the opinions of men, the doctrine of creeds, scholastic speculation and so-called churchly decrees. He delights to commune with Christ, and puts principle above personality, spirit above creed, right above party and inward conviction above outward sense.

The liberal brother accords to all men the same privileges of thought and action that he contends for as the essential liberties and rights of his own, and is judicious and tolerant, yet clear and sure in the way of truth.

The liberal brother rejects the blind tyranny of fashion, habit, custom, and so-called public opinion, once named by a great thinker "a conscience owned

by a syndicate." He has the courage of his convictions and will speak and act for them as sincerely and radically in the arena of public criticism, censure and abuse as amidst the approving silence of his own heart or the plaudits of the multitudes.

What This Convention IS NOT:

1. It is NOT arranged with the idea of uniting dissenting groups. Such a hope, while it is laudable, is not justified at this time. No "man" organisation is planned; there are too many now.
2. It is NOT for the purpose of providing a sounding board for exponents of diverse views to air them from the platform. The brethren generally are quite familiar with the respective teachings of various groups.
3. It is NOT under the auspices of the service organisations. It is solely under the jurisdiction of the Cicero Ecclesia, a group of young consecrated brethren, who are anxious for the prosperity of Zion.
4. It is NOT for the purpose of espousing one group's particular religious persuasions.

What This Convention IS:

1. It is arranged in the sincere conviction that Christians can fellowship together in the Bond of Jesus Christ alone.
2. It IS arranged (God willing), to disprove the so generally accepted teaching that Christians cannot fellowship unless they mutually subscribe to a list of teachings drawn up by fallible human beings, no matter how honest and sincere.
3. It IS arranged to provide a week of fellowship, amid the surroundings of God's Nature, to draw us all closer to Him, as well as to each other.
4. It IS arranged to prove that we, who call ourselves "truth people", have more in common that unites us than divides.
5. It IS arranged thus to visibly manifest to our Heavenly Father and to our blessed Master our desire to "do good unto all, especially the household of faith".

We have contracted what we believe to be the "ideal" convention spot; Hotel Macatawa, Macatawa, Michigan (near Holland). It has all the facilities for a restful and comfortable week, thus enabling us better to gain the spiritual blessing. A full descriptive folder and reservation card will be sent upon request.

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BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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

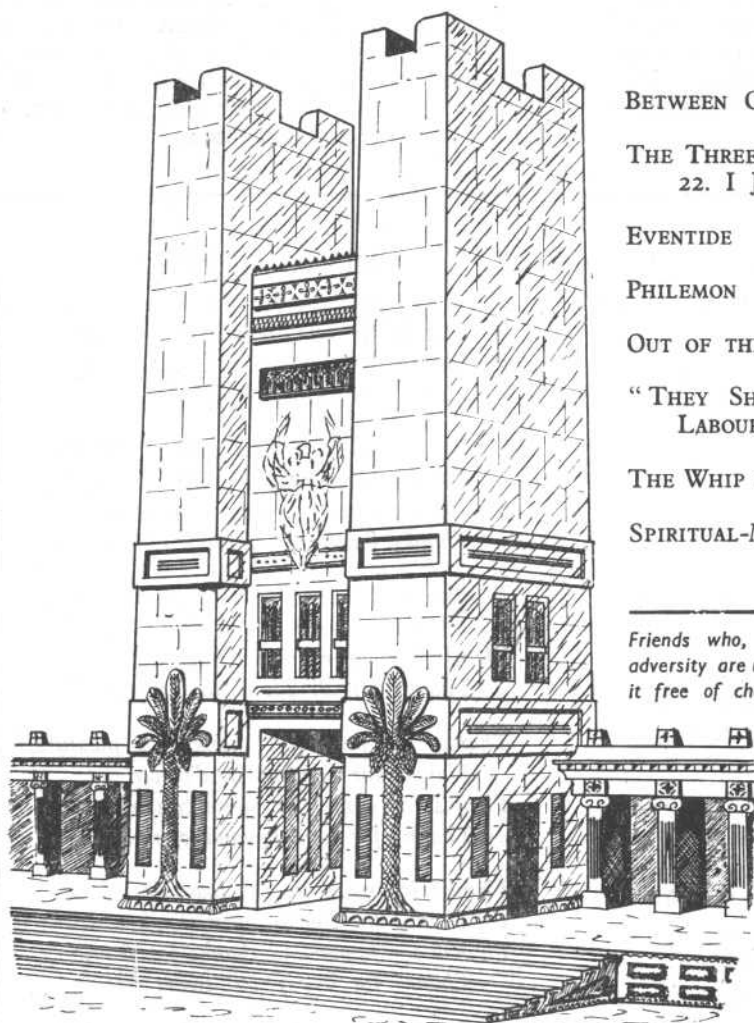
Vol. 29, No. 7

JULY, 1952

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----|
| BETWEEN OURSELVES | 98 |
| THE THREE EPISTLES OF JOHN | |
| 22. I John 4. 17-21 | 99 |
| EVENTIDE | 101 |
| PHILEMON | 102 |
| OUT OF THE STOREHOUSE | 105 |
| "THEY SHALL REST FROM THEIR LABOURS" | 107 |
| THE WHIP OF SMALL CORDS | 110 |
| SPIRITUAL-MINDEDNESS | 111 |

*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 office at 24, Darwin Road, Welling, will be closed between July 16 and 28, and no correspondence will be dealt with inside these dates. Any letters reaching this address after 16 July will therefore wait until after 28 July before action is taken. It will be appreciated if friends will take note of this since no other notification is possible.

* * *

The book "*The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*" which we have carried in stock for some time, is now out of print and we cannot accept any more orders until a new edition is available. Due announcement will be made in the "*Monthly*" when the book is again in stock.

There has come to light a quantity of poem post-cards of three types which it had been thought were long since out of print and out of stock. One is the poem "*Thanks to God*" by our Bro. Chas. Wessman, of Sweden, now gone to "be with the Lord"; one the poem "*Christ is Everything*" by a London sister; and one the well-known piece "*Afterward*" ("God's ways are equal") last printed in our special issue "*God's Fulfilling Purpose*". These three cards, printed in coloured ink on tinted card, are of course "pre-war" or nearly so, and we are glad to offer them now in packets of three dozen cards (one dozen of each kind) at 1/6 post free while they last. Two of the poems are reproduced below.

CHRIST IS EVERYTHING

*He's EVERYTHING to us ! These words touch deeply
Within the inner sanctum of our souls,
And chords responsive echo rare and sweetly,
From those whose hearts the love of Christ enfolds;
Who look beyond this world of imperfection,
To that pure realm of satisfied desire,
And in the circle of Divine affection,
Find all those joys to which their hearts aspire.*

*He's EVERYTHING ! But all the hidden meaning
That lies beneath that all-embracing word
Is known to those alone who on Him leaning,
Have had the Spirit's life within them stirred;
Whose eyes behold in His all-glorious Person,
An object of their reverential love,
Who die with Him in deepest soul-immersion,
Who rise with Him to walk the heights above.*

*Whose needs so vast and varied He supplieth,
Each one completely suited to His grace,
And if sometimes their cravings He denieth,
His compensating comfort they can trace.
Yes, Christ is EVERYTHING ! And if thus surely
We find our all in Him who cannot fail,
What matchless joy to share His love and glory
In heav'n's unhindered bliss beyond the veil !*

" 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.*

The Three Epistles of John

Comments on the writings
of the "Beloved Apostle"

Part XXII. I John 4. 17—21

"Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world." (vs. 17.)

This is not the great Day of Judgment, the Millennial Age, here in John's epistle. The aged Apostle was not thinking about that then far-off event. He was thinking about something much closer and more directly affecting the lives of his brethren. In every Christian life there comes a day of judgment, a time of testing when the faith structure that has been erected over perhaps many years of quiet and uneventful living must be proved and tried. It was the destiny of many of those early Christians to endure that day of judgment in the guise of persecution and martyrdom at the hands of the civil power of the day. But whether the testing time be a physically crucial one such as that, or the slower but perhaps more penetrating one of hopes unfulfilled and expectations disappointed, disillusionment and apathy such as is by no means an uncommon thing to-day, it still remains that the day of judgment comes to each one of us in the course of our consecrated life. Jesus illustrated it in His story of the two men who built themselves houses, one on the rock and the other on the sand, whilst St. Paul used the metaphor of workers building alternatively with gold, silver and precious stones, or wood, hay and stubble. In both cases the testing time came and in both cases the handiwork of the one who had built well stood the strain and emerged triumphantly, whilst that of the other suffered loss and destruction. Now the completion of our growth in love, the "making perfect" of that love, ensures that we will be able to stand in that day. It was because Jesus Himself was the supreme example of selfless love—love for His Father, love for His brethren, love for the world—that He was able to go to the Cross and rise again triumphant on the third day. It was because He was the supreme example of selfless love that He went about during his lifetime doing good to all men, pouring out His life unto death. The incense of His offering ascended up to God a "sweet-smelling savour" and it was all love. Now, says John "as he is, so are we in this world". Just as He was made perfect in love and in that perfection was completely acceptable to the Father and altogether triumphant over all that He suffered, so must we be if we are truly to "follow in his steps". We too are pouring out our lives

unto death. we too are buried with Him by baptism into His death and are risen to walk with Him in newness of life that in due time we might triumphantly share in the glory of the First Resurrection. His love was made perfect and He had boldness in His day of judgment. We, if we would be like Him, must follow the same path.

"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." "Torment" here is *kolasin*, to restrain, check, cut off, cut short. Are we not all witnesses to the truth of this word? Fear does have a restraining effect; so many have refrained from entering the race for the prize of the High Calling on account of their fear of its implications, and they have been restrained thereby from ever entering in. The children of Israel in the wilderness feared the gigantic inhabitants of the land and their high-walled cities, and that fear caused them to forget or to ignore the promise of God that He would go before them and drive out their enemies. Their fear had torment; it restrained them from going forward and entering into the land of promise.

The Apostle Paul tells us in Rom. 8 that those who "walk after the Spirit" have been delivered from the spirit of bondage, which is fear, and have received instead the spirit of adoption which makes us aware of our sonship to God. We can cry to Him "Father" and know that it is no empty cry; we are indeed His sons. That consciousness of Divine sonship must therefore be synonymous with our being made perfect in love, for we are told here by John that he that feareth is not being made perfect in love. There is no room for fear in the Christian character; we can and must face all things in life with quiet confidence and absolute assurance that He who has called us and guided us hitherto will be our Leader and Guardian all the way until the end. "I am persuaded" cries Paul triumphantly "that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God." No room for fear there! In these latter days when affairs in the world have come to a pass that strikes fear into the hearts of men, "men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking to the things that are coming upon the earth", it is good to realise that we who are being made

perfect in love are thereby being freed from fear. We can with perfect confidence pursue our appointed way in life knowing that God is good and God is great, and that all things are working together for good to us, we who love God and are called according to His purpose.

Once more, as we thus ponder John's words, are we impressed with the fact that he perceives a veritable power in love. Love is no matter of sentiment to John, no comfortable and easy virtue whose only use is to act as a lubricant in human relations, smoothing and making easy the rough places of our contact with fellow-men; a pious adjunct to our worship, preparing for us our approach to God. Love is a dynamic that is capable of overthrowing every evil thing. "*Perfect love casteth out fear*". The word for "casteth out" is *exo balli*; and that latter word gave its name in those early days to what was, in military circles, the then equivalent to our modern heavy artillery. The "*ballista*" was an engine of war designed something like a giant catapult, capable of hurling heavy stones and boulders long distances against enemy fortifications and city walls. (The "engines" mentioned in 2. Chron. 26.15 as set by Uzziah on the wall of Jerusalem were *ballistæ*.) Just as those *ballistæ* cast heavy rocks many hundreds of yards in a wide trajectory through the air to a great distance away, so, says John, does perfect love cast out fear, not removing it gently as it were to just one side, where its presence might still harass and obtrude, but far away whence it can never return.

It is just at this point, where another facet of the many-sided jewel we are examining has been fully displayed to our gaze, that John, as is his wont, abruptly returns to the centre of his subject. "*We love him*" he remarks "*because he first loved us.*" (vs. 19.) Each time that he has concluded one of his exhortations and one little section of Christian instruction he reminds us that all we have and the whole position in which we stand is in consequence of the love of God. We are naught of ourselves; we owe all to Him. "*He first loved us.*"! Let us never forget that sublime truth. It explains everything. It explains the entire plan of salvation, the mystery of the coming and death of Christ, the interval between that coming and the advent of the Kingdom to ensure which He died, an interval devoted to our own calling and perfection, and it explains the Kingdom itself. "*He first loved us!*" Those four words stand as irrefutable evidence that God is working and will work to bring fallen man back to Himself, and will not cease working until the time has come that further effort is manifestly useless.

"If a man say 'I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.'" (vs. 20-21.)

This is the end of John's dissertation on love. In chapter 5 he is going to talk about faith—the faith that saves. In this chapter he has talked about the love that saves, love that commenced in God and is continued in us. In the perfecting of this love we are truly made in the image and likeness of God and as such can be received, at the end, into the very presence of God. But this very thought of being made in His image and likeness instantly brings to mind another question, intimately associated; what of our fellows, also destined to be perfected in that same image and likeness. Do we love them?

If not, says John in effect, we are doing despite to the expressed purpose and intention of God and demonstrating that we have not as yet entered into an understanding of Divine love. If we claim to have this true, deep love for God and yet do not ourselves manifest the same feeling toward our brethren we are not speaking the truth; we are liars. It is quite impossible to hold and cherish true love for God without at the same time possessing and realising love for all that God has made. That does not involve any kind of sympathy with sin or endorsement of evil-doing, even as God's own love for man does not imply that. It does involve the same yearning desire that fills God's own heart for the reconciliation of all mankind and the perfecting of this earth to be their home. And it does also involve co-operation with God and willing service for Him to the extent He indicates is His will, in the work He is doing towards this end.

So the whole argument ends on this lofty note, a law which defines and limits the principles which should regulate our entire outward Christian life and activity. "*He who loveth God love his brother also.*" There is hardly need to elaborate that briefly eloquent word. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Each one of us is able to interpret those instructions in our individual cases and according to our individual circumstances. The manner in which they will be put into practice will of necessity differ with each one of us, but the underlying principle will always be the same. We shall be doing God's work in the world at this present time and we shall be progressing by sure stages to that mark of perfect love which will render us fitted in every respect for the still greater work of God in the coming Age.

(To be continued)

Eventide

"So he bringeth them unto their desired haven"

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

Presently the sea-drenched clothing was dried before an open fire, as the Maltese natives bestowed on them "unusual kindness" because it had "begun to rain and was cold." (Acts 28. 2, *New Revised Version*.)

During this enforced stay among the Maltese people, the Spirit of the Lord, in the heart of Paul, availed itself of the opportunity to repay their generosity by the healing of all their sick—the people on the island who had diseases also came and were healed (v. 9) and without doubt would hear the Word of God proclaimed by Paul as he wrought these kindly acts. It is a touching commentary upon the native goodness of these rude islanders when Luke could say of them, "they presented many gifts to us," and "when we sailed they put on board whatever we needed," (v. 10). Seemingly there is good in the most benighted, providing we know how to bring it out!

From thence the journey was completed in another ship, which, after a passage occupying several days, brought them at last to Italian soil. At the port of de-barkation several brethren were "found" who invited Paul and his travelling companions to stay with them until the journey could be resumed. Presumably a messenger was im-

mediately dispatched to the brethren in Rome, informing them that Paul and his company had landed at Puteoli, and would soon be en-route again for Rome.

What was the response to these tidings in Rome? Was it an attitude of indifference and unconcern about the prisoner? Doubtless they were well informed that he was arriving in the custody of a Roman officer, and that he was not now a free man to go and do as he would have liked. Would they take his coming, in captivity, as a judgment on him for being too energetic and venturesome?

Presumably the tidings of his coming had had an electrifying effect among the brethren in Rome, for immediately two contingents of them set out at once, one of which, when they met him, had travelled no less than three and thirty miles, while the other also had come twenty-three—both of them on foot! And their attitude towards the prisoner, what of that? Imagination must provide the answer here, for "on seeing them Paul thanked God and took courage". (vs. 15.) Surely, blest was the tie that bound their hearts in Christian love, to produce such an effect such as that! As the prisoner's company came alongside the little waiting group, the eyes of Paul would search the faces of each in turn, and recognition would be prompt and mutual. Paul had many friends then resident in Rome—Priscilla, Aquila, Epaenatus, Mary, Andronicus and Junias, Ampliatus, Urbanus, Stachys and quite a host of other names (see Rom. 16), to whom he had sent love and greetings but a little while before. Who, and how many of this well-loved company had come to meet him on his Romeward way we cannot say; what we can say with complete confidence is that the love-light of a deep affection would be beaming from every eye, as the enquiring glance of Paul ran along the faces of the waiting company. Prisoner though he was, it was as a brother in the Lord that they greeted him. And as he heard their kindly words and felt their loving hands, the words "thank God" broke forth again and yet again from his rejoicing lips.

What a meeting that would be—love welling up from every heart towards this travel-stained and bedraggled prisoner—and he, giant though he was at heart, found new courage from the out-poured love! How had this warmth of attachment and solicitude come about? How was it that this diminutive little man—accounted as of "no

presence" by his enemies—had come to acquire such a grip upon the hearts of those he met? There is but one answer here—his absolutely selfless life; a life spent in imitation of the Master whom he served. "Not I, but Christ" was the magnet of their love.

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

*"Not I but Christ, to gently soothe in sorrow,
Not I but Christ, to wipe the falling tear,
Not I but Christ, to lift the weary burden,
Not I but Christ, to hush away all fear."*

*"Not I but Christ, in lowly silent labour,
Not I but Christ, in humble earnest toil,
Not I but Christ, no show, no ostentation,
Christ, only Christ, the gatherer of the spoil."*

Breathes there the desire in any heart to be a rallying centre to the Fellowship? a nucleus to the group?—let him emulate that little old man

who found that draught of pure joy on the Appian way! Let him "live" Christ day by day—Christ Jesus will do the rest! No child of God who houses that magnet in his soul need to push or thrust himself to the centre—or the front—Christ Jesus will see to that!

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

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

How speedily and easily those three and thirty miles would seem to disappear as communing friends talked together by the way—a living parable, beloved in the Lord, for thee and me!

PHILEMON

An exquisite gem of the New Testament

True nobility is more often shown in the little things of daily life than in the great things. When a man lives in the full view of public opinion he is keyed up to create a favourable impression but it is the nature and temperament shown when the lime-light is withdrawn, when there is no inducement to wear a mask, which reveals the true man and what he really is.

This is shown in an incident in the life of the great Apostle Paul. This does not mean that Paul was not at all times genuine or that he at any time dissembled or pretended that he was one thing at one time when the public eye was upon him and another thing at another time in private. The incident brought before us in the letter to Philemon, however, shows us the true nobility of this man of God in a clearer light than is possible when we are considering the great public work Paul accomplished during his eventful life. We can gather from the record of Paul's life a very good idea of his keen spiritual vision, his intellect and reasoning powers, his great skill in argument, his passion for truth, his love for his countrymen and for the churches he founded, his continual care for them, his ardent loyalty to the Master he

served and his heroism, courage and fortitude under bitter trials and disappointments. We can gauge pretty accurately the strength of all these qualities but nowhere is the heart of the man so well revealed as in the short private letter he wrote to Philemon.

It is here that Paul throws off as far as possible his Apostolic dignity and his fatherly authority over his converts and descends to a familiarity of equal intercourse. He lingers with obvious delight on the word "brother" which breathes the very spirit of freedom and equality. In this letter we see in Paul not the towering Apostle but the friendly partner; he speaks simply as a Christian gentleman and uses true courtesy, delicacy and tact. After reading it we confess that we know the writer better and it would have been a vast pity if this letter had not been included in the Canon of Scripture.

In the course of his missionary journeys Paul had spent a considerable period at Ephesus. It is probable that the Church he founded there was numerous and distinguished and the fame of the Apostle as it spread affected neighbouring towns and doubtless attracted men like Philemon and

Epaphras who were natives of Colossæ. Perhaps these men founded the Church in their own town; it is certain that Philemon's house at Colossæ was the recognised centre of Christian activity in that place.

Philemon was evidently a man of mark, probably quite wealthy, for it is said he was able to refresh the hearts of the saints which seems to suggest gifts both temporal and spiritual. Moreover he was in a position to entertain brethren. Philemon must have been held in high repute by the Apostle for the latter treats him almost as an equal, a fellow labourer and partner, as a brother and not as a son, like Timothy, for instance. Philemon's wife appears to have been Apphia and his son Archippus; both Christians, Archippus holding office, probably a Deacon in the Church. The details supplied, though meagre, give us the impression of some wealth and dignity in the family nobly used for the relief of necessity and the binding closer of the bonds of Christian love and unity.

Another member of the household was Onesimus, a slave, but he turned out badly. He stole his master's goods and, fearing detection, fled to Rome, doubtless thinking that among the thousands of that crowded city he would escape notice.

Our God is ever watchful and in this runaway slave He saw a potential child of grace. "*Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called, but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world.*" It is among the poor despised and outcast ones that the Gospel of Jesus Christ has wrought miracles all down the age. It has changed lives like those we read of in the Corinthian Church, some of whom were thieves, covetous and worse; but the message of salvation transformed them into noble and pure men and women with hearts aflame with a new and burning desire to do the will of God and tell forth the wonders of His grace.

Paul was at this time undergoing his first imprisonment at Rome. It was irksome enough to be chained continually to a Roman soldier, though some generous concessions were made him and he was able to live in his own hired house and receive there any who came enquiring into the faith he preached. So earnestly did he follow up this advantage that a number of converts to Christianity were made and Paul's name began to be known in Rome. Men and women who came under his influence were not backward in proclaiming their new faith and in course of time the Truth reached Onesimus the runaway slave. Christianity regenerated the true humanity which had been degraded in him. The actual circumstances which led to his introduction to Paul are not told us but

it is certain that Paul, noting his sincerity and earnestness, received him as a brother in Christ and a close fellowship sprang up between them. Onesimus was happy in the privilege of doing many a little service for the Apostle.

It would not be long before Onesimus made a full confession of his past life and how he had robbed and run away from his master, and we can picture the Apostle's surprise when he learnt that the master's name was Philemon, one of the principal supporters of the Colossian Church and a most worthy friend of his own. It was with mingled feelings and some perplexity of mind that Paul meditated on the problem now presented to him. What course of conduct should he advise Onesimus to pursue? Onesimus was now a free man; ought he to inform the authorities and let the man suffer for his crime? That, he knew, would be sending his convert to certain death. Would it not be better to say nothing about the matter? Onesimus had become very dear to him and had been of great service to him in his imprisonment. It would be hard indeed to lose him and yet Philemon had his rights which ought to be respected. Slavery was a recognised custom and clearly Onesimus was the property of Philemon and ought to be restored to him. He would write to Philemon and make Onesimus the bearer of the letter. But the letter did not prove an easy one to write; he wanted to conciliate Philemon and yet not humiliate Onesimus—to commend the evil doer and yet not excuse his offence. Such was the delicate problem set his mind.

To give Onesimus courage to face the master he had injured, Paul arranged that there should be a third person present. Tychicus, a companion and fellow labourer of Paul and probably one of his own converts, was on his way home and the idea came to Paul that Tychicus might act as a mediator and ease the situation by his presence (Col. 4. 7-9). Tychicus could present the letter while Onesimus, adopting his old position as a slave, would remain unseen but within call.

The letter is a model of tact and Christian courtesy. Paul first endeavoured to create a favourable atmosphere of good-will by referring to the fact that they all belonged as members to one family. There was himself and Timothy, Philemon, Apphia, Archippus, and other members of the Church meeting in Philemon's house, all called in one holy calling, all privileged to name God as their Father and the Lord Jesus as their elder Brother. What a bond of union—! Surely Philemon's heart would rejoice as he recalled the boundless grace of God accorded to his family! Then the writer touched a chord of tenderness in

Philemon's heart by making reference to himself as a prisoner and an old man; Paul would be between fifty and sixty and after a life of unexampled labour and suffering he might well call himself aged in relation to his need of ministry from his son Onesimus. Paul commended Philemon in verses 4-7 and cordially acknowledged his love and loyalty and thus carefully prepared the way for the main object of his letter. He intended to make it very difficult for Philemon to refuse the request he was about to make; Philemon would surely be anxious to live up to the good opinion Paul had of him. In verses 8 and 9 he approached the matter a little closer and told Philemon that there was a duty he should do. He did not yet tell him what it was but he urged his own position as an Apostle and suggested that he could demand this thing but he preferred to leave it to Philemon's love and goodwill and to his feelings towards himself as a dear bosom friend. His appeal was to love rather than authority, "I plead with you for this child of mine to whom in my prison I have become a father". Then he announced the name, Onesimus. In verse 11 he frankly acknowledged that Onesimus had been found a worthless character. The name Onesimus means useful or profitable and Paul played upon the word and seemed to say, "He belied his name in days past, he will more than deserve it now". Though once unprofitable Paul could vouch that he was a changed man. "He is so dear to me that in sending him back to you with this letter it is like tearing out my very heart. If I kept him by me he would be ministering to my needs in your stead just as I know you would be serving me if you were here, but I would not do that without your consent so that your goodness to me might come of your own free will and without any appearance of restraint." Notice how carefully Paul chose his words, he said Onesimus "departed" not "fled" from his master. The word "fled" might have awakened resentful feelings and he wanted to avoid that. "He parted from you for a while that you might get him back for good", a very graceful way of putting it! He hinted at the Providential aspect of the matter and suggested that the parting was unconsciously overruled by a higher hand. God in His wisdom had parted him from Philemon for a season that he might receive him for ever. Verses 16 to 18 are very tender; Paul reiterated that Onesimus was now a brother dear to himself; how much more must he be dear to Philemon. If Philemon considered Paul as a partner in the Gospel let him receive Onesimus as his own representative. In verse 21 Paul speaks of his confidence that Philemon would

do as he suggested, then adds that he was hoping to see him soon face to face.

It is not difficult to follow the workings of Philemon's mind as he read the letter. We are not told of the result but we cannot doubt that Paul's appeal, couched in such happy language, had its effect. Philemon would surely feel that he could never face the Apostle again if he refused to do what he desired, and what Christian joy would fill his heart as he learnt that the grace of God had touched Onesimus and effected such a marvellous change in him. How long would it be before Philemon would eagerly enquire where Onesimus was and learning that he was without, insist on having him in so that he might assure him of his complete forgiveness?

Why is this letter included in the New Testament? No important doctrine is enunciated as in Romans; it admits of no controversial or directly theological use; there is no dissertation on Christian virtues, no warning against apostacy or false teaching as in Galatians; it is purely a personal letter, even though a model of the highest character. The question will be answered if we can see in this simple letter an analogy to the story of redemption.

Onesimus the thief and slave had run away from his master. Man was the creation of God and as such was His property but by his conduct he has erred against his Master and provoked Him sorely. He has become not a servant of righteousness but the slave of sin and has run away from God, his legal and proper owner. Not only has he run away but he has robbed Him of His due and gone into a far country. But an all-loving Providence has led his steps to Jesus, Who has suffered great privations for his sake. There at the feet of Jesus, whom God counts as His partner, the repentant slave pours out his soul and confesses his sin. Acting on the advice given him he returns to God, his rightful owner, and is received, not as a slave, but even as Christ Himself and all the debt he has incurred is put to the account of Jesus.

*"Naught of merit or of price
Remains to justice due
Jesus died and paid it all
Yes—all that I did owe."*

If we are not ready to praise God where we are, and with our conditions and circumstances as they are, we should not be likely to praise him if we were differently circumstanced and our conditions just that which now seems to us most desirable.

OUT OF THE STOREHOUSE

A collection of interesting items

Extract from the works of John Bunyan

"Now since a man must be made righteous before he can do righteousness, it is manifest his works of righteousness do not make him righteous, no more than the fig tree makes its own tree a fig tree. . . . Hence those acts of righteousness that Christian men do perform are called the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God. (Phil. I. II.) . . . Nor can any man propound such an essential way to cut off boasting as this which is of God's providing. . . . The righteousness is Christ's, not the sinner's. The imputation is God's, not the sinner's. The cause of imputation is God's grace and love, not the sinner's works of righteousness. The time of God's imputing righteousness is when the sinner was a sinner . . . not when he was good, or when he was seeking of it; for his inward gospel goodness is the fruit of the imputation of justifying righteousness. . . . For by grace are we saved through faith, and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast. . . . That it might be sure, implying that there is no certain way of salvation for the elect but this, because God can never by other means reconcile us to himself; for his heavenly eyes perceive, through and through, the silly cobweb righteousness that we work; yea they spy faults and sins in the best of our gospel performances."

* * *

Practical application

Thomas Carthew, a missionary in East Africa, was amazingly powerful in his presentation of the truth. One day when he was teaching the Commandments to his congregation, everything went calmly until they reached number eight. "Thou shalt not steal", thundered Carthew. "Thou shalt not steal", repeated the coloured congregation. There was a pause. "Thou shalt not steal—coconuts", announced Carthew. This was an unexpected innovation, and dead silence reigned. "Say it!" demanded the preacher. In hesitating tones came the response, "Thou shalt not steal coconuts". "Now say this: 'Thou shalt not steal—fowls,'" and so on through the whole list of petty pilferings, until the subdued congregation felt the power of the applied Word of God as never before.

"The vision of all"

By "vision" was frequently meant prophecy as a vehicle of the revelation of the will of God, but it was constantly necessary to understand what prophecy really was. The prophet was a seer, the interpreter of the signs of his times, often a shrewd thinker, frequently a man of deep passionate patriotism sick of the heedlessness of court and temple, who had retired into solitary places with his grief and his dream, until suddenly, impelled as by the out-thrust of a hand invisible, he found his way again into the streets or even to the foot of the throne, denouncing, revealing, awakening, inspiring. He did not so much guess at the future as interpret the present. He occupied the position of an outside critic—standing apart from the welter of politics and the battle of little ambitions, and according as he had the gift of perception of relationship of cause and effect, according as he saw the drift and trend of actions and tendencies, so was he of value to his own generation. The nation along whose far horizon beat the inspiration of no gleam, whose darkness was not stirred by the voice of any dreamer, was certain to fall into stagnation. There was no uplift without the vision of the idealist. The most prosaic, matter-of-fact age could not shake itself free from the effect of the teaching of the idealists and dreamers of the age preceding it.

* * *

On Judgment

If any of us had been appointed to supply the list of ancients who, according to Hebrews 11 "obtained a good report through faith", how differently it would have read. Probably many would have excluded Jacob on the basis of his treachery, Rahab on her reputation, David for his heinous sin, and Samuel because he failed to "rule well his own household". If we would have failed so noticeably in the selecting of the Ancient Worthies, what folly it is for us to pass judgment on any of our fellows for whom the "better thing" has been provided!

* * *

Superscription on the Cross

Some have wondered why the writers of the Gospels differ in their record of Pilate's inscription placed above the Cross. Matthew records it as

"This is Jesus, the King of the Jews" (Matt. 27. 37) Luke, "This is the King of the Jews" (Luke 23, 38); John, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" (John 19. 19) and Mark, "The King of the Jews" (Mark 15. 26). It would seem at first sight that the Evangelists had been guilty of carelessness in compiling their records, but such is not the case. It will be remembered that the inscription was written in three languages current in Palestine at the time—Hellenistic Greek, Aramaic Hebrew, and Latin. Luke, being himself a Greek, would probably record the Greek inscription. Matthew, a "Civil servant" of the Roman Government, accustomed to rendering his accounts and reports in Latin, would take the note of the Latin form, whilst John, a Galilean fisherman, would of course read the Hebrew. Mark, a mere lad at the time, has apparently preserved only part of the inscription. On this supposition, the Latin inscription would consist of twenty-two characters and the Greek and Hebrew of twenty each. Thus the inscription in each language would occupy an equal amount of space.

* * *

"Signs of the Times" in 1848

"Another sign of the near approach of the advent of Christ will be the spread of knowledge. Daniel gives us this indication when he says, 'Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.' Do we not see the signs of this around us? A century ago, if a man made a discovery in science and art, it was likely to be his fortune; but now, if one makes a discovery in chemistry, in science, or in any department of knowledge, in which a man would have staked a fortune in former times, he will find that a discovery made in 1848 is superseded by a more brilliant one before the year has closed. We see steam running and executing the errand of man, and carrying five hundred at once at the rate of fifty miles an hour. Man has made the greatest approach to the power, though he has not made a correspondent approach to the holiness of God, when he takes the lightning and makes them carry his messages. How true is it that many run to and fro, and knowledge is increased."—*Rev. John Cumming.*

* * *

Bow of Promise

The ancient Peruvians had a legend to the effect that the sea was prevented from overflowing the land and drowning all the inhabitants only by virtue of the rainbow, the two ends of which were continually pressing upon the ocean and holding it down.

This legend is quoted on the authority of Francis Lenormant, the French archæologist. To those who are acquainted with the Biblical story of the Flood the story has interest when it is remembered that Gen. 9. 12-26 tells of the rainbow being given as a sign of God's promise never again to destroy the world with water. Some dim memory of those days immediately after Ararat, handed down through the generations, has survived in this legend and creates a connecting link between Father Noah and his sons, and the Peruvian Indians of South America.

* * *

On Hell

"There was a valley near Jerusalem called *Ge Hinnom*, the valley of Hinnom, where it is said, the refuse of the city was burnt; and its name was used as a metaphor by the Jews in later times for the place of future punishment of the wicked. Rabbis differed as to its finality, and instances were collected half a century ago of some who limited its operation to short periods of time. Many modern Jewish writers have indignantly denied that there is any support in their ancient writings, including the Old Testament, the Mishna, and the Talmud, for what one of them called "the modern Christian doctrine of everlasting woe". (*Rev. Percy Dearmer, 1929.*)

* * *

More Value than Many Sparrows

The "sparrows" of Palestine are very numerous and are caught and destroyed in great numbers as a nuisance. To know this is to better appreciate the assurance that our Heavenly Father, Who takes care of all His creation so that not one sparrow can fall to the ground without His knowledge, will surely take heed to our welfare, who are "of more value than many sparrows." (Matt. 10. 29 and Luke 12. 7.)

This blessed law of Christ, the Law of Love, should rule in all who have taken by consecration the name of Christ. Its hallowed influence should radiate from us, not only among the brethren, but also out upon the world, as a powerful witness to the effect of the grace of God in the heart. Thus we shall demonstrate to them that the love of God received into a life brings peace and harmony and happiness; that it makes noble, devoted, faithful husbands; more kind, loyal and tender wives; more obedient, loving children; more kind, good neighbours; and that it pours "oil on the troubled waters" of all our experiences, bringing blessing wherever it reaches.

"They shall rest from their labours"

A.O.H.

The fourth of a series of Studies on the Second Advent

"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours: and their works do follow them." (Rev. 14. 13.)

The New Testament does not appear to say a great deal about the time period involved in the raising of the "sleeping saints" and the "change" of the "living ones". That the one takes place first and the other afterwards is plain from I Thess. 4. 17 but how long afterwards is another matter. It would seem however that there is sufficient evidence in the few Scriptures concerned to justify the conclusion that following the resurrection of the sleeping saints there is a fairly lengthy period of time—lengthy as human measurements go—during which the living ones are being "changed". The taking of the last member of the Church to be with the Lord is not counted in minutes, but in years, after the dead in Christ of past Gospel Age centuries have been raised.

The basis of the whole matter lies in I Thess. 4. 16-17. ". . . the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up . . ." and so on. "First—then". These are the determining words. It is sometimes suggested that both events take place at the same moment of time and this is the general view of evangelical Christians but it is not the correct view. In this text "First—then" quite definitely denotes sequence, one event occurring after the other, although no indication is given how long after.

The word "then" in this verse is *epeita*, an adverb of time meaning thereupon, thereafter, then, afterwards. When combined with *proton*, "first", it becomes an expression of time and order, that is, of the relative sequence of the matters discussed. There is another example of the two words in I Cor. 15. 46 "That was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterwards that which is spiritual." It is very easy to pick out a number of examples of this word *epeita* showing that it is used to denote events separated by short periods of minutes or long periods of years. Thus we have Mark 7. 5 "Then the scribes and Pharisees asked him" Luke 16. 7 "Then said he to another"; John 11. 7 "Then after this, he said" in each of which cases the interval, though not stated, is obviously short, probably a matter of minutes only. Another example is in I Cor. 15. 5-8 where we have "He (Christ) was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve, after (*epeita*) that, he was seen of above

five hundred brethren at once . . . after (*epeita*) that, he was seen of James . . ." Here the order in which the appearances of the Lord occurred is plainly indicated. There is also Gal. 1. 18 "Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem" and Gal. 2. 1 "Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem". These are periods of years. In I Cor. 15. 23 "afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" demands a space of two thousand years between the two events mentioned.

The question may therefore well be put at this point; is there any Scriptural indication that there is such a lapse of time during which the living ones are being changed, and if so, what is the position and occupation of the "dead in Christ" who have been raised to immortal life at the beginning of that time, during such period.

The first element of the answer to that question lies in the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians. In the first chapter of that epistle, Paul declares the retributive judgment of God destined to come upon the wicked, and a corresponding compensation upon all who have suffered for righteousness at the hands of those same wicked ones. The promise is *tribulation* to those who persecute the Church (vs. 6) and *rest* to the persecuted (vs. 7). This "rest" is not the final state of eternal felicity with Christ. It is not the complete assembly of the entire Church with Christ when all have been presented with exceeding joy in the presence of the Father. It is something in the nature of an interim position. Verse 7 promises a rest to the suffering saints of Thessalonica in company with Paul and his brethren when the Lord is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels for the purpose of executing judgment upon the wicked. But later on, in verses 9-10, there is a subsequent phase of His coming when that judgment has been carried into effect and other men have commenced to believe on Him, described as "when he shall come to be glorified in his saints". This latter aspect of His coming is obviously that which is referred to in Matt. 13. 43 "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father". What we have in 2 Thess. 1. 7-10 therefore is, first, the commencement of a "rest" for the faithful at the time of our Lord's revelation from heaven to initiate judgment in the earth, and then, afterwards, when that judgment has been executed, and "all them that believe" have recognised the fact of the Lord's advent, another phase of the "Com-

ing" which is characterised by the Lord being openly glorified in His saints. In other words, we have here one more example of the Scriptural two-fold nature of the Advent; first, *for* His saints *before* judgment is executed at the end of the Age, second, *with* His saints *after* that judgment is executed and the Kingdom has been established in power.

Paul, then, promises these believers a "rest" during that period. There is confirmation of this in the Book of Revelation. The vision of the six seals in chapter 6 is familiar to all. It is possible to trace in this chapter a parallelism with the general characteristics of the Gospel Age. Those characteristics were given in Matt. 24 as seven in number, evangelism, war, famine, pestilence, earthquake, persecution and judgment. The same theme runs through Rev. 6. The identity of the four horsemen with the first four characteristics is fairly apt and has often been remarked. If that be conceded, these four seals must picture virtually the whole of the Age until the "End Time". Thus we come easily and logically to the fifth seal immediately prior to the great Time of Trouble, which is of course pictured by the sixth. Now in connection with the fifth seal there is a tremendously significant statement. John says he saw under the altar the souls of those who quite evidently represent the Church of the early centuries and the Dark Ages, the principal times of persecution and martyrdom. They are pictured as crying out and asking how much longer they must wait for justice and judgment—exactly the same theme as in 2 Thess. chapter I just considered. Here is the reply. "And white robes were given unto every one of them, and it was said unto them that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." (vs. 11.)

They are then to rest for a "little season", waiting for others of their fellows whose earthly course is not yet completed. Where do they thus rest? In the tomb, where they have already been for many centuries? Not with white robes! That statement about the white robes means a great deal. It means that those "souls under the altar" are no longer in that condition, no longer hidden in the grave, no longer cut off as it were from the presence of God. The gift of the white robe signifies in symbol the conferring of spiritual life, the spiritual body, the righteous one of past time having been clothed upon with the "house which is from heaven" (2 Cor. 5. 2). This same symbol is used of the Church in Rev. 19. 8 where the reference is to the "marriage of the Lamb". We must take it therefore that the "souls under the altar" are the sleeping saints and that the opening

of the fifth seal marks a change in their condition in that the death state into which they entered in consequence of persecution has come to an end, they are raised to spiritual life, receiving the white robes, and enter into a condition described as "rest" while they wait for their fellows, the "living ones left over", to finish their course. The succeeding symbols comprising the events of the sixth seal are clearly the symbols of the Time of Trouble and end of the Age and it is therefore logical to conclude that it is during the progress of these events, the earthquake, darkening of the sun, human perplexity and terror, etc., that the "killing" of the "fellow-servants" is to be completed.

If this be a reasonable interpretation of this chapter, it does mean that the sleeping saints were raised before the onset of the great Time of Trouble on the world, and that the "change" of the living ones will be completed during the progress of that Time of Trouble. Such a view accords well with 2 Thess. 1, and is not contradicted in any material particular by I Thess. 4.

A later vision in the Book of Revelation lends still further support to this theme of the "rest" which those already resurrected to spiritual life enjoy whilst waiting for the last of their number to join them from earth below. This vision is in the fourteenth chapter and is as well known as the one just discussed. It concerns the "dead in Christ" and again it promises them "rest". Following this there is a gathering by the returned Lord and then comes Armageddon. The likeness to the vision in chapter 6 is so marked as to warrant further examination.

"And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them. And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of Man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle . . . And he . . . thrust in his sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped." (Rev. 14. 13-16.)

This necessitates a brief survey of Revelation chapter 14. Although this chapter is intimately connected with chapters 12 and 13 it is complete within itself. Against a background picturing the Church during the Gospel Age "seated with Christ in the heavenlies" and viewing earthly matters from that standpoint, there come forward in succession seven heavenly messengers. Six of them are angels and the remaining one is the Son of Man Himself. The nature of their messages makes it fairly clear that we have pictured here certain aspects of the Gospel Age viewed from what might be called the

heavenly standpoint, corresponding to the same things in chaps. 12 and 13 where they are viewed from the earthly standpoint. Thus the first angel, having the everlasting gospel to preach to all nations, clearly pictures the Gospel witness going out into all the world in the beginning of the Age and onward. The second angel proclaimed the next great event in the "religious" history of the Age, viz., the downfall of Paganism, which in the "earthly" view is described in chap. 12. 9 as the dragon being cast out of heaven. We are all familiar with the history of the great anti-Christian power which succeeded Paganism, described in chap. 13. 1 as a beast with seven heads and ten horns, and we are all more or less acquainted with the fact that toward the end of the Age that power is succeeded by another which, whilst verbally repudiating the oppressive and dictatorial methods of the first "beast" does in fact prove to be even more oppressive and dictatorial, so much so as thoroughly to merit the description given in chap. 13. 12-17. The third angel of chap. 14 is commissioned to proclaim the Divine warning to all of God's own people not to acknowledge or worship these anti-God systems, and to call to separation and consecration of life. Now that is obviously getting very near to the end of the Age; indeed the third angel's message must of necessity extend right up to the close of the Age. And it is just at this point that a sudden word comes to John intimately concerning God's own people. From this time there is to be a special blessing for those who "die in the Lord". The phrase in verse 13 "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth" does not mean that the blessing is only for those who die from that time forward, i.e., after the message is given. It means that *from the time of the message* there is a blessing for all, whether already literally dead or not, who are of the class that "dies in the Lord". The Diaglott makes this more clear than does the A.V. "From this time blessed are those dead who die in the Lord". The blessing is rest—a rest from their labours, with the additional comfort that their works go with them into that condition of rest.

This word means therefore that from that point of time there is no more sleeping in the tomb for those who die in Christ. All who are at that moment in the grave arise to that "rest", and all who "pass over" thereafter enter also into the same rest. At this point of time, indicated here as being between the third angel's message and the "harvest of the earth", there comes this change in the condition of all who are dead in Christ, or who subsequently die in Christ, which is declared to be a blessing. That change can only be the resurrection to spiritual life. Confirming this thought

we find that John, hearing the message and lifting up his eyes, immediately saw a vision of the Second Advent, one like to the Son of Man coming upon a cloud, crowned and holding a sickle.

The "white cloud" of vs. 14 is really a bright, glowing, dazzling cloud. The word "white" is normally used in the New Testament to denote such. What John saw was a vision of the Lord returning in glory on the clouds of heaven, crowned to denote His kingly dignity, armed with a sickle to signify the work He was to do. Thereupon the fourth angel appears from the temple of heaven and announces the gathering of the harvest of the earth.

It is strongly urged by many that this harvest work cannot picture anything that takes place on earth; it must refer exclusively to the gathering of the saints into heaven. Now there is no doubt that the harvest of the earth does involve the gathering of all the Lord's faithful ones into the heavenly garner but it does not seem necessary to insist that there is no aspect of the matter having its place on earth. The harvest of the vine of the earth, coming next in order in this chapter, refers primarily to Armageddon, where the Heavenly Rider and His armies confront the Beast and his forces, but that involves a previous gathering together on earth of all those who are set against the Lord and His Kingdom and His righteousness. Likewise we can quite reasonably look upon the literal gathering together, in this End Time of the Age, of those who "look for His appearing and His Kingdom", preparatory to their being taken to be with Him, as a feature of the "Harvest Work". The whole point is that the returned Lord is gathering His own, first the dead ones, from their graves, then the living ones, as He sees meet, until all is complete. And all this is the work of harvest.

So "the earth was reaped", in the words of verse 16. Only one great event remains to conclude the Age, the "winepress of the wrath of God"—Armageddon. The fifth and sixth angels of the chapter are concerned with this and the vision ends at this point, the final overthrow of Gospel Age evil in the greatest of all judgments.

The united testimony of these Scriptures, then, is that the sleeping saints are raised and ushered into "rest" at a point of time just before the great Day of Trouble dawns upon the world, and the living ones still "running for the prize of the High Calling" are "changed" as and when the returned Lord is ready to call them, but certainly extending well into the Day of Trouble and perhaps almost up to its end. The "marriage of the Lamb" cannot take place until all are gathered and neither can the Kingdom be set up

or proclaimed; but meanwhile preparations for *Armageddon* continue and the raised saints, joined to their Lord, remain spectators of what is transpiring on earth and wait for the completion of their number.

It may seem a long time to us—one, two, maybe three generations. But it is a very little time indeed in the mind of God. If a thousand years is with Him as one day, as a watch in the night, what are three short generations of humankind? If the "souls under the altar" have waited nineteen hundred years, some of them, for their blessing,

shall not we wait with patience our few short years? "*Here is the patience of the saints*" says this very chapter (14. 12), "*Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus*". This knowledge that our fellows of past ages have already been ushered into the presence of Jesus and that the turn of the living saints is at hand ought to be an inspiration and encouragement to each one of us as we go about our allotted tasks. Let us lift up our heads and rejoice, knowing that our deliverance draweth nigh—for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.

The Whip of Small Cords

A note on John 2, 15

A much misunderstood incident in our Lord's life is that recorded by John as occurring during the early stages of His ministry, the cleansing of the Temple. A similar incident also took place much later and this is recorded by the other three evangelists, but it is the one spoken about in John's Gospel which mentions the whip of small cords. The generally accepted impression is that Jesus, entering the Temple and finding it given over to all manner of merchant trading connected with the ritual sacrifices, made Himself a whip (more properly a flail or scourge) and drove out the traders by the use of sheer physical violence. This action, so contrary to the general tenor of His conduct and teaching, has been made the basis of argument to the effect that the Prince of Peace sanctioned the use of violence.

A brief study of the passage in question reveals the false premise upon which this conclusion rests. Jesus did not in fact assault the traders with His flail at all. He drove out the beasts—the cattle and sheep—and then returned to upset the money-changers' tables and utter those burning words of denunciation which caused the guilty men before Him to slink out of the Temple precincts, quailed and cowed under the fire of His indignation.

The A.V. is at fault in rendering the passage "*When He had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep and the oxen*" (Jno. 2; 15). The R.V. corrects this mis-translation "*He made a scourge of cords, and cast all out of the temple, both the sheep and the oxen.*" This rendering is confirmed by the majority of independent translators, as may be seen by the following examples.

"*All of them he thrust forth out of the temple, both the sheep and the oxen*" (Roth.).

"*So he drove all—both sheep and bullocks*" (Weymouth).

"*He drove them all, sheep and cattle together*" (Moffatt).

"*He cast all out of the sanctuary, the sheep as well as the oxen*" (Concordant).

The sheep and cattle were driven out, their owners being left to round them up as best they could; the money-changers, sitting to barter the pilgrims' coins, of all nations, for the Jewish coin in which alone the Temple tribute could be paid, grovelled on the ground seeking to recover their ill-gotten and scattered gains; while the sellers of doves for the sacrifices of the very poor quickly carried their cages away as His piercing voice rang in their hearts, "*Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise.*"

The time was the Passover. Every orthodox Jew had within the past few days scrupulously searched his house for hidden leaven and anything else that might defile, and attended to his own ceremonial cleanliness that he might keep the Passover according to ritual. Now there appeared one Who took to Himself the role of a prophet in Israel and commanded men to cease from desecrating the Temple of their God, and with that inborn awe of a man who spoke to them in the name of God they hastened to remove themselves from the Court which they knew was defiled by their presence. The fact of Christ's indignation joined to their own knowledge that their conduct was indefensible, was sufficient to empty the Court of the Gentiles of its trafficking crowd, and it was not until after the occasion had passed and the cupidity of these men once again overcame their temporary confusion that they began to ask of Him a sign—a miracle—to establish His right to act as He had done in claiming the authority of a prophet in Israel.

SPIRITUAL-MINDEDNESS

WORDS FROM LONG AGO

To be spiritually-minded is to have a mind in harmony with the Spirit of God, and fully surrendered to the Divine will—fully consecrated to the Lord. It would not be enough merely to have a preference for good, saying, "I prefer not to do any gross sin; I prefer to live a life that will be honest and decent." This attitude would not be spiritual-mindedness. Adam was not spiritually-minded, but in his perfection he had a mind to do right. He had the mind of God in the sense that he had a balanced mind, not one having a preference for sin, or one that was weak. He was sound-minded and could appreciate things from the standpoint of righteousness and justice. But even in his perfection Adam had not a spiritual mind, in the highest, or Scriptural sense of the word.

In Romans 8. 6 the Apostle Paul uses the expression "spiritually-minded" in describing a certain class who have become followers of Christ, who have made a full consecration of their lives to the Lord and who, in harmony with this consecration, have been begotten of the Holy Spirit. These are spiritually-minded. These are granted a spiritual insight into Divine things.

This was true of our Lord Jesus. Having left the glory which He had with the Father, and having humbled Himself to take the human nature, He was "found in fashion as a man". At Jordan, however, He was begotten of the Spirit, when He made full consecration at baptism, and as a consequence the Holy Spirit descended and lighted upon Him in bodily form like a dove.

Following that begetting, the Lord had an enlargement of understanding and was granted to see certain deep things of God which He had not seen before His consecration; so we read in that very connection that "the heavens were opened" to Him—the higher things became clear to Him—the more spiritual things. These things St. Paul calls "the deep things of God". "The natural man", St. Paul says [the natural man would be a perfect man; fallen man is imperfect, unnatural], "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, . . . neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1. Cor. 2. 14.) Then he proceeds to say that we have received the Spirit of God through the begetting of the Holy Spirit; and that having the new mind, this spirit begetting, we are enabled to understand the deep things of God. "The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God; and we have received . . . the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the

things that are freely given to us of God." Thus to us it is given to know the deep things of God. (1. Cor. 2. 11-12.)

So, then, the one who has been begotten of the Holy Spirit is spiritually-minded. He sees things from the new standpoint which God specially brings to the attention of the spirit begotten. As the Apostle John says, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye all know it". (1. John 2. 20.) Whoever receives this begetting of the Holy Spirit, this anointing, has an understanding of heart and mind which is different from that which any natural man would have, a quality that will progress with him. He has the privilege of growing in grace and in knowledge and in the appreciation of the deep things of God; and he should grow.

The Apostles Peter and Paul go on to explain (1. Pet. 2. 2-3; Heb. 5. 13-14; 6.1-2) that one thus begotten of the Spirit of God is at first only a babe, and, as a babe, should desire the sincere milk of the Word—the first principles of the doctrine of Christ; but as he goes on, he should feed upon the strong meat of God's Word. Some of those who have the begetting of the Spirit may be blessed with the special gift of language, so that they can make the matter very clear to others; some others who have also received the begetting of the Spirit may not be blessed with this gift. But all certainly would have the desire to tell forth the blessings which they have received from the Lord, that others might know and might glorify God in their bodies and spirits, which are His.

As these spiritually-minded ones would thus endeavour to tell the good tidings, we have no doubt whatever that the Lord's blessing upon them would more and more qualify them as ambassadors and representatives, that they might tell the Message to others—if not in one form, then in another. We have noted, however, that some who speak with stammering lips have sometimes accomplished very wonderful things, while some with a great deal of eloquence have failed to obtain the same results. The victory is not always to the strong nor to the swift; for the Lord may grant His blessing with the feebly spoken word, particularly if the whole life be in harmony with the message given out.

It is surprising at times to find that some who have apparently considerable understanding of spiritual things, in the sense of being able to tell about them, do not always give the best evidence

in their lives that they really have the Spirit of the Lord. Sometimes in their private lives there is that which is quite contradictory. This condition surprises and causes to wonder how it is that those who apparently understand the Truth should be without the power, or manifestation of the power of the Truth in their daily lives. It should be borne in mind that whoever speaks the words of the Lord with his mouth should uphold it in his every act, word, thought, in private life as well as in public.

The Truth should be the standard. Everything else is certainly quite contrary to the Divine will; and that person who fails to uphold the Truth in his daily life gives evidence that he has not the Spirit of the Lord in the proper degree. If, therefore, any of us should find that in our daily lives we have not been living in conformity with the message of our lips, it would be a matter of serious concern, for we cannot doubt that whoever is out of harmony with the Lord in his heart, will sooner or later get out of harmony in his utterances.

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BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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

Vol. 29, No. 8

AUGUST, 1952

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----|
| BETWEEN OURSELVES | 114 |
| IS LIFE WORTH LIVING? | 114 |
| HIGHER THAN ALL HEAVENS | 115 |
| A NOTE ON EXOD. 20. 5 | 119 |
| OUT OF THE STOREHOUSE | 120 |
| "THEY SHALL SEE EYE TO EYE" | 122 |
| "IN THE WILDERNESS" | 123 |
| "ALL THE RIGHTEOUS BLOOD" | 124 |
| OUT OF THE IVORY PALACES | 125 |
| THE BAPTISM AND TEMPTATION OF JESUS | 126 |

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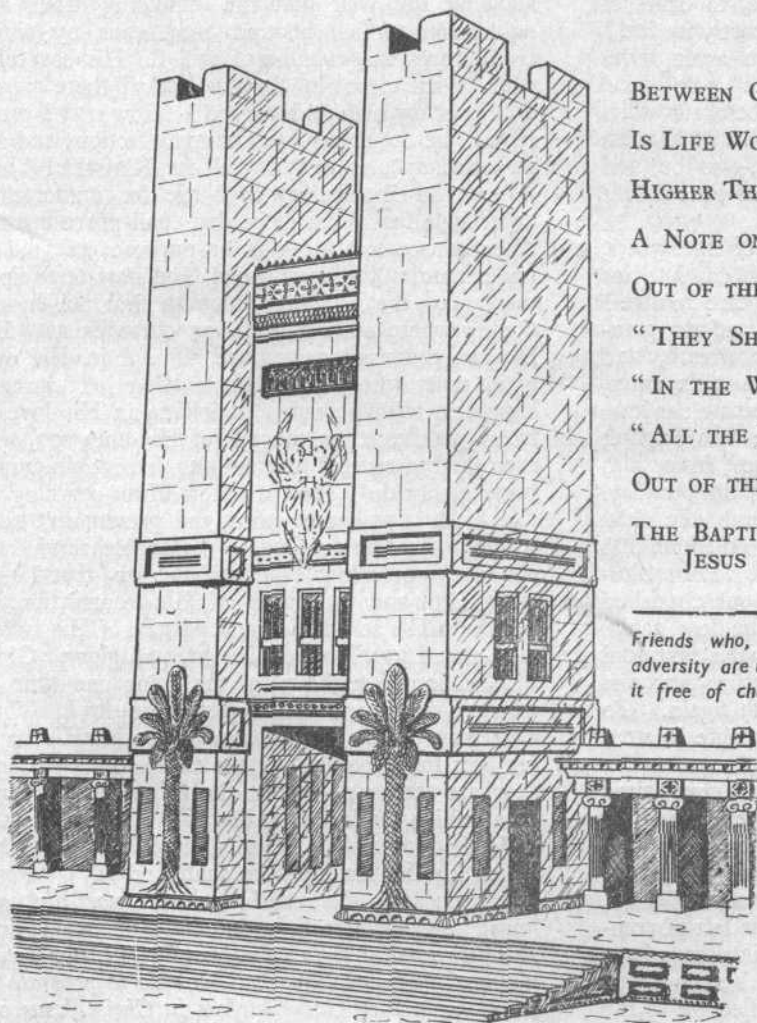
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Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

The friends at Osset (Yorks) announce a Home Gathering on September 6th and 7th, and extend a warm welcome to any who can come. Accommodation will be gladly provided for those who wish to stay overnight and requests for same should be addressed to Miss E. L. Robinson, Laburnum Cottage, Dewsbury Road, Ossett, Yorks.

The work of the Benevolent Committee is already well known. Oft-times it has proved a timely means of aid to those in need. Gifts and recommendation of cases of known need should all be sent to Bro. E. Allbon, 20, Sunnymede Drive, Ilford, Essex.

IS LIFE WORTH LIVING?

Is life worth living? What a question! Who would die? gladly youth replies, buoyant with hope, unfettered with care, the ruddy cheek glowing with health, the eye sparkling with pleasure. How sweet to be, to think, to move, to drink of joy on every hand. Oh, who could part with life?

Is life worth living? 'Tis youth again gives answer, but hope has fled. The pale face, emaciated form, and sunken eye betoken affliction's heavy hand, with days and nights of anguish and unrest. Oh what is life to me!—to be, and suffer. Life is a synonym of pain, and time means torture.

And what has life for you, O man of riper years, busy from early morn till close of day? Has labour aught of joy that one should care to live? Talk not to me of giving up to plan and do, gaining of knowledge, wealth, honour's wreath, and fame's fair title. 'Tis true, life has its trials, cares, its stormy days, but these are only fleeting shadows that serve to gild the intervening time with brighter splendour. But again answer comes from him who has reached the meridian of life in our day. Misfortune on the right hand and the left. Life to me means toil for naught. Affection has no sooner settled firm around earth's fairest blossoms than death puts an end to all our cherished hopes. Friends are gained but to be lost again. Honour is a bubble to be burst by the first foul breath of jealousy. The cup of pleasure scarce is lifted to the lips till dashed to earth again. To judge the future by the past, what has life in store that I should crave it?

And what of life? 'Tis now the gray-haired veteran gives reply. The weight of years has bent the once proud form, furrowed the cheek and brow, and robbed the senses of their acuteness. Alone, and trembling on the verge of the grave, memory of younger days is all there is left of comfort. The days of the years of my pilgrimage have been few and dull of sorrow. The beacon lights of pleasure, wealth and glory are as fleeting as the moments we employ in their pursuit, as changeful as the firefly, and if secured are only vanity. Humanity's portion is, to be, to hope, to hover between its fruition and despair, and end in death, fitting finale of the fitful dream.

But Christian, what say you of life? It is our first and greatest blessing, the preface to eternity, the time in which true happiness may be forever gained. I look not for the present earthly joy, knowing full well that the afflictions, trials and temptations which abound are means by which God proves me, whether I will do His sovereign will. What virtue in obeying Him if there are no desires of my own to disregard? How may I prove Him to be the chief object of my affections and not be called upon to deny myself for His sake? Life affords the opportunity to battle for immortality, to struggle for an existence that shall prove eternal. They who use it for a baser purpose are void of understanding. The curse of God now rests upon the land. We need not think to find our heart's desires where such a blighting curse exists. But He has promised to remove all evil in His own good time, when, with His blessing here instead, happiness shall be ours. Rejoicing in His love so freely manifested in the gift of His only son, who even died to redeem us from our present sin-cursed state, gladly do I seek to follow Him, scorning all that earth now has in store, and present my body a living sacrifice to God, a reasonable service. I am made conformable unto His death, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection. I rejoice in His self-denial, and partake of His sufferings, that I may share in His joy and glory. Glory to God in the highest, for the being and time by which I may work out so great a destiny! Whatever may be my portion now, I praise His name for life; for I look not at the things that are seen; they are temporal; but at the things that are not seen, which He has promised, for they are eternal. "He that loveth His life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Those who live to make the most they possibly can of earthly objects through their present fleshly nature, are doomed to bitter disappointment. This life can prove a blessing only when lived for God.

(P. W. Pope.)

HIGHER THAN ALL HEAVENS

A.O.H.

The fifth of a series of Studies on the Second Advent

"On the left hand, where he doth work, I cannot behold him; he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him." (Job 23. 9.)

A number of years ago there was published a book which set forth the views of twelve Christian ministers on the characteristics of Heaven. In nearly every case they pictured it situated a long way from the earth, somewhere in space, beyond the reach of telescopes or cameras, but having a definite geographical location so that presumably if one had some means of travelling through space and could live long enough it might be possible to take a journey to Heaven and come back to Earth. Of course none of the writers suggested as much but that is what would logically be implied. Even although some of them stressed the fact that Heaven is a "spiritual" realm, inhabited only by "spiritual" beings, the idea of locality in relation to the earth and the sun and the stars remained. It is difficult for anyone to think of Heaven in any other terms. The well-known hymn, *"There's a home for little children, above the bright blue skies"*, is a tolerably correct reflection of the idea that exists in most minds respecting Heaven. Somewhere up there, beyond the sun and the moon and the stars, there hangs, suspended in space, the golden floor which constitutes the land of Heaven; there stand the hosts of the redeemed round the Throne of God. Somewhere in the upper skies shines resplendent that Holy City of which God and the Lamb are the eternal light.

When considering Scriptural teaching regarding our Lord's return to earth at His Second Advent it is rather important that we clarify our ideas, as far as possible, about the nature of Heaven. Naturally enough, the way in which we visualise it in our minds will affect and colour our understanding of what the Scriptures say about His return. If, for example, we believed that Heaven was on the moon, we would picture His Coming as a simple journey through space for two hundred and thirty-eight thousand miles on a straight line from moon to earth, and could then very easily imagine Him cleaving our terrestrial atmosphere at the end of the journey and landing upon earth in full view of those who happened to be on the spot at the time, in just such a manner as 1. Thess. 4. 17, and Matt. 16. 64, would indicate if interpreted strictly literally. We are saved all that since

we do not believe that Heaven is on the moon—which is just as well, since man, in his inexhaustible hunger for exploration, would perhaps be effecting a landing on that satellite in another century or so if human rule was going to be permitted to continue that long. And yet, if the place to which our Lord ascended when He "appeared in the presence of God for us" is not in fact a physical locality in our Universe to which man might conceivably travel if they had the machine and knew the way, and from which our Lord does travel when the time comes for Him to return to the earth, how and in what terms are we to picture His coming? Putting it crudely, where does He come from and how does He get here? The answer to that question might help us to understand the "manner of His coming" more clearly. We might well question now whether the time has come when, in the development of our understanding both of Divine revelation and natural science, it is necessary to consider from a new angle Scriptural statements such as that Christ "ascended into Heaven" and "sat down at the right hand of God"? A clearer appreciation of what really happened to our Lord when the cloud veiled His ascending form from the eyes of the disciples on Olivet, and of where He has been and what He has been doing during the long centuries since, cannot fail to be enlightening when the manner of His return to earth is considered.

It is difficult to think of the Second Advent except in terms of some kind of journey from a distant part of space. The very fact that our Lord's spiritual presence is with us all through the centuries (*"Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the Age"*) implies that His Second Advent is a personal coming to the earth, something more than the merely being present by His Spirit, or in thought and care for His Church. One truth upon which we do all agree is that for thirty-three and a half years the Son of God was literally present in the earth, communing and associating with men, and that after the Olivet scene following His resurrection He was thus literally present no longer. Even although during those last few weeks He was for the most part invisibly present, there came a change at Pentecost. Thereafter He was in the earth no longer; He was ascended into Heaven.

It is true that four or five years afterwards Paul saw the resurrected Christ on the Damascus road. Was that reality or a vision? Did Jesus return from Heaven for a few minutes thus to vouchsafe a glimpse of His resurrection glory or was He actually still seated at the right hand of the Father while Paul, blinded, lay in the dusty Syrian highway? That question may be borne in mind but is better considered in detail later on.

It is thought by some that God fills all creation and pervades all creation, a great Mind having no location in any one place. It has to be said that if our Lord Jesus Christ is pictured extending through all space like that, in some intangible, abstract fashion, as though Heaven and the spiritual world has no reality beyond the sphere of operation of a great Mind without body or definite relation to some appropriate environment, then the only manner in which Christ can "come again" must be by assuming once more the limitations of a body of flesh and living as a man amongst men. It is absurd to think of His thus becoming man to all eternity whilst the members of His church become spirit. One of the things upon which we must insist is that Christ, from the time of His resurrection, is the "Lord that Spirit", exalted to the glory of the Father's right hand, a glory that He retains forever and in due time bestows also upon His Church. He has relinquished His humanity for ever and will never again be man.

It may be helpful at this point to trace the progressive development through the centuries of human beliefs about Heaven. From earliest times the place of the after-life has been visualised as lying just outside the boundaries of the known physical creation, transcending this earth in all the things which make for happiness and contentment, but essentially of the same physical nature as this earth. As men's knowledge of the universe widened so their ideas of the place of Heaven perforce receded farther away. The earliest beliefs in this direction we meet with are those of the descendants of Ham—known to history as the Sumerians—shortly after the Flood. Heaven, the home of the gods, was in their view situated on the snowy summit of Mount Algurd, thirteen thousand feet high, on the frontier between Iraq and Persia. It was the highest mountain they knew, called by them the "Mountain of the World", the one from which they believed their ancestors had come after the great Flood. It soon ceased to be the site of Heaven when the later Sumerians became more familiar with the district and could even climb the mountain's slopes. For centuries afterwards, though, it was venerated in Babylonian legend as Mount Nizir, where the Ark came to rest. So

Heaven was transferred to the south, at the other end of the Persian Gulf, "beyond the mouths of the rivers" (Tigris and Euphrates) as the legends had it. But before long Sumerian merchant vessels were ploughing the waters of the Gulf on their way to India and Ceylon, and Heaven had to be moved again. It became the turn of the Greeks to fix its new site on the heights of Olympus, where they placed the home of the gods and the eternal abode of the blessed, and that did duty until some hardy adventurers, greatly daring, climbed to the summits of the mountains and found no marble halls, no playing fountains, no rich feasts of food and drink of life, no gods and no goddesses—nothing but a line of jagged, snow-clad peaks across which a cyclonic wind howled and chilled them to the bone. Even so, the later Greeks went on believing that somewhere in the earth there existed a mountain, higher than all the rest, whose proud summit jutted into the fair land of the blest where the gods and their favourites dwelt in eternal felicity.

Three hundred years later it fell to the lot of Claudius Ptolemy (astronomer and the famed author of "Ptolemy's Canon") to convince a wondering world that Heaven was not really on the earth—even at the top of the highest of high mountains—at all. Outside the moon, planets, sun and stars, revolving in their orbits around this earth, he said, there were three great "crystalline spheres", like vast glass envelopes completely encircling and enclosing the earth, the planets and all. The surface of the third and outermost of these three spheres was the "sphere of happy souls", the eternal abode of the righteous.

The Christian Church in the early centuries of the Gospel Age grew up against the scientific background of Ptolemy's system, which was generally accepted by educated men of the day, and thus the idea of Heaven being somewhere out in the far recesses of space, on the uttermost of these "spheres", became firmly fixed. The principal reason why the Catholic ecclesiastical authorities persecuted Galileo in the seventeenth century for denying the Ptolemaic theory by declaring that the earth and planets were really moving round the sun, and that the earth was not the fixed centre of the universe, was because it upset their theology in so far as the place of Heaven was concerned. In demolishing Ptolemy's crystalline spheres Galileo and his predecessor, Copernicus, had unwittingly demolished Heaven as well! Galileo was forced to recant, but despite the anathema of organised ecclesiasticism, the truth was established, and with some glimmering at length of the enormous distances involved in this new understanding of astronomy, men began to think of God's Throne

as occupying some place even farther away from earth, infinitely remote in the starry heavens.

It was in consequence of this rapidly expanding knowledge of the heavenly bodies that in 1750 Thomas Wright, a British astronomer of Durham, hazarded the theory that the constellation known as Pleiades is the centre of the universe, and that all other stars, including our sun and its planets, circle around that central point. His thesis was not accepted but in 1846 it was elaborated and revived by a German astronomer, Prof. Maedlar. Dr. Joseph Seiss, a noted Lutheran minister of Philadelphia, came across the idea and concluded that here, surely, was the ideal place of Divine rule. He wrote "*Science has discovered that the sun is not a dead centre, with planets wheeling about it, and itself stationary. It is now ascertained that the sun also is in motion . . . around some other and vastly mightier centre. Astronomers are not yet fully agreed as to where that centre is. Some, however, believe they have found the direction of it to be the Pleiades, and particularly Alcyone, the centre one of the Pleiadic stars. . . . Alcyone, then . . . would seem to be the 'midnight throne' in which the whole system of gravitation has its central seat, and from which the Almighty governs His universe. . . .*"

But as with Ptolemy, so with Maedlar. It is now known that so far from Pleiades being the centre of visible creation, it is but a member of our own "galaxy" or cluster of stars; and not even at the centre of that! Pleiades is in fact a relatively near neighbour of our own sun and with the sun is itself revolving round some other and greater centre. The extent of God's material creation is still unplumbed and unknown—and Heaven as a place seems farther away than ever.

Compare with all this the sublime words of 2 Cor. 6. 18. "*But will God in very truth dwell with men on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built.*" When those words were uttered at the dedication of the First Temple King Solomon glimpsed a truth that all the seekers after a geographical heaven have passed over—that God, Who is a Spirit, "*dwelleth not in temples made with hands*" (Acts 7. 48). He who was, not only before this world, but before any part of the material universe came into being, cannot be contained within the structure of that which He created. It is with this thought in mind that enquiry into the "going" and "coming" of our Lord Jesus Christ must be made.

In the search for Scriptural allusions that may help us to understand these things a little more clearly we are led quite naturally to the experience

of the Apostle Paul when he was "caught up" to the "third heaven" and heard "*indescribable things which it is not possible for a man to relate*" (2 Cor. 12. 4 Diaglott). It is not suggested by any serious student that there are in fact three distinct heavens; it is more generally accepted that Paul had in mind the three symbolic heavens and earths, described so fully in 2 Pet. 3 as the heavens and earth that were before the Flood, the heavens and earth that are now, and the new heavens and earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. The "third heaven" would then be the "heavens", the spiritual controlling realm, of the Millennial Age. If that is so, and Paul actually did see and hear the sights and sounds of that spiritual kingdom which we ourselves will not experience until we are "beyond the Veil", then we can well understand his reference to "*indescribable things which it is not possible for a man to relate*". His memory might well retain and cherish those things, but no words or analogies exist in human experience whereby he might describe them to his fellows.

To illustrate: Two hundred feet below the surface of the sea all sunlight is so filtered out that only blue is left. All things there appear in various shades of blue. A diver, cutting his hand, sees the blood emerge as blue. Men have descended to that depth with floodlights and colour film cameras and found that when their powerful lights are switched on, the seabed and all its myriad forms of life show up in a magnificent and resplendent blaze of all colours. Suppose there had been on that seabed a race of intelligent beings, accustomed to spending their lives in that environment of blue, knowing nothing else, and one of them coming in contact with the scene thus illumined by the floodlights. How could he describe to his less fortunate fellows, afterwards, what he had seen and the glory of the reds and greens and yellows? He could carry the brief vision in his own memory for ever, but it would be to him so far as his companions were concerned an "*indescribable thing which it was not possible to relate*". So must Paul have felt when he penned those words.

The spiritual world from which our Lord comes at His Advent, then, is something so different from the world we know that we could not understand or visualise it even if the Scriptures tried to describe it. It is not just that the trees are greener and the streams are clearer and the gold is brighter and the music sweeter. It is described in the Scriptures by many such devices but only because that is the nearest we can get to comprehending it. True it is, as Paul said to the Corinthians "*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". Yet he goes on in the very next breath to declare "But God hath revealed them to us by His Spirit—for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God". And if that last remark means anything at all it must mean that we who are the Lord's consecrated disciples should expect to comprehend at least the fundamental principles of the spiritual realm even though we may not visualise its citizens and its landscapes correctly.

Landscapes? Yes, landscapes! for the spiritual world must be a real world, as real to its citizens as is ours to us. The fact that it may not be found on Ptolemy's crystalline globe, or in the Pleiades, or anywhere else in this physical creation of which we are a part, does not detract from its reality, nor, be it said, from a certain similarity which must subsist between that world and this. For this world is a copy of that. When God made man, He said "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness". In some very definite sense humanity is modelled after the likeness of those beings whom God had already created to inhabit the world in which He has His Throne. At the very least, man is in the image of God and of the angels in his love of beautiful things and inspiring things; in his urge to create, to build, to accomplish; in his impulse to happiness, to joy, to laughter. Then there must be in that world, too, beautiful sights and inspiring sounds, things to create and build, purposes to accomplish, events that evoke happiness and joy and laughter. How inconceivable it is, when one comes to think it out, that God should make it possible for men to have laughter and merriment on earth if in all the long ages that preceded man's creation there had never been laughter and merriment in Heaven! The sights and sounds and surroundings of that world must assuredly be as real and substantial to its inhabitants as those of our world are to us, even although we may with the aid of all that human science can give us, range throughout the whole wide domain of the starry heavens and never catch a glimpse of its splendour nor sense one note of its celestial harmonies. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." It is not just distance in space, measured in so many millions or quadrillions of miles, that bars us from reaching the golden gates. It is something much more fundamental, a barrier that can never be crossed except by the power of God, a barrier that never will be crossed except by those who experience the reality of the Apostle's words "We shall be changed".

What if that "change" is a change to life as it were on a different "wave-length", as if one had

changed from the Light to the Home programme on the radio? That may be a difficult thing—it may even seem a ludicrous thing—to consider. Yet those who possess the inward illumination that is afforded by the Holy Spirit of God should find it easier than would the natural man to appreciate the possibility that just as the spiritual world partakes in no sense of the material elements of the earth, just as spiritual beings are not limited as are earthly beings by terrestrial gravitation, the physical restraints imposed by distance, and so on, so that world may be quite unrelated to the dimensions of space, time and material by which mankind measures and determines his position in his own universe and the extent and duration of his universe.

It is becoming a common experience in everyday life to switch on a television receiver and "tune in" to a particular wave-length. The room is filled with music—a definite world of sight and sound is created and is perceptible to the eyes and ears of the observer. Almost everyone realises now that simultaneously with that programme, other worlds of sight and sound, inaudible and unperceived, are pulsating through that room, not seen or heard only because the force that creates them is on a different wave-length. They are just as real, and in other rooms, on correctly tuned receivers, are yielding sight and sound just as evident. Each receiver can discern only that to which it is adapted and tuned.

If the spiritual world can, by analogy, be pictured as something like that, and existing, not in some other part of the material universe, but as it were upon a different wave-length, then, imperfect and to some extent inaccurate as this analogy must be, it can at least serve to free us from the geographical limitation which has of necessity shaped men's thoughts in the past, and help us to visualise that world as divorced from this, and yet in a sense superimposed upon it. If such a conception in any way approaches the truth, then our Lord Jesus Christ, Who left the earth and ascended to the right hand of God, effected that transfer of His personal presence from earth to Heaven, not by continuing His upward progress through the cloud that received Him out of the disciples' sight to some far distant point in outer space, but by passing into a world which is just as near to us here, and at the same time just as far away, as the unheard radio programme is near and yet far from the one that fills the room in which we may be sitting.

Likewise, then, at His coming again, the commencement of His Second Advent, the time of His arrival, the "descent from Heaven", would be marked, not by a physical approach from distant

space through the solar system and so to the surface of the earth, via earth's outer atmosphere, but by His coming "into tune" with the plane of material things, even as during the weeks following His death and resurrection. That there was some difference between His condition during the time between Calvary and Pentecost, and the long centuries since, is obvious. The New Testament makes it very clear that the *man* Christ Jesus died on the Cross and was resurrected a spirit being, no longer of this world, and imperceptible to human senses, except when, upon the various occasions of His appearance, He assumed or "materialised" a fleshly body for the occasion. But although He was thus a spirit being as He had been before the days of His humanity, He had not yet "ascended, far beyond all heavens". He had not yet re-entered the heavenly land.

That re-entry took place on the day that the disciples stood upon Olivet. After that time there

were no more appearances. He had gone—even as He had said—and would be present with His followers in person no more until the day of His Second Coming. And that latter event is marked by His once more crossing the invisible barrier that separates us from the other world, and so He becomes present with us—invisible still, for He is still "the Lord that Spirit"—but present with us in the time and space framework of this our world.

Perhaps the analogy is too hard to grasp. Perhaps it is not a very good one after all. But that our returning Lord comes, not from somewhere else *inside* our universe, but from a spiritual realm which is *altogether outside it*, ought to be realised as a fact even if we cannot fully comprehend it; and that in turn should help us to understand the silent, unobtrusive, invisible nature of His Presence, not perceived and not perceivable by human sense.

To be continued.

A NOTE ON EXOD. 20.5

"The Lord, whose name is *jealous*, is a *jealous* God." "I the Lord thy God am a *jealous* God." (Exod. 34. 14 and 20. 5.)

The modern usage of the word "jealousy" as indicating an evil passion akin to envy of another or an unreasoning demand for the exclusive right to another's affections or regard has led many to misunderstand the many Scriptures which speak of God as a "jealous" God. From first principles we know that the great Creator has no base or evil element in His being, and therefore He is not "jealous" in the ordinarily accepted sense of the word. The dictionary definition of jealousy is of assistance here. It is "*jealous*—Watchful of one's rights, honour, etc. Afraid of being supplanted by a rival. To be solicitous for the good name of the object" (of jealousy). Now our God manifests these characteristics except that there can be no question of His being *afraid* of being supplanted.

When we turn to the Old Testament we find an interesting fact. The words "jealous" and "zealous" are from the same Hebrew word.

Upon turning to the New Testament the same fact is observed. The "zeal" of God and the "jealousy" of God are one and the same thing.

For those who are interested, the words are "*ginah*" in Hebrew and "*zelos*" in Greek.

If then we combine the dictionary definition of jealousy with the meaning attached to "zeal" or "zealous" we can approach these Scriptures from a fresh angle. Turn to Zech. 1. 14. "I am *jealous* for Jerusalem with a great *jealousy*." God's solicitude for Jerusalem, His desire for her prosperity, is manifested in His zeal for her res-

toration. So Paul, using the Greek *zelos*, says in 2 Cor. 11. 2, "I am *jealous* over you with godly *jealousy*" thus expressing his watchful zeal for the well-being of his converts. Zephaniah declares (1. 18) that "all the land shall be devoured by the fire of (God's) *jealousy*" or zeal; zeal for the destruction of every manifestation of sin and the bringing in of every righteousness.

The prophetic words of Psalms 69. 9, "The *zeal* of thine house hath consumed me" quoted by Jesus in John 2. 17 and applied to Himself is another instance of the use of this same word. So also are Isaiah 9. 7, "The *zeal* of the Lord of Hosts will perform this" and Isaiah 59. 17, "And was clad with *zeal* as a cloke". Many other texts could be quoted to the same effect.

When therefore we read that our God is a "jealous" God, we are expected to picture in our minds One who is ever active and zealous for the honour of His great Name and for the execution of His Plan; One Who will by no means clear the guilty and yet has provided a means whereby the guilt may be covered and the sinner become reconciled to Him; One Who will not tolerate sin in His creation and is zealous in His operations directed to the removal of sin. God is jealous for the honour of His own character and for the happiness of His creatures. His zeal will never flag until He has accomplished all His good purposes. With this in mind we can read Exodus 14 "The Lord, Whose name is ZEAL, is a zealous God" and in our confidence in that sacred zeal we can rest content, knowing that as surely as He hath spoken, so surely will it come to pass.

OUT OF THE STOREHOUSE

A collection of interesting items

Apathetic Christians

The rector of St. Edmund's, Salisbury, recently described "wheeled Christians". Said he "*they come to church for the first time in their perambulators, for the second time in their wedding car, and for the third and last occasion in a hearse. How much happier would people be if they came on their own two feet in between times*". True enough! We are reminded of the somewhat similar observation which first appeared in print many years ago under the caption "*Four kinds of Christians*". First there is the *tired* Christian. He is active enough in theory but the enthusiasm vanishes when there is work to be done. Then there is the *retired* Christian. He was a good worker once, but that was a long time ago. Next comes the *rubber tyred* Christian, all right if the way is straight and the road is smooth. Finally, the *flat tyred* Christian. He ran well until he suffered a puncture and since then he has never recovered his wind.

On the other hand there is something to be said in the defence of people who find "going to Church" not the most inspiring of exercises. Rowntree and Laver, in their recent social survey "*English Life and Leisure*" mentioned the young girl they interviewed who had made an attempt to attend Church but had given it up. "It was all bobbing up and down and I couldn't find the place in the book." Somehow there is something pathetic in the thought of that lassie wrestling manfully with the Book of Common Prayer, casting covert glances the while at her neighbours in the endeavour to kneel, stand and sit in tolerable unison with them. . . . At which point it is time for us to stop smiling and ask ourselves why it is that we likewise fail so often to hold newcomers to our meetings. It is not the fault of the Truth; it is not that we lack enthusiasm or desire; then what is it?

Baal

The pagan deity most frequently mentioned in the Old Testament is Baal, whose visible emblem was the sun. Baal is referred to nearly one hundred times, and his worship was attended by such degrading rites that Israel was forbidden to countenance or tolerate it under any circumstances. Yet this idolatrous worship was but the corruption of a once purer and holier faith. The peoples of Canaan had worshipped God with a nobler and better knowledge of His character; and this is indicated by the very construction of the name itself. "*Baal*" is thought to be derived from "*Bara-el*", meaning the "Creator-God", and in

earlier days—earlier even than the time of Melchisedek, the "Priest of the Most High God", whose royal city of Salem first gave its name to the City of Peace—God was worshipped in spirit and in truth by men upon whom the degradation of the Fall had not yet proceeded so far as to obliterate from their minds all remembrance of the God of their fathers: nor so far as their descendants of later days, whose iniquity was so great that they were rooted up to make room for the chosen people.

Moses' Age

Moses died at 120, his eye not dim nor his natural force abated. (Deut. 34. 7.) He was not the only one to live to such a ripe old age in his day. Aaron his brother was 123 when he died. (Num. 33. 38-39.) Miriam his sister at least 110, Joshua and Elisheba about 110, Amram and Levi 137 (Exod. 6. 16, 20) and Joseph 110 (Gen. 50. 26). It was five hundred years later that the Psalmist fixed the span of human life at the proverbial three-score years and ten. The human race had travelled farther along the downward path during those five centuries.

On Heresies

Our all-wise Head made a most choice selection in the word he used to foretell that the spirit that says "I am of Paul, I am of Apollos" would manifest itself in the midst of the true Church—as it did do even under the ministration of such powerful leaders as Paul, and Peter, and John. On this word, "*heresis*", found in the King James Version, E. P. Gould writes in the American Commentary: "*Heretic* is a transliteration (the Greek word spelled with English letters), but not a translation of the Greek word, which has come over into English with a different meaning from its ordinary Greek, or New Testament, meaning. It means, originally, a taking; then, introducing the idea of selection, the taking what one desires and leaving the rest, election, choice; then, a chosen way of living or thinking; then, a body of men choosing the same way of thinking or living; and finally, dissensions between different bodies of this kind. Its use in the New Testament is divided between the last two meanings—sects and their dissensions. In this sense, it is classed by Paul among the works of the flesh. (Gal. 5. 20.)" This writer gives also what we believe is the correct explanation of the last clause of this text, "that they which are approved may be made manifest among you". He writes: "Those who stand the test and receive the

Divine approval; here those who show an unpartisan and loving spirit. 'May be made manifest'—viz., by the contrast between them and the dissentient". How simply and how skilfully our Heavenly Judge shows up the selfishness, the wilfulness, the lovelessness of the unfaithful!

* * *

In the Morning

The ancient Egyptians were usually buried with a copy of what moderns have called the "*Book of the Dead*" by their side. It was a book of liturgical texts and other matters connected with the after life; for the Egyptians believed that after death there would be a resurrection, and that the body laid in the tomb would one day live again. And because of this, they themselves had a different name for that book. They called it "*The Book of Coming Forth by Day*". It was not a Book of the Dead to them; it was a Book of Resurrection.

How striking an illustration of the tremendous contrast which to-day exists between the world at large and the Christian believer! Too many people, intelligent, talented, look at death and see in it only the end of all things. The Christian, however deficient in intellectual attainments, looks at death and sees it as the preliminary to a coming forth by Day. "*I know that my Vindicator liveth*" declared Job, "*and that in my flesh shall I see God*" (Job 19. 25). "*There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust*" said Paul (Acts 24. 15). The world goes on its way, unheeding, its plans and its schemes limited by the brevity of human life. We who have pledged our lives and our abilities to the larger vision have espoused a long term policy which sees death but as an incident in our service to God, an experience marking the transition from this order of things to that better order under which the practice of evil will disappear from Divine creation, and all men enter into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Look at it how we will, we cannot escape the inevitable conclusion: that which men call death is nothing else than a "coming forth by Day".

* * *

Fearfully and Wonderfully

The Christian, as he thinks of the human body, is forced to exclaim with the Psalmist, "I will praise Thee, O Lord, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made". Surely no instrument is so wondrous, no other handiwork so Divine!

Here, for example, are a few interesting facts about the average man, about YOURSELF:

—those two hundred bones and five hundred muscles of yours are capable of fourteen thousand different adaptations;

- that heart of yours, so delicate yet so mysterious, contracts no fewer than four thousand times every hour;
- one hundred thousand glands and two million pores assist in the circulation of your blood every minute of the day;
- and your human voice (the greatest marvel of it all) it has been estimated is capable of producing seventeen trillions, five hundred and ninety-two billions, one hundred and eighty-six millions, forty-four thousand, four hundred and fifteen different sounds.

Wondrous mechanism!

Little wonder then that the celebrated anatomist, Galen, was turned from his atheism as he examined the formation of the human body. When he studied the utility of all its members—of every muscle, of every nerve, of every vein—he went down on his knees in wonder and in praise, and composed a hymn in honour of his Creator.

H. H. Martin in "*The Happy Life*".

* * *

A Millennial Promise

The thirty-second chapter of Isaiah has long been recognised to comprise a prophecy of Millennial conditions. "*Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment*" is how it opens. The Septuagint rendering of verses 6-8, which describe the attitude of the obstinately wicked in that glorious day, is so much more clear and vivid than is the Authorised that it is well worth reproducing.

"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."

That final sentence is a wonderful assurance of the certitude of God's promises. "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain" is the declaration. Here in Isaiah 32 we have an eloquent pen-picture of the determination with which some will seek to perpetuate the bad old ways of this "present evil world"; but all their plans and schemes will come to nought, for "*the godly have devised wise measures, AND THIS COUNSEL SHALL STAND*".

“They shall see Eye to Eye”

A few words on a well-known text

“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” (Isa. 52. 8.).

The immediate setting of this text is the promised return from captivity to Babylon. There would be symbolic watchers on the walls of Jerusalem and symbolic heralds hastening over the mountains to announce to the watchers the coming of the returning hosts intent on rebuilding the temple and city. The long night of captivity is past; the day of Divine favour is come. *“I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies. My house shall be built in it, and a line shall be stretched out upon Jerusalem”* (Zech. 1. 16). Hence the stirring cry of the watchmen in the seventh verse: *“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that bringeth good tidings of good, that sayeth unto Zion ‘Thy God reigneth’”* (Isa. 52. 7).

Then come the words of our text. The rejoicing watchmen sing together because they see, *face to face*, the heralds of good tidings announcing the Lord returning to His sanctuary in Zion.

That is what this expression “eye to eye” means. *“Face to face.”* It only occurs in one other place in the Old Testament, Num. 14. 14, where it is rendered “For thou, Lord, art seen ‘face to face,’”. The thought in Isa. 52 is that the watchmen see clearly, face to face, the heralds of glad tidings announcing the imminent return of their God to His people.

Rotherham's rendering is *“Eye to eye shall they look upon Yahweh's return unto Zion”* and he further remarks on the meaning as “Probably ‘face to face with the event’”. Moffatt has it: *“They see the Eternal face to face as He returns to Zion”*. Margolis: *“They shall see, eye to eye, the Lord returning to Zion”*. Ferrar Fenton: *“When clearly you see that the Lord comes to Zion”*. The Septuagint confirms the thought by having *“Eyes shall look to eyes when the Lord shall have mercy upon Zion”*.

Bible students know that this wonderful imagery was not intended solely for fulfilment in the days of Israel's return from captivity. Paul uses the seventh verse as applicable to the heralds of the Gospel in Rom. 10. 15. Realising that the return under Cyrus was but a picture, a type, of the greater release from captivity which should come to spiritual Israel at the close of the Gospel Age, and the joy which the imminent Advent of our Lord

and Saviour, Jesus, would inspire in the hearts of the Gospel Age “Watchers”, we can discern a greater and more glorious application of these glowing words.

The “Watchers” on the walls of the Holy City of this Gospel Age have waited through a long and dreary time during which the people of God have been held captive by an oppressive system which has crushed the Truth to the ground. Only a few of the “poor” have remained to be “vine-dressers and husbandmen”, but these have faithfully manned the walls watching for the promised “return”. The night is far spent, the day is at hand, but as yet only the first gleams of dawn are perceptible.

Then come the heralds. Hastening over the mountains, pressing toward the Holy City, so long downtrodden and oppressed, they come with glorious news. The KING is on his way. He is returning to Zion with favour. Enlightenment and prosperity is to come with Him. The captive people are loosed—even now they are on their way to commence the great work of rebuilding the Temple of God, and placing within it the golden vessels—the precious truths so long submerged under the defilements of a foreign power.

How eagerly the Watchers fasten their gaze upon the heralds. They haste—therefore the news is good. Did they bring bad news their pace would be slow. They each seek to outvie the others in order to reach the city first. How beautiful the sight, heralds upon the mountains proclaiming the coming King!

So they meet, face to face. No longer any doubt. The news runs round the city. Not all the watchers receive the news at once. Not all hear exactly the same story from the different heralds, all zealous to proclaim the essentials of their message. But one central truth stands out—THE KING IS AT HAND! He may be upon the mountain approach; He may even be within the city, and making Himself known to those who have perceived His entrance. There is no lack of love and zeal on the part of those who have not actually seen Him enter the gate, if so be He really is now within the walls. All are united in the one joyous theme—the time has come. *“I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies.”*

That is the story of this closing period of the Gospel Age—a period which is now well advanced. Is the King within the walls? Is He at the gates? Whether the one thing or the other, the important teaching of the text is that we are “face to face with

the event". The Watchers and the Heralds have met, and their united testimony has been given to seekers after the Lord for three generations past. The Temple has been built; Divine Truth, things new and old, has been established in its rightful place. The work is not yet finished; the building must go on; the Temple must be adorned with yet purer and nobler vessels of truth and understanding, that the day may at length come when the great outer doors will be flung open to all mankind and the invitation come to all men to enter and walk in its light.

The importance of a right understanding of this

Scripture is great. It calls us to recognise the significance of the times in which we live; that the work begun in Christendom during the nineteenth century continues still in active preparation for the day when our Lord Jesus Christ shall be manifested in His glorious appearing—His revelation of Himself to all men, in association with His glorified Church, for man's blessing and salvation. How beautiful upon the mountains . . . the heralds . . . proclaiming "*Thy God reigneth*" . . . for the time of His Kingdom is come, and the day is not far hence when He shall "*reign in Mount Zion, and before His ancients gloriously.*"

IN THE WILDERNESS

A modern lesson from ancient history

"And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no."

In a very beautiful poem entitled "*The Angel of the Presence*" the author (The Rt. Rev. Allan Becher Webb, D.D.) has shown how God upholds and protects those who trust in Him, and faithfully and simply cling to His strength alone—

*"Just to have known themselves to be but men,
Just to have let Him lead them by His Hand,
Just to have had a little faith, and then
All had come safely to the Promised Land."*

Alas, that many "fell" in the wilderness. Why was it that so many failed to reach the "goal"? It was not because they were apathetic, nor yet because they were not trying. We must remember that the Lord always referred to Israel as "stiff-necked". They were not easily led, and did not easily fall into the child-like and trustful attitude which alone brings the blessings of God's love and the guidance of His Wisdom.

There is only one way in which we can come safely through the wilderness, and that is to put ourselves unreservedly in the hands of Him "who alone is able to keep us from falling". Thus, we see, that the Israelites who reached the Promised Land were those who had made a full surrender to Christ, and who realising ever more and more clearly the "Presence" were given strength and courage to go forward. They had yielded themselves to His transforming power as willing instruments and were "upheld by the power of God". We may be sure they stumbled again and again, but were never completely cast down, for realising their own wretched weakness and utter inability to do aught of themselves they turned ever to the Good Shepherd for help. They are, therefore, humbled

in this knowledge of their own helplessness and learn to lean upon their Leader. They know their sins and weaknesses are covered by the "Robe of Righteousness and continue on their journey in complete reliance upon the Saviour Who has promised to bring them to their desired haven.

Let us take particular note of the fact that Moses stressed that they had not been promised to possess the land for their own righteousness. In Deuteronomy 9.4 he tells them—

"Speak not thou in thine heart after that the Lord hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the Lord hath brought me to possess this land: but for the wickedness of these nations the Lord doth drive them out from before thee.

Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land . . ."

This is the only attitude of mind that can bring us to true humility—this realisation that we cannot possess the land by any merits of our own, but only by trusting in the all-sufficient merits of the precious blood of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

This is a difficult and dangerous journey on which we have started—this journey through the wilderness, so let us be continually on the watch to make sure that we are not discarding any of the helps which have been provided.

Most important of all, of course, is to keep in our hands the "Sword of Truth"—the word of God, by which to overcome the many enemies of the Truth which will rise up and confront us, and we shall be guided over many a rough patch, or shown the right way at many a cross-roads if we have this Sword ever in our hands, casting down many a hinderer or obstacle in the way of our progress.

"The people rose up to play" we are told. Pleasures of the senses filled their whole lives.

They had lost the "spiritual mind" with which they started on their journey, and had lost the zeal and inspiration which they had found with the wonder of realising they were coming out of Egypt—symbolising the worldly things. They even worshipped the golden calf. Money and the things which meant money began to loom very largely in their minds, and as all know, we cannot serve God and mammon. Disobedient, wilful, obstinate and stiff-necked, grumbling and complaining, yea and pleasure-loving. This is the picture which the story of the wilderness presents to us. Moses in utter exasperation smote the rock and called them rebels. In some way he erred. Was it that in his exasperation he forgot to give to God the glory and to attribute to Him the power? It was a terrific task which he had undertaken to bring these people through this "terrible wilderness". Moses loved his people, and longed to see them enter into the glorious Land of Promise. In utter self-abnegation he even prayed to be blotted out of the book of life that they might be saved to go into the Land, yet they exhausted his patience again and again.

As we enter near to the borders of the Promised Land, therefore, let us pray that God will by His grace grant us patience, toleration and understanding that we may not offend. Let Him lead us by the hand as "little children", trusting Him implicitly, and not turning from any help which God sends to illuminate the weary journey, and to lighten the trials and difficulties.

They who put their trust in Him shall never be ashamed, and let us keep ever in mind that "the arm of flesh will fail you, ye dare not trust your own".

"ALL THE RIGHTEOUS BLOOD"

Notwithstanding all the chastening and punishment meted out to the nation of Israel (and sometimes to individuals), it is evident that GOD reserved a particular punishment for all the RIGHTEOUS BLOOD shed from the foundation of the world (Matt. 23. 35 and Luke 11. 50). Stated in figurative terms, it would seem as though GOD had opened a "special account" in which was entered particulars of the slaying of HIS Righteous men and Prophets (Matt. 23. 35: 7. 37; Luke 11. 50 and 51). Evidently it was in the Father's purposes that HIS Son should be the one to make the charge against "that generation," and the result (Matt. 23. 35-38 and Luke 11. 50-51). History indicates that this charge was carried out in the destruction of Jerusalem (and all its horrors) by the Romans about the year 70 A.D.

As there are a variety of opinions among critics, it might be worth while to consider the detailed foot-note in the Emphatic Diaglott re verse 35 of Matthew 23rd chapter—this as to the identity of

This wilderness journey, is the trial and testing to prove what is in our hearts and He Who knoweth the thoughts and intents of the heart is not mocked.

The two great commandments should be ever in our minds—to love the Lord our God above all things, and our neighbour as ourselves. God's love extends to the whole human race and as we come to know Him and understand His boundless love more and more, our hearts will expand and we shall be uplifted to deeper and wider truths, and shall eventually undergo the great transformation of which Ezekiel speaks—

"and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh and will give them an heart of flesh." Ezek. 11.19.

Jesus even rebuked the beloved Apostle for a wrong spirit, when he asked the Saviour if they should not call down fire to destroy a certain village which would not receive Him. We do well to remember His reply—"Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are, for the Son of Man came not to destroy men's lives but to save them." Luke 9. 55-6.

As we learn to become more perfect in love, through the grace of God, therefore, we shall also learn that in loving one another we are also loving Him in whose image we are all made and that "inasmuch as we do it to one of the least of our brethren, we are doing it unto Him."

Let us claim His promises, that He is able to perfect that which concerneth us, and the glorious promise of our Saviour "If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you."

the Zechariah therein mentioned. It is suggested that Jesus spoke prophetically of this man who was slain "in the middle of the holy place," three years before the final destruction of Jerusalem . . .

"This view agrees with the context and recorded facts; and in agreement with the same, ephoneusate, a word in the first aorist tense, has been thrown into the future, instead of the past." (part extract.)

Whether this view be acceptable or not, it might be well to remember the murder of Stephen at the hands of that same generation. It seems to be reasonable to consider his blood as "righteous shed blood." It also seems reasonable to think that the period from Abel to A.D. 70 came within the charge by Jesus against "that generation" (generally said to be the end of the Jewish Age).

The thought of "shed righteous blood" during the Gospel Age might be worthy of consideration—upon whom will come the punishment for such murders of the LORD'S Saints (See also Rev. 6. 9-10 and Rev. 18. 24).

Out of the Ivory Palaces

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

LIFE DEVOTED

I live for those who love me,
Whose hearts are kind and true;
For the heaven that smiles above me,
And awaits my spirit, too;
For all human ties that bind me,
For the task by God assigned me,
For the bright hopes left behind me,
And the good that I can do.

I live to learn their story,
Who suffered for my sake;
To emulate their glory,
And follow in their wake;
Bards, patriots, martyrs, sages,
The noble of all ages,
Whose deeds crown history's pages,
And Time's great volume make.

I live to hold communion,
With all that is Divine,
To feel there is a union
Twixt Nature's heart and mine;
To profit by affliction,
Reap truths from fields of fiction,
Grow wiser from conviction,
And fulfil each grand design.

I live to hail that season,
By gifted minds foretold,
When men shall live by reason,
And not alone by gold;
When man to man united,
And every wrong thing righted,
The whole world shall be lighted
As Eden was of old.

I live for those who love me,
For those who know me true;
For the heaven that smiles above me,
And awaits my spirit too;
For the cause that lacks assistance,
For the wrong that needs resistance,
For the future in the distance,
And the good that I can do.

G. L. Banks (1821-1881).

"I THAT SPEAK TO THEE"

She came, the thirsty one, to fill her pitcher,
And found a stranger sitting on the brink;
And while she poured for him the well's refreshment,
He gave the precious cup of life to drink.
And when she wondered at her life's revealing,
And if Messiah deeper depths could see,
He graciously her rising faith encouraged,—
"I that speak to thee am he."

And so when we, blest Master, come all empty
To fountains we but drink, and drink, in vain,
Be thou with satisfying waters waiting.
That we may drink and never thirst again.
Our wayward hearts' true inwardness disclosing,
Constrain our timid faith to hope in thee,
And let us hear again the gracious message—
"I that speak to thee am he."

They turned him from the synagogue accursed,
Whose gift of sight the Saviour had bestowed;
And, burning under grief and indignation,
He sought again the well-remembered road.
And while he mused upon his kindly patron,
And if he could indeed Messiah be,
Lo, One with beaming countenance addressed him,
"I that speak to thee am he."

And so, dear Lord, when our dim eyes are opened,
And one-time friends thy healing power despise,
Be thou anear with words of cheer and comfort,
To grant our saddest hour a glad surprise.
And when life's subtle mysteries perplex us,
Unlock to us with faith's unfailing key,
That we may hear from out the open portals,
"I that speak to thee am he."

The proud and haughty still a sign requiring,
In vain the zenith and horizon scan,
While walks among them One with vesture girded,
To wield the purging and discerning fan.
But he who humbly treads the path of duty,
With eyes unsealed shall his Deliv'rer see;
His trial hour shall brighten with this token—
"I that speak to thee am he."

R.B.H.

The Baptism and Temptation of Jesus

A meditation for a quiet hour

"In that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."—
(Heb. 2. 18.)

John's baptism was intended merely as a sign of reformation. There is no intimation that either John or his disciples or others of the "Israelites indeed" made use of it. Nothing in the Jewish Law required it either. John's Gospel notes the fact that John objected to our Lord's being baptised because He was not a sinner. He was "holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners."

Our Lord's baptism, therefore, as intimated in his reply to John, was a new institution, which He did not explain at the time, but which, later on, He showed was a symbol of his consecration unto death, not as a sinner, but as a sin-offering. He thus consecrated as soon as he was thirty years of age, the legal age at which a priest could offer sacrifice. The language of his heart is told us by St. Paul, "*Lo, I come, as in the volume of the Book it is written of me, to do thy will, O God.*" (Heb. 10. 7.) There, declares the Apostle, He began to set aside the typical sacrifices of the Law Covenant by beginning the "better sacrifices"—the antitypes.

From a child Jesus sought to be about the Father's business, and to know the teachings of the Scripture respecting his appointed work. His anointing by the Holy Spirit quickened his understanding and made all that He had learned much more significant. This illumination (Heb. 10. 32) gave Jesus such new views respecting His work that He was thereby impelled to go aside into the wilderness to think and pray and study what his course should be as outlined by the Law and the prophets. He spent forty days thus, fasting, praying, studying. When weak as a result of these experiences the Tempter was permitted to assault Him with suggestions of ways and means of carrying out His work, which were far different from those which He found in the Scriptures,—which His perfect mind grasped completely, having heard them read by course in the synagogue from childhood.

The three temptations experienced by our Lord illustrated all the temptations of His followers as New Creatures. "*He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin.*" He was not tempted as a father, as a mother, as a drunkard, as a gambler—and neither are these the temptations

experienced by His followers. Of the weaknesses of the flesh he had none, while His followers have many; but the merit of His sacrifice is efficacious for the forgiveness of all the blemishes of His followers to the extent that they are unwilling, unintentional faults. Their testing is not along those lines, even as His were not. Proper understanding of our Lord's three temptations reveals to us that they are the same by which we are tested as New Creatures, His Spirit-begotten disciples.

Temptation 1. Hungry after His long fast, our Lord's flesh cried out for nourishment, and the tempter, affecting a kindly interest in His welfare, suggested that, having received the Holy Spirit, He now possessed the power of miracles and should use it to transform the stones into food. Our Lord subsequently used this power in feeding multitudes, but it would have been sinful for Him to use it upon Himself—to sustain the human life which He had already consecrated to death. He might use any ordinary means to supply His physical needs, but the Holy Spirit was given Him for another purpose—not for gratification of the flesh, even legitimately. Our Lord at once recognised the principle involved and promptly refused the suggestion, declaring, "*It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*" To create and eat the bread for the nourishment of his life in opposition to the Divine Law would be disobedience.

Applying this temptation to our Lord's subsequent career and that of his followers, the lesson is this: Obedience to the Divine will is paramount every way, and holy privileges of the Church in spiritual matters must not be bartered for earthly advantage. The wrong course is symbolically pre-figured in Esau's selling his birthright for a mess of pottage. (Heb. 12. 16.) Every temptation to sacrifice spiritual privileges or violate spiritual responsibilities for the attainment of earthly advantages would be a yielding to this form of temptation.

Temptation 2. It is not necessary to suppose that our Lord went to Jerusalem and to the pinnacle of the Temple in person to experience His temptation. On the contrary He was all the while in the wilderness and went to the Holy City merely mentally, guided there by Satan's suggestion that He could bring Himself and His glorious mission quickly to the attention of all the people by perform-

ing a stupendous miracle—by leaping from the pinnacle of the temple into the chasm below and then arising unhurt. He could then explain to the multitude His heavenly errand and awe them to faith. Seeing that our Lord had repulsed His first temptation by quoting Scripture, Satan now attempted to support the second temptation with a text of Scripture, which, on its face, might appear to be properly applied by him. The passage reads much as though it were specially intended as a suggestion to our Lord to perform the very feat suggested—“*For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.*” (Psa. 91. 11, 12.)

Our Lord promptly discerned the fallacy of the argument and the misapplication of the Scripture. It would have been sin for our Lord to follow the course indicated because, although not misusing the Divine power He would have been tempting God to use Divine power, for His deliverance, whereas this was unnecessary, as He had not been called upon to thus hazard His life, but rather was required to sacrifice it—laying it down in the service of the Truth and of humanity. Our Lord's answer was directly to the point and was another quotation from Holy Writ: “*Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.*” In every case Satan seems to have realised that he was promptly and fully met by the quotations and his temptation shown to be contrary to the Divine instruction.

Our Lord's followers are tempted along this line also—tempted to presume on the goodness of God and by words or acts to place themselves in such positions as would test or tempt God in respect to His providential care of them—along lines which He has never authorised in His Word. The wonder-working spirit is contrary to the spirit of humility anyway and, if gratified, would lead to spiritual pride and egotism. God wishes His people now to “walk by faith and not by sight”. Moreover the “call” of this Gospel Age is along lines of faith in the promises, rather than faith respecting the wonder-working achievements of others or of ourselves. Meekness, humility, faith, all stand arrayed on the side of the question which our Lord took and which His followers should take.

Temptation 3. Again it is unnecessary for us to assume that there is any very high mountain in the wilderness in which Jesus was being tempted, for there is no such high mountain there. Nor is there a mountain in all the earth on whose pinnacles all the kingdoms of the world could be seen in a moment. In this case, also, our Lord was mentally transported to a high mountain, to a great lofty kingdom overlooking and overtopping

all earthly empires. For in Bible symbolism a mountain represents a kingdom. In a brief moment Satan pictured himself to our Lord as the ruler of all earth's kingdoms—as having the ruling empire of earth, controlling all empires. This is in accord with the Scripture which declares that Satan is the Prince of this world (this age), and that he “now ruleth in the hearts of the children of disobedience”—thus ruling the vast majority.

After thus picturing his own power over the world—the power of a usurping prince imposing upon the ignorance and superstition of mankind, Satan's argument paraphrases thus: I know well the object of your coming, and the promise that your kingdom shall bless all the world and uplift the willing and obedient out of sin and death conditions. I assure you that I wish you well in the enterprise. As the ruler amongst men, I deplore present conditions myself. I suggest, therefore, that you undertake the work of reform amongst men as my lieutenant and assistant. If you will thus recognise, honour, reverence (worship) me, I will co-operate with you and turn the world of mankind over to your care. You, then, will be their earthly king or ruler, while I, Satan, as a spirit-being would still control after the manner of an over-lord. This is the best you could do. The matter is fully in my hands, as you will judge from your present view of human conditions. If you take any other course, it will bring you disappointment, scorn, defeat, shame. If you take the course I suggest it will bring you prosperity and honour.

Our Lord's reply was, “*Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.*” The temptation passed successfully, Satan withdrew and holy angels ministered to our Lord.

A similar temptation is sure to come to every follower of the Lord, from the same Adversary, in one form or another. These are permitted by the Lord for the testing of our characters, even as in His own case. The temptation is, Will we connive with and recognise unjust and sinful institutions, because they have power and because to oppose them would imply their opposition and the braving of shame and scorn and death. Such temptations may come to the tempted through political or social or religious institutions, saying, serve us and we will assist you. But in every case behind the temptation is the Adversary. Those who have not learned to love righteousness and to hate iniquity—all who have not come to the point of a full submission of their will to the Divine will—are in danger of falling in such a temptation. But those whose hearts are loyal to the core, as was the Redeemer's, will repulse the

Adversary and disdain his proffer of assistance on such terms or any terms.

Our Lord had no Advocate to sympathise with Him and to succour and encourage him in the hour of temptation: "Of the people there was none with him." With us, however, matters are different. Our Lord, as our great High Priest, by the merit of His own sacrifice for man's sin, has ascended on high and has appeared as the Advocate of all

those who are now being "called of God" to faith in His blood, and to walk in His steps, and to be baptised into His death, and to share with Him glory, honour, and immortality in "His Resurrection". (Phil. 3. 10.) This great Advocate, having been tempted in all these lines, is able to succour us. Yet He waits for us to realise our needs and to apply for succour at the Throne of Grace, as intimated by our text.

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- 108 The Holy Spirit. 116 Angels that Sinned.



BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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

Vol. 29, No. 9

SEPTEMBER, 1952

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----|
| BETWEEN OURSELVES | 130 |
| DESPISED AND REJECTED | 130 |
| AT THE END OF THE YEARS | 131 |
| LEICESTER CONVENTION 1952 ... | 133 |
| ABLE MINISTERS OF THE NEW COVENANT | 134 |
| A QUESTION OF FAITH | 137 |
| FROM THE WALLS OF THE CITY ... | 139 |
| THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM ... | 140 |
| SPIRITUAL MANHOOD | 141 |
| LONDON CONVENTION 1952 ... | 143 |

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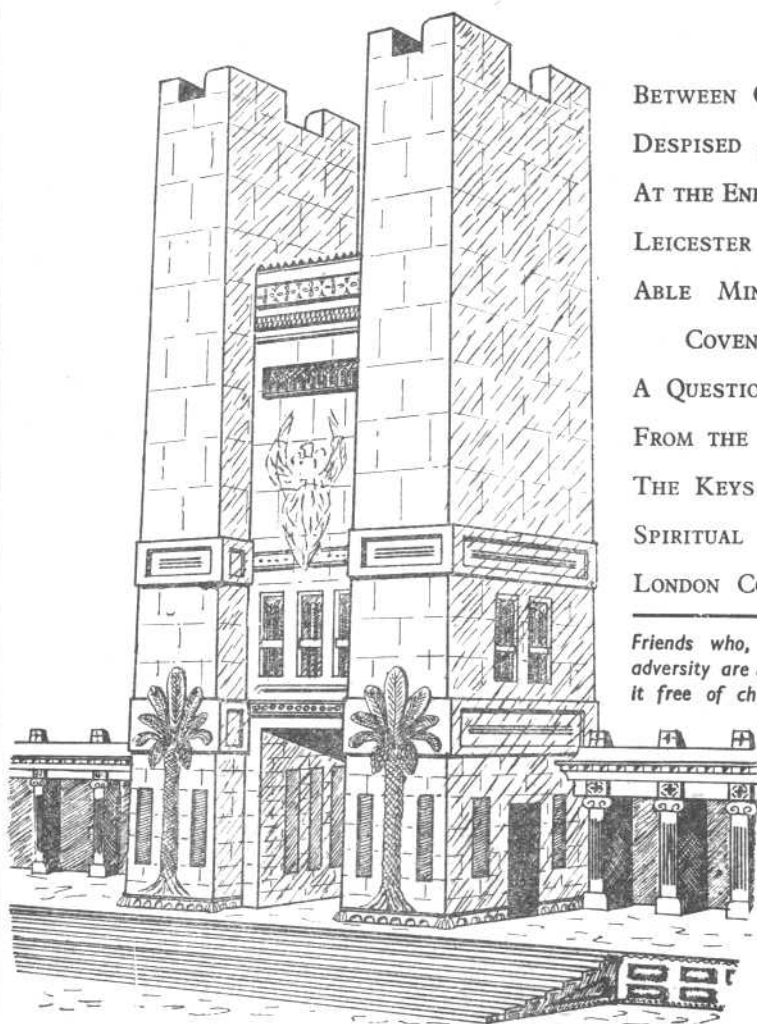
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Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

The Midlands friends announce that a Public Meeting is to be held in Birmingham (D.V.) on Saturday, September 20, in the Digbeth Institute, at 6.30 p.m. The address will be given by Bro. A. J. Lodge under the title "*A Clarion Call to the Nations.*" This meeting will be preceded in the afternoon at 2.30 by a session at which there will be a discourse by Bro. H. Chrimes, followed by tea and an organ recital. Programmes can be obtained from Bro. C. F. D. Clarke, 2b, Sidney Road, Rugby.

* * *

Attention is drawn to the arrangements for a gathering at Cardiff on 27th and 28th September. Programmes were enclosed with our August issue but further copies and other information can be

obtained on request to Bro. J. A. Jones, 95, Heathwood Road, Cardiff.

* * *

There will be no meeting at Caxton Hall during September. The next meeting will be on Saturday, October 18, and details of the arrangements for this meeting will appear in the October issue of the "*Monthly.*" This is likely to be an important meeting, seeking guidance for future plans, and the interest and prayers of all our brethren is desired that the Master may reveal His Will as to the nature of succeeding meetings.

Gone From Us

Bro. A. Ogden (*Bury*).

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

DESPISED AND REJECTED

This rendering of one of the finest passages in the Bible is said to represent a compendium of six translators. It may not be so literally accurate as the Authorised Version rendering, but there is a beauty in this presentation of a familiar chapter which perhaps brings home more intimately the pathos of the prophet's theme.

"Behold my servant shall prosper; he shall be raised aloft, and magnified, and very highly exalted.

"As now many are astonished before him (so disfigured is his aspect before men, and his figure before the children of men) so shall many nations exult in him; kings shall close their mouths before him; for what had not been related to them, shall they see; and understand what they never heard.

"Who hath believed what we have understood by hearing? Who perceives what the arm of Jehovah is preparing?"

"He hath grown up as a twig before him, as a shoot out of dry ground. He had no form nor beauty. We looked at him, but there was no fair appearance that we should be desirous of him.

"Despised and neglected by men, a man of sorrow and familiar with sufferings, and like one who hideth his face from us; disdained, and we gave him no attention. But it was our griefs he bare, it was our sorrows he carried. We indeed, accounted him smitten, stricken by God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions: was smitten for our iniquities: the chastisement, by

which our peace is effected, was laid upon him; and by his bruises we are healed.

"All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned each to his own way; but Jehovah hath inflicted upon him the punishment of all. He was severely afflicted, yet he submitted himself, and opened not his mouth. As a lamb that is led to the slaughter, or as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.

"By an oppressive judgment he was taken away—the men of his age who shall describe? For he was cut off from the land of the living; on account of the transgression of my people was he smitten. A grave is assigned him with the wicked, but his tomb is a rich man's; for he hath done no injustice, and no guile is in his mouth. But Jehovah is pleased to crush him with sufferings. If he will offer himself a sacrifice for sin, he shall see his posterity, he shall prolong his days, and the gracious purpose of Jehovah shall prosper in his hand.

"The effects of his soul's pain he shall see and shall be richly satisfied. By his knowledge my righteous servant shall make many righteous, and shall take away their iniquities.

"Therefore will I distribute to him the many for his portion, and the mighty people shall he share for his spoil; because he poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. (*Isa. 52.13 to 53.11.*)

AT THE END OF THE YEARS

An exhortation.

"O God, thou hast taught me from my youth; and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now also when I am old and greyheaded, O Lord, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come." (Psa. 71. 17-18.)

There is a ring of mature faith in those stirring words, the mellow confidence of one who gave his heart to the Lord in the golden days of youth and now in the quietude of old age realises that his faith was not misplaced. The One Who gave him work to do in those early days of youthful zeal and enthusiasm has work yet for him to do. Even in old age he may still shew forth the strength of God's righteousness to a new generation that the work of God may continue. Even while the shadows of death close around him he may still, with last expiring breath, tell of God's power and glory to those who are as yet babes in Christ. There is inspiration and encouragement here for those to-day—and there are many such—who look around on depleted numbers and a diminishing fellowship in which the tale of years is many and the signs of youthfulness almost absent. There is more than inspiration and encouragement, too, there is a call to action and service, a reminder that the labours of the consecrated do not finish short of death, that at all times during our sojourn this side the Vail we are capable of some service for our Lord and King, some means of declaring His strength to this generation and his power to that which is to come.

The Psalmist here admits physical weakness but refuses to admit any ageing of the spirit. As a young man and in the heyday of middle age he rejoiced to declare God's wondrous works. That was to him the breath of life and without the joy of service life would not be worth living. The whole object and end of his existence was to give praise and honour to God in the sight of all people, to witness to the wonder of His Plan and the grandeur of His Promise to all who would listen. It needs physical vitality as well as mental alertness to do that; one cannot endure the heat and burden of Christian witness in the outward sense without a goodly measure of physical strength. Those not so favoured can and do serve in quieter ways, in the ministry of prayer, the ministry of comfort, the ministry of healing,

and so on, but the active work of prosecuting the Gospel requires the ability to be active in the physical sense. And that is an attribute of the young; it cannot be expected of those who have passed the prime of life and whose physical powers are failing. Such a time must come to all of us and it cannot be avoided. But there is no reason why the spirit should fail too.

This word comes reproof and chiding to all who have used advancing age as excuse to lose interest in the work of God in this Age. It is an unhappy spectacle, and one that is all too common, that of one who has laboured mightily, spending and being spent, in the service of his Master, maybe from early youth, through the twenties and thirties and forties and fifties, and then lost heart. The apparent failure of fond expectations, the disappointments and disillusionments that the Christian life is bound to bring, instead of performing their intended work of making mature and mellow the Christian character, have been allowed to make virtual shipwreck of faith. For it is no good claiming that faith is retained if the works of faith have been relinquished. It is no good saying we still look for and expect the Kingdom if we no longer evince any outward sign of concern for its interests. Our consecration is unto death, and although it may be true that our outward man perish, yet it is equally true that our inward man is being renewed day by day, if so be that we are still faithful to our covenant.

There is another and more subtle delusion abroad also. It appeals especially to the elderly. It is the feeling that "the end" is so near and loss of faith in the world so general that the Lord would no longer have His faithful ones preach the Gospel to those who have not yet heard it but rather devote their remaining time and energies exclusively to their own calling and election and that of their consecrated brethren. It is not well to condemn such conclusion too hastily; it is a natural reaction to the rebuffs and failures and apparent lack of success of many long years' active preaching and witnessing. But the attitude must be deprecated nevertheless. It is not a healthy one. It breeds egotism and self-righteousness and tends towards an exclusiveness and narrow-mindedness that is the very reverse of what the mature and mellow Christian should manifest. There was

no such thought in the mind of the Psalmist when he wrote these words. He did not say "Now also when I am old and greyheaded, O God, forsake me not while I abide in splendid isolation before thee, proclaiming no more thy glory to this generation and utterly ignoring every one that is to come." Far from it. Con the words once more. "*Now also when I am old and greyheaded, O God, forsake me not, until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come.*" So far from voicing a plea for a kind of "honourable retirement" from the work of evangelising, the Psalmist passionately beseeches that God will not forsake him in his old age until he has declared the message to yet another generation. He wants to labour to the end; he wants with his last expiring breath to declare the greatness of God to those who still know Him not.

There is a certain ring of "up-to-date-ness" in the Psalmist's words. He wants to declare God's strength to "*this generation.*" He himself, old and greyheaded, belongs to a generation that is past. In many things the world has grown beyond him and the fashion of the world is strange to him. Customs, conventions, practices, which in his day were unknown or not accepted have now become commonplace. The very language in which the new generation talks is one that is fast becoming incomprehensible to him. The pace of life has quickened and those things on which he and his once set such value, are now lightly esteemed. The temptation is ever present to withdraw from this strange new world and dwell in more comfortable seclusion with other greyheads of like mind until the call comes to "go home." The world is no longer the understandable place that it was; it is better that we shut it out from our lives and beseech the Lord to take us away from it quickly.

Not so the Psalmist. It is this new and strange and in many ways uncouth generation to which he wishes to declare the glory of God. He knows that the fashion of the world must needs change as the clock of Time ticks on; he knows that restless man, ever exploring and seeking something new, must change with it, as generation follows generation. He knows, too, that faith will ebb lower and lower with each succeeding age so that the one who takes his stand on the words of God will appear to be more and more an outworn relic of a past era. He knows all this, and feels within himself that he is getting older and more out of tune with this modern way of life. He realises how easy it would be to accept what appears to be the inevitable, and give up the conflict, waiting for the end. He might reason-

ably anticipate the words of St. Paul and apply them to himself. "*I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day.*"

He might do all this; but he does nothing of the kind! "*Now also when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not, until . . .*" What though this new generation has a new language? He will speak to them in that language! What though they adopt customs and conventions and practices which seem to him strange and even repellent? He will relate his message to those customs and conventions and show that generation how the truth of God is for them as well as for those of the past! What though their interpretations and ideas, yea, their very practice of the faith he tries to inculcate in them, show features undreamed of in his own youthful days and features that would have been roundly condemned in those days? He will seek to find in all this the evidences of younger hearts giving themselves to the Lord and strive to give them wise guidance in the pathway that they must certainly tread for themselves and in their own way.

Our own position in this day, as life goes on and we find ourselves surrounded by a new generation whose accepted standards differ so much from ours, is to play the part of understanding counselors and convinced witnesses. No matter what else changes, the truth of the God stands the same. No matter how we must change the language in which it is preached, it remains the same message having the same power over all generations new and old. "*Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day and for ever.*" Our earthly powers may be failing and days of active evangelism be over, but there is always something we can do to declare God's strength to this generation and His power to that which is to come. Aaron and Hur held up the hands of Moses while the battle raged; it was little enough they could do but it made all the difference to the outcome. When Israel went out to fight their enemies it was decreed that he who "tarried by the stuff" and cared for the camp property should share equally with the warriors when it came to dividing the spoils. So it is with us; so many there are who must perforce "tarry by the stuff", but all the time they can be "holding up the hands" and contributing to the success of the Lord's cause. Let those who still can, go forth into active service for the Lord and His Gospel; those who can do so no longer, wait upon Him in prayer and supplication, perform

the countless little services that mean so much to the warriors in the field, help with words of encouragement and confidence, evincing a ready sympathy with the progress of all that is going on, and in these and many other ways demonstrate their own unity in thought and action with the Church militant all over the world.

Our Master has accepted us into the work of His vineyard not until the ninth hour or the tenth hour or the eleventh hour, but right up to the last minute of the twelfth hour. It is then, and not until then, that He utters the longed-for words "*Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Enter thou into the joys of thy lord.*"

LEICESTER CONVENTION - WHITSUN 1952

Although it is some time since we attended the Midlands Annual Convention held at Whitsuntide in Leicester, the fragrant memories of those two happy days have lingered with us. It is because there were so many impressive features of the gathering that we have been constrained to record some of the things said and done which produced so much blessing. Unity and liberty were part of the life of the convention, rather than ideas to be talked about, while the private fellowship and public worship bore as close a resemblance to that of the Early Church as anything we have yet experienced.

It was a most suitable auditorium in a modern, easily accessible city. Catering, accommodation and other facilities evidenced much preparation and generosity. But the success of the convention lay mostly in the stirring discourses, the warm inter-sessional conversations, exhilarating interludes of praise and a loving spirit radiating from every face. Such occasions can only be of lasting benefit if the Father and the Master are present in every aspect of the proceedings, and this most assuredly was so.

The warm words of welcome given by Brother George Chilvers (*Nuneaton*) enunciated the basis of fellowship for the convention. It was—consecration through faith in God and trust in the ransom sacrifice of Jesus. In a discourse entitled "*Thou art—Thou shalt be,*" Brother J. A. Jones (*Cardiff*) showed how the life of Peter had been changed under the influence of Christ. He further demonstrated that such a transformation must take place in each one of the Lord's followers. In the evening Brother S. H. French (*Walthamstow*) gave an arresting survey of the prophecies relating to the Lord's Second Coming and the establishment of His Kingdom upon earth. It was seen that man would not be allowed to pursue his course of evil much longer but that "When God breaks His silence" men will learn the way of peace.

The friends were brought together early next morning for a short session of praise and devotion.

A very heart-searching sermon upon "*Christ's motives and ours*" followed, by Brother H. Chrimes (*Timperley*). In it he contrasted the pre-human existence of Jesus with His life here below, pointing out that the Lord's humiliation and sacrifice were for our sakes. Applying the lesson, he said that we, as His disciples, should order our lives in speech and action for His sake alone.

Two short addresses by young brethren attracted considerable attention in the early afternoon. The first, Brother Gordon Chilvers (*Nuneaton*), impressed his remarks about "*Christianity*" with a forceful illustration. He defined true discipleship as distinct from names, sects and creeds. Secondly, some "*Lessons from Samuel*" were drawn by Brother David Clarke (*Rugby*) who emphasised the beauty of the life of Samuel, fully dedicated to God and used by Him to revive His people. A most inspiring talk completed the afternoon in which Brother H. E. Panteny (*Ilford*) showed the power of faith in the lives of those who were "*Walking with God.*" Using examples of godly men in the Early Church and of more recent times, he showed that the day of miracles has not passed and that there is still time to do great things for God for those whose entire trust is surrendered to His will.

The convention finale came when Brother A. Kirkwood (*Glasgow*) spoke upon "*Jesus in the midst.*" In His life before He came to earth, while here below to redeem men from sin, and now seated at the right hand of God, Jesus was and is the hub of all creation. In things both great and small, particularly in the meetings of the Lord's people, Jesus is or should be the central figure of all worship and service.

And so the assembly began to break up, gathering into little knots for the last few words of farewell. The influence of the convention has not ended with that parting, however, for it continues with those who, having heard the Word, are now bearing fruit in their lives and testifying that it was good to have been there.

Able Ministers of the New Covenant

A Doctrinal Essay

"Who also hath made us Able Ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." (2 Cor. 3. 6.)

We must not understand this—"the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life"—to refer to our spirit, nor to the letter or spirit of the Word of God, nor to the letter or spirit of the Law, but to the letter and the spirit of the Covenant, because that is what the Apostle is discussing here—"Who hath also made us able ministers," qualified, efficient servants or messengers of the New Covenant. The broad thought would be this: that all the angels are in Covenant relationship with God, not through a New Covenant, but by a Covenant that is very old. Not, perhaps, by a Covenant that was expressed in so many words, but by a Covenant that was understood in that they receive everlasting life and all their blessings on condition that they be obedient to God. Such is their Covenant relationship.

Adam, the founder of our race, was similarly created in Covenant relationship with God. God's law was written in his very heart, his very being; and without being specified in so many words, it was understood by him that if he would be obedient he should have everlasting life and everlastingly enjoy all of God's favours and blessings. We know that Adam failed in this. He broke the Covenant. The result was Divine sentence upon him—the death sentence—and that has followed all his posterity because they have inherited imperfections, so that however good their intentions, their work is imperfect—all, therefore, are out of Covenant relationship with God.

In the case of Abraham, God intimated His willingness to deal at some time and in some manner with any of our race who were out of relationship merely through wicked works and not through wicked hearts or intentions. Abraham, being of the class who are in accord with God in heart, in their desire for harmony with the Divine will, was granted at once a measure of Covenant relationship in that he was privileged to be called the friend of God. He was privileged to know of God's provisions of blessings, not only for himself, but for all who would likewise become harmonious with God. He was not given the details of this, but merely the rough outline. In due time, his descendants, the children of Israel, were given a

further compact with God. This, the Apostle says, they thought would be of great advantage to them, but they found their requirements impossible for them. Therefore the Law, which was granted them apparently as a favour—and it was a favour in certain senses—"they found to be unto death", and not unto life. Later, through the Prophet Jeremiah and others, God explained to them that the fault of the Covenant was not in the Law, not on his part, but it was on their part, because they did not keep the Law, and the only way that anything could be done to their advantage would be to enter into a New Covenant through a new Mediator, a Mediator who would be able to make up for their deficiencies and to assist them in a manner that Moses was not able to do.

From that time onwards God's people began to look for this new Mediator. They saw that Moses himself foretold this Mediator, saying, "*A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; Him shall ye hear in all things, and it shall come to pass that the soul that will not obey that Prophet shall be destroyed from amongst the people.*"

All the expectations of the Jews thenceforth were for this Messiah; and by the words of the Prophets we see that God specially pointed out the coming of this Messiah, saying, "*Behold, I send my Messenger before my face to prepare the way before me, . . . even the Messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in*"—the one you have been waiting for, the one you have built your expectations upon, even him I shall send, saith the Lord: "*but who shall abide in the day of His coming*"; who shall stand when he is here, for he shall be like fuller's soap, in that he will cleanse everything; he will be like a refiner's fire, in that he will purge all imperfections from those to be associated with him, that he might purify the sons of Levi, that he might offer a sacrifice acceptable to God. Israel was expecting that God would carry out all of His original proposition to make them His chosen people and use them as a channel of communicating the blessing of eternal salvation and reconciliation—eternal life, to the world of mankind—to bring all the world into Covenant relationship with God. This was called a New Covenant, because God had made a proposition of this kind to them before, namely the Law Covenant, which they were unable to keep. "This, therefore, is to be a Covenant with you anew,

afresh", so to speak, a better Covenant. This is, not one better in some of its features, in its Law for instance, but better, more *favourable to you*; not more favourable in that it would require less than obedience to the Divine Law—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, mind, soul and strength, and thy neighbour as thyself"—but a better Covenant through the Mediator it would have—a Mediator better qualified than was Moses, and an arrangement which would be more favourable for helping them out of their difficulties and imperfections.

When our Lord Jesus came, He was this Mediator of this New Covenant. He came for this purpose. But who of them abided in the day of His presence? Who of them were ready when He appeared? Only the "Israelites indeed", and his teachings, his ministry were like the fuller's soap and like the refiner's fire. He did at that time purify the sons of Levi, the consecrated ones, that they might offer themselves unto the Lord; that they might present themselves living sacrifices. Thus the Church might be a sacrificing priesthood class. And so it has been all through this Gospel Age. Having selected all the suitable material from amongst the Jewish nation, the privilege largely passed to the Gentiles, to fill up from among them the number lacking. Thus we have been brought into this class, to be a part of this sacrifice, that we might offer unto the Lord an acceptable service. All of this we understand to be preparatory work of the Mediator, the greater mediation of this New Covenant arrangement.

God is now selecting the antitypical "house of Levi" and the antitypical Royal Priesthood. The Church in this age shall be completed, and glorified—the "Body" of the great Mediator will be completed and He will be ready to begin His great work. His work will be the installation of the New Covenant relationship, or, as stated in other words, the institution of Covenant relationship between God and Israel anew, upon a better basis than the arrangement made through Moses, because this antitypical Priest, this antitypical Moses, will have power to forgive sins of the people, and therefore the right to restore them and to bring them up out of degradation. From the time He will take hold of His work as Mediator of the New Covenant, those under the New Covenant arrangements will have a share of this blessing and thus they will be in relationship to God and enjoy His favour. When at the conclusion of this age the Lord shall seal the New Covenant, make it operative, and take His place as the great Mediator or King of the Millennial Age, He will take charge of the world of mankind and by virtue of the seal-

ing of the New Covenant with Israel He will use that nation in a special manner, to be His channel of blessing.

The New Covenant arrangement will mean that the nation of Israel will enjoy certain favours and blessings, but that their relationship will not be with God direct, but with the Mediator. Then the Mediator will have the authority and the right to guarantee them eternal life and to assist them up to it and to give them all the rewards and blessings, just as though they were fully in favour with God. They will be in favour with God through Him, but so far as God's law is concerned they will still be imperfect, be under the Divine sentence. But God has made the arrangement that through His Mediator, all His mercy and favour will be extended to Israel. That nation, therefore, during that time will begin to have restitution favours and uplifting from every evil of the present time. These blessings will extend to other nations also in that they will come into this relationship with the Mediator, and, as the prophet declares, it shall come to pass that the nation that will not thus come to the Lord, to Jerusalem, and recognise the new relationship thus established in Israel, and take a share of it as they will be privileged to do, to that nation there will be no Divine blessing.

During the Millennial Age, then, this New Covenant arrangement, at the hands of the Mediator, will mean a blessing to all who will be under the Mediator, and under the beneficent arrangement they will come up to the full perfection of their nature and in the end of the Millennial Age be fully able to meet every Divine requirement and no longer need a Mediator between them and the Father. As the Apostle tells us, at that time, having put down all sin and disobedience, having destroyed death, having uplifted humanity from death, the Lord will deliver over the Kingdom of God, even the Father—not for its destruction, but because it will at that time be fully able to enjoy direct all the blessings of Covenant relationship with God.

Such will be the Covenant relationship in the fullest sense at the close of the Millennial Age. Mankind will be back to the place Adam occupied at the beginning when he was created in the image and likeness of God and was called "son of God". So mankind, fully restored, fully harmonised with God, will be back in full relationship with Him and will be subject to the Father.

During the Millennial Age then, the New Covenant relationship will be just what it will be at the *end* of the Millennial Age, except that it will be under the direction of a Mediator and have

its limitations, because of the imperfection of humanity, while later they will be perfect.

Come back to our text, to the declaration that "*God also hath made us able (qualified) ministers of the New Covenant*". We see that we are now ministers of the New Covenant, servants of the New Covenant. We are serving it in the sense that Jesus served it. Jesus served it in the sense of first preparing Himself to be the great Prophet, the great Priest and King—Mediator—so likewise we are in preparation, receiving our lessons and developing in character likeness of our Lord, that we may be members of His glorious Body, members of that glorious Seed, Prophet, Priest, King, in the future. This is the sense in which we are made able ministers or able servants of it—namely, that we not only serve it developing the fruits and graces of the Holy Spirit in ourselves, but that we do this also toward each other. The Bride makes herself ready. These servants of the New Covenant help to make each other ready.

This is not an imperfect ministration; it is a ministration that is accomplishing its work, its purpose. It will actually accomplish the matter. The sacrificing that we do is all *bona fide*; it is not sham; and the preparation that we make is *bona fide*; it is not sham. In what way? In this way: We were neither ministers nor suitable to be ministers of this New Covenant when we were "children of wrath even as others"; but when we heard of the grace of God, we had the blessed ear, and when we saw the glorious invitation, we had the blessed eye, and when the eyes of our understanding and the ears of our understanding comprehended this message of God's grace, speaking peace in Jesus Christ our Lord, our hearts were of that attitude and condition that they responded. We had the same experience as our Lord. As He had the eye of understanding fully opened to know the Father's will and the obedient ear, saying, "I delight to do Thy will", so also our hearts must have attained that position of desire to know the Father's will before we could in any sense of the word be pleasing or acceptable to Him. So we brought ourselves to the Lord. We presented our bodies living sacrifices. We acknowledged that of ourselves we are not perfect. We acknowledged that the good intentions were all that we had. We heard His grace and consecrated ourselves to the full. We gave up everything to walk in the steps of Jesus and suffer with Him now that we might be glorified with Him.

At the time we reached this point of consecration and desired to be associated with Jesus as able ministers, or able servants of the New Covenant,

Jesus advanced to us, became our Advocate, and presented our cause before the Father. When He did so the Father accepted us and counted us members of the Body of Christ, associated with Jesus as able ministers of the New Covenant, New Testament. And so we are going on as able ministers now, because we are accepted in the Beloved, not acceptable under the terms of the mediatorial Kingdom of the next age, because there is no such arrangement now, but we are accepted as "members" of the Mediator, as "members" of the "Body" of Christ. As able ministers, or as recognised ambassadors of God in the world, we are associated with Christ in the work which He is now carrying on, to wit, the work of gathering together the Lord's jewels all through the Gospel Age. This is the special work that the Lord has given us to do at the present time. The Bride is to make herself ready. As soon as the Bride is made ready then the work will begin for the world of mankind; but now our able ministry of this New Covenant is in the sense of preparing us, preparing ourselves and presenting our bodies living sacrifices, laying down our lives for the brethren—and all this, as members of the great High Priest, is, in another sense, part of his work; or rather, as the Apostle says, "*It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do His good pleasure*". It was God that worked in Jesus that He should accomplish His sacrifice in the proper manner, and it is God that is now working in us in the same manner. He set before us a great prize. As we read of our Lord Jesus Christ, "*Who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of God*", so also we learn that God hath "given unto us exceeding great and precious promises that by these we might become partakers of the Divine nature". By the operation of these promises in our hearts we are enabled to lay down our lives for the brethren and to copy the characteristics of our Lord and Saviour, even unto death.

Now, we are qualified ministers of the New Covenant, not of the letter, but of the spirit. The Mediator of the Covenant, of course, should be in harmony with all the terms of the Covenant. The terms of this Covenant are the perfect obedience to God as represented in the Divine Law, "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy being and with all thy strength, and thy neighbour as thyself*". Of course, Jesus is in full accord with this law of God which He accepted as the basis of the arrangement He would make for mankind, and all of those whom God would accept as members of His body,

as associates with Him, as able ministers and servants with Him of this New Covenant—all such must be in accord with the Divine Law, else how could they be servants of that Law? But now, says the Apostle, in our case we are not able to measure up to the standard of the letter of that Covenant, but we are able to come to the measure of the spirit of it, to the intention of it. And in harmony with this he says elsewhere, “*The righteousness of the Law (that is, the true meaning, the true spirit of the Law), is fulfilled in us, who are walking not after the flesh but after the spirit*”. He does not say that we are able to walk up to the spirit, up to the Divine Law, and we know indeed that we are not able to do so, but we are able to walk after it.

As we are accepted of God as able ministers of the New Covenant, and as members of this Body of the Mediator, King and Priest at the time of our consecration, through the merit of Jesus our Advocate, so God has made provision that for any unintentional infractions of this Law, of this Covenant, on our part “we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous”. He is not only an Advocate when we first come to the Father and present ourselves living sacrifices, and are accepted through the imputation of our Lord’s merit, but He is our Advocate still—and we need His advocacy still, because, while we have this standing as “New Creatures”, and as “New Creatures” our intentions are good, nevertheless as “New Creatures”, we are responsible for the earthen vessel, the natural body, through which we operate as “New Creatures”. We are respon-

sible for all its infractions of the Divine Law. Therefore, as the Apostle tells us, if we find that unintentionally, contrary to the intentions of our will, the spirit of our mind, we infract the Divine Law, we are to come with courage to the Throne of heavenly grace. We come with courage because we have such a great High Priest, because we realise that we are members of the House of God. We are all privileged to come with courage to the throne of heavenly grace and there obtain mercy and grace to help in every time of need. Thus the “able ministers” (servants) of the New Covenant may maintain their standing with God continually, through their Advocate, “who ever liveth to make intercession for them”. It is because we have this Advocate, because we recognise Jesus as our Advocate, that we may come to the Throne of grace. All those come who are privileged to call God their Father for the forgiveness of those trespasses, which come day by day and which are unintentional on our part. It is then that we make apology and get forgiveness and assistance that we may be more faithful, more able to overcome in these various respects thenceforth. Thus we are qualified ministers of the New Covenant, not according to the letter of that Covenant, as it will operate during the Millennium, but according to the spirit of the New Covenant, which now operates towards us through our Advocate and enables us at all times to be acceptable to the Father through Him. Thus we can perform the service of able ministers, abide in the Holy, and hope ultimately to pass, as members of the Body of the great Priest, Prophet, Mediator and King, beyond the Second Vail into the Most Holy.

A QUESTION OF FAITH

*Would God
deliver?*

If England became a Christian and God-fearing nation, laid aside her arms and set an example to the rest of the world, every knee bowing to God’s Name in prayer and trusting Him fully for defence, what would be the result of our faith? Would God respond?

God would. We can consider this question only from the viewpoint of the principle involved, for there is not the slightest probability of England or any other nation behaving in the manner described. The entire prophetic outline of the transition from this world to the next shows that the kingdoms of this world will resist the incoming kingdom to the last.

God always honours faith. That is an immutable principle which ever holds good. None who come to the Father of all men in confidence will ever have that confidence betrayed. That is the basis upon which we must frame our answer.

The greatest of lessons which man has to learn is that of his utter dependence upon God and God’s all-sufficiency. The people of Israel in the wilderness were promised that if they only exercised faith in God and went forward, He would drive out their enemies and they would inherit the land without battle or loss. They preferred instead to rely on the power of war and in consequence never did fully inherit the land—and suffered grievous loss in the process. The only

times they did exercise that faith were in the days of Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah. In both cases they were delivered by Divine power in consequence of their faith. (See 2 Chron. chaps. 20 and 32.)

The whole history of Israel is coloured by frequent apostasies and consequent captivities, and the occasions when "they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he heard them, and delivered them". The lesson is taught plainly enough in the Old Testament for the nations of to-day to read, but they will not read it.

It might be argued that the case with Israel is different in that Israel was a nation in covenant relationship with God. It is true that the position of Israel before God differed from that of other nations, but it also should be realised that if a national repentance of the nature above suggested took place in this or any other modern country the logical consequence would be that every individual of that nation would also and forthwith come into covenant relationship with God. Repentance and faith leads on to consecration and we would have the spectacle of an entire nation of fifty millions of people giving themselves in full surrender. At the same time we must remember that the Scripture does give instances where God has heard and answered the prayers of those not in covenant relationship with Him. The case of the Ninevites comes readily to mind. The whole city repented at the preaching of Jonah and a national prayer for deliverance went up—and God delivered. An even more striking example of God's attitude in such a case is revealed in 2 Chron. 30 in connection with some of Israel who had failed to keep the terms of the Covenant and were thereby legally debarred from keeping the great Passover which King Hezekiah was preparing. The good king prayed—and we ought to consider that his prayer was acceptable—"the good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary" (2 Chron. 30. 18-19). God allows nothing to stand in the way of His acceptance of a repentant heart.

One might properly ask at this point why, if these suggestions are valid, did God not intervene to save so many *individuals* who trusted in Him, both in Old Testament and New Testament times, such as the Christian martyrs of the first few centuries. It is certainly true that if deliverance automatically followed faith in every individual case it would become a literal impossibility to be "faithful unto death" in the face of persecution.

It is clear that in the outworking of the Divine Plan many individuals do go willingly into death on account of their faithfulness and their faith, even as did Jesus. In His case the fulfilment of the Divine Plan depended on His so doing. The final answer to our question, then, must include the realisation that the manner in which God does answer the prayer of faith for deliverance must depend upon the place of the particular case in His Plan. The national aspect differs from the individual's case in that it is more intimately connected with dispensational matters. Had Israel as a nation repented completely after the death and resurrection of Jesus and all the nation, instead of a remnant, entered the Christian Church there is no doubt that the tragedy of forty years later, when Jerusalem was destroyed and the nation scattered by the Romans, would never have occurred. Israel would have survived as a nation throughout the Age. Similarly now, if one of the great nations of earth were to renounce the evil things of this world and set itself as a champion of God's righteousness there is no doubt that it would exercise a profound effect upon the events of the Time of Trouble and probably greatly ease the transition into the Kingdom of righteousness. Taking world politics as they stand at the moment, and realising as we do that the contending powers fear each other more than they hate each other, it is obvious that such a happening would immediately tend to lessen that fear. Since no earthly power is free from blame in respect of the things that cause mutual enmity, it follows that such a nation would at once set about putting its own house in order, the early fruits of its new-found faith in God being seen in a determined and manifestly sincere effort to make peace even at the cost of sacrifice. The tremendous power of love, set free in the world, could and would produce great consequences. After all, even from the everyday "practical" point of view, an alien invader, faced with nothing but kindness and anxiety to do good—even insistence on doing good—but resolute refusal to co-operate in any way with anything that is wrong or evil, would find the position more than a little embarrassing and all his weapons of warfare no good at all.

It is probably not profitable to spend too much time discussing a position which we know full well will never arise. Some Christians there are who expect God to use one of the "kingdoms of this world" as the nucleus of His Kingdom on earth. They will be disappointed. The tenor of Scripture is to the effect that the whole of this present fabric of world-government is to give place to the "Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ—and

He shall reign for ever and ever". Not until then may we look for Divine deliverance on a national scale—and then the deliverance will be universal. "Nothing shall hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord."

"And he will destroy in this mountain the face

of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations . . . and it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." (Isa. 25. 7-9.)

FROM THE WALLS OF THE CITY

A few notes on
current happenings

Australia recently suffered one of the worst droughts in its history and many stockbreeders were brought to the brink of ruin. At length the drought ended, and rain came. A Sydney engineer who had been conducting rain-production experiments claimed that his apparatus was responsible for the welcome showers. The claim was instantly disputed by the chieftains of an aboriginal tribe, the Arunta. Their own professional rain-makers, they declared, had produced the rain, by virtue of certain rituals performed before the tribal gods. Their system, they said, had worked for centuries; the Sydney engineer was but a newcomer and a charlatan.

Unflattering as it may be to the white man, one has to admit that the blackfellows were nearer to the truth. The engineer was admittedly and frankly relying on human skill and ingenuity; the natives did at least believe and hold that the rain was sent or withheld by the will of God, and they sought to placate or persuade God to send the rain. Their conception of God may have been grossly distorted and far from the truth, but it may well be in that future Age when materialistic, rationalistic, agnostic white man and superstitious but innately reverential black man stand together before the great White Throne, the black man may have the advantage over his white brother because he does at least believe in the existence of a supreme Being to whom his worship and service is due.

* * *

A modern case of a man being restored to life from the dead is reported by the medical profession. An old man of eighty-two, he suddenly dropped dead from heart failure in the grounds of a hospital in which he had been a patient. Orthodox attempts to revive him failed, the face turned waxy and the body cooled. In the physical and medical sense the man was dead, and in that state the body remained for thirty-five minutes. At the end of that time an adrenaline compound was in-

jected into the muscles of the heart, the heart began to beat, and an hour later the man awoke to conscious life. He is now hale and hearty once more, apparently none the worse for his experience.

Cases of revival a few minutes after death are not infrequent, although quite often the patients die after all within a few minutes or hours more. This case is apparently an extreme one. It cannot be compared with the Biblical cases of raising the dead, as for example, that of Lazarus or the son of the widow of Nain. In those cases corruption had set in. In this case it had not, and there perhaps we shall find the practical limit of medical skill in this direction. Once the body has commenced to "return to its dust" no amount of heart stimulation will restore its working and conscious life. From the Scriptural point of view, therefore, we may perhaps be correct in saying that man enters into death when the mortal frame begins to disintegrate into its component elements. When that process has commenced, there is nothing more that man can do; only God then can give resurrection.

But a case like this does pose a question for the orthodox theology. It is claimed by Christian theologians generally that the soul leaves the body at the moment of death, not at the moment of decomposition. This man, questioned about his feelings or experiences, if any, during the half-hour that he was lying dead, could recollect nothing. The space of time was, to him, a blank. The obvious conclusion is that if the doctors had not got to work on him it would have continued a blank. As said the Psalmist, "His breath goeth forth; he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish". (Psa. 146. 4.) "There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest." (Eccl. 9. 19.) Inevitably we are brought to the Scriptural position that man's future life is entirely dependent upon a resurrection from the dead.

THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM

An examination
of Matt. 16, 19

"And I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Matt. 16. 19.)

The words of Jesus to Peter in this verse take us back to the Old Testament. Peter had just uttered his memorable declaration "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" and Jesus knew that here was the man who would take the lead after His own death and be the acknowledged captain of that little band which was to lay the foundations of the Christian Church. Hence His words "Thou art Peter (*petros*, a piece of stone or rock) and upon this rock (*petra*, a great mass of rock—the body of disciples and believers at that time) I will build my Church". Peter's preaching at Pentecost saw the beginning of the fulfilment of those words, a fulfilment which has proceeded throughout the entire Age.

Now with this picture in mind we need to turn to the Old Testament. Jesus was thinking of Isaiah's words in Isaiah 22. 22. *"The key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder, so that he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open."* Under figure of Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, the Lord Jesus Christ is pictured here. In the time of Israel's unfaithfulness God has condemned them to captivity, and the sentence pronounced on Shebna the unfaithful steward over the house well fits Israel's national experiences in Babylon. The promise then is that God will call "Eliakim" and clothe him with the "robe" and "girdle" (both priestly terms indicative of Aaron's "robes of glory and beauty") and commit the "government" (a word is used here meaning complete sovereign power as of a king) into his hand. This Eliakim is to be a father to Jerusalem and Judah, and the key of the house of David is to be laid upon his shoulder. In other words, the priestly kingly rights are to be vested in this one person pictured by Eliakim.

He is then to be fastened as a "nail in a sure place", and all that is in the house shall depend upon that nail. (Vs. 23.) Now here comes a strange word. *"In that day, saith the Lord of Hosts, shall the nail that is fastened in a sure place be removed, and cut down, and fall; and the burden that is upon it shall be cut off."* (Vs. 25.) This

was fulfilled when our Lord, the "nail in a sure place" during His First Advent, was "cut off out of the land of the living". (Isa. 53. 8.) During that First Advent He had appeared both as Priest and King, and although He was rejected by the people, His right to both those offices remained unimpaired. He, the rightful heir to the throne of David, and in whom the covenant made with David was fulfilled, held the "key of the house of David", and used that key to "shut" the Jewish Dispensation and "open" the Christian Dispensation. Three and one-half years after His death the exclusive call to the Jews ended and the call to the Gentiles went out.

But that key has yet to be used again, for in Rev. 3. 7 our risen Lord declares Himself to be "He that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth". He must yet "close" the call of this Gospel Age and "open" the call of the Millennial Age.

Now perhaps we can begin to see Peter's privilege in all this. His Lord was about to go away; He had laid the foundation principles on which His Church must be built, but there was as yet no work done. It was as if the architect's drawings of the building had been prepared and the ground cut for the foundations, but only the first twelve foundation stones had been laid. And so our Lord, because of His impending departure, laid upon Peter the responsibility of using the key which was rightfully His own. "I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven" and knowing that Peter would use those keys in harmony with his Master's will, Jesus declared in advance that Peter's actions would be honoured by His Master away at the right hand of God. Just as the Heavenly Father had entrusted the key of David to our Lord to execute all the details of the Divine Plan as promised to David, so did Jesus entrust to Peter the key which enabled him to enter upon the commencement of that great work which has occupied all the Gospel Age.

To this day the standards set out in the New Testament by Peter and Paul have been the laws which determine entrance into the Heavenly Kingdom. Paul, with all his learning and ability, must needs go to Peter before he could commence his own ministry, and so it is true to say that Peter opened the Kingdom of Heaven even to Paul. The

writings of these two men, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, have "bound" and "loosed" the things which can either help or hinder us in our pressing toward the mark of the prize of the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus, and what has been thus written on earth has had the sanction of Heaven.

At the end of this Gospel Age Peter's use of the

"keys" comes to an end. His commission to act expires with the completion of the Church which he proclaimed at Pentecost. Our Lord then comes upon the scene in all the glory of His Second Advent, and proceeds to the execution of the next phase in His Father's Plan—gathering His saints together to Himself and opening the doors of blessing to the redeemed hosts of mankind.

Spiritual Manhood

A study in
1 Cor. 13, 11

Spiritual law is as fixed in its principles and operations as is physical law. If it were not so the physical could not be so frequently used as it is for illustrations of spiritual things. Thus, for instance in spiritual life, as revealed in the Scriptures, we have duplicated that principle so well known in physical law, of growth and development—first the blade, then the ear, and afterward the full corn in the ear; first the infant, then the boy, and afterward the full grown man; first the babe in Christ, then the growing child, the young man, and finally the full stature of a man in Christ. (Heb. 5. 31, 14; 1 John 2. 12-14; Eph. 4. 13-15.) In both cases there is also a marked similarity in the process of development. As in nature both plant and animal life are sustained by appropriate nourishment, food, light, heat, air, etc.—thus strengthening them to perform the various functions of their being, so the spiritual new creatures in Christ must have and appropriate nourishment that they may continue to live and grow. There is this difference, however, to be observed between the physical and the spiritual life in the process of development; viz., that the former matures quickly, while the latter is of slow growth—a plant to bloom in eternity.

As new creatures in Christ—babes in the family of God—we realise our adoption as sons only when we have renounced the vain pomp and glory of this world and turned fully to God, claiming no righteousness of our own, but humbly accepting the imputed righteousness of Christ. No one is even a babe in Christ who still cherishes iniquity in his heart, or who fails to recognise his need of the covering of Christ's righteousness. But having been converted, turned about, from sin to God and righteousness, having learned of Christ, having put off the old man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness (Eph. 4. 24), and having been renewed in the spirit (disposition) of our minds, we are reckoned sons of God, babes in Christ. And from that infantile standpoint, which

has in it, undeveloped, all the elements of the man, the duty and privilege of such is to grow, to develop as new creatures in Christ. We are not to content ourselves with the lisping and prattlings of infancy, nor with the milk diet suitable to that age, but, making due use of these as stepping-stones we should go on unto perfection.

It was in view of such considerations that the Apostle penned the words of our text. He himself had rapidly passed on from the early stages of Christian character to higher degrees of development, and yet he was not counting that he had attained the perfection which was the mark at which he was aiming. (Phil. 3. 13, 14.) He had, however, passed beyond both infancy and boyhood to the stature of a young man in Christ. Looking back over the pathway of his Christian experience, he recognised these different stages, and for our profit recorded his thoughts, saying, "*When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things*".

This was true both of his natural life and his spiritual life—the reference being specially to the latter, of which the former was merely an illustration. By the illustration he would draw our attention to the fact that if we have been children of God for some time we should be able, on looking backward over our Christian experience, to trace a good degree of advancement toward the mark of perfection. While as mere babes in Christ our hearts must always be loyal to God and true to righteousness, our very inexperience causes us often to stumble; our knowledge of the right ways of the Lord is very imperfect, and our powers of discernment are very unskilled: we have much to learn both of revelation and experience. The child in Christ has its own childish understanding, thoughts and ways, and his brethren in Christ should not expect from him the wisdom of the sage. Nor should he himself presume to have such wisdom; for only

through knowledge and the discipline of experience does wisdom come; and then, only when we have allowed them to work in us the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

For our growth and development in the Christian character God supplies all that is needful in the way of nourishment, and it is our part to make use of all the help He sends. By study and meditation upon His Word of truth, by prayer and communion with God, we partake more and more of His Spirit, and are led into a closer acquaintance both with the Lord Himself, and also with His works and ways. And by exercise of the strength thus gained in active service of the Lord, we are prepared to receive more and more of the fullness of His grace, and so to go on from grace to grace, and from one degree of advancement to another.

But notwithstanding these recognised principles of Christian growth and development, it is a lamentable fact that many who can point with exactness to the day and hour when first they gave their hearts to the Lord and received the Holy Spirit, the seal of their adoption, are compelled to realise, when they consider the matter at all, that instead of advancing toward the stature of men in Christ, they have actually retrograded. Often such painfully look back to the blessedness of that first experience of the grace of God in their hearts, and say:—

*“Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I sought the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and His Word?”*

It is a thing of the past with them, and its joys have fled. Why is this? It is because they have failed to appropriate the means of grace which God has supplied, and because, instead of striving against the downward tendencies of the carnal nature, they have allowed those old dispositions to rise up and re-assert themselves. In some cases a morbid desire for something new and strange has led away from the truth into the forbidden paths of human speculation—philosophy and science, so called—until the mind became bewildered and confused in the labyrinths of error—the snares of the Wicked One. In other cases the measure of truth possessed has been held in unrighteousness. The tongue has been permitted to wag in the service of sin and uncleanness, manifesting unkindness, lack of Christian courtesy and forbearance, evil surmising, self-exaltation, pride, boastfulness, vaunting, etc., etc., and these unholy indulgencies have been excused and even cultivated; they have not been striven against nor repented of; hence the spiritual decline.

It is for these causes that the blessed sense of fellowship and communion with God, experienced when first the Holy Spirit set the seal of adoption upon the heart, has been lost by many. God cannot dwell in a heart so unfit for His presence; and no Christian can look back to the time of his first experience as a child of God and recall any such evil dispositions at that time. Had his heart been in such a condition then, God would not have accepted him; and it is only as we strive against sin that we can continue to abide in His love and favour.

Who cannot look back to his first experience in the Christian life and remember how the love of God filled his heart and overflowed to all His creatures, especially to them of the household of faith—a love that could bear well the beautiful description of 1 Cor. 13. 4-7. *“Charity (love) suffereth long and is kind, envieth not, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.”*

Realising such to be the will of God, this was the attitude of heart which the seeker after God sought to attain; and such an attitude he was enabled to realise when the Spirit of adoption sealed him as an accepted son of God. Yet God, who remembers that we are dust, that we are morally weak from the Fall, knew with what difficulty we must endeavour to maintain this condition of heart and mind when assailed by temptations, and worn with the disappointments and trials of life. Nevertheless, He does look for the cultivation of these graces of character in us. He does, and has a right to, expect us to strive to live godly, and to war a warfare against the world, the flesh and the devil. And, therefore, notwithstanding the facts of trials and temptations, the maturer growth of Christian character should find our first love deepened into a more steady, constant and enduring thing, not characterised, perhaps, with so much of the gush and fluster of youth, but rather with the mellow benedictions of a more nearly ripened character.

That the church in this sifting and proving time will be individually tested as to character, as well as to faith, is certain. The prospective heirs of the kingdom must, like their Lord, be tried and tested in every point; and it behoves everyone, therefore, to watch and pray, lest he enter into temptation, and diligently to cultivate such a character as will stand every test applied to it. But in the hour of testing let none mistake love of peace for love of righteousness. Let us see to it that the same mind dwells in us that is in Christ, our pattern. So shall we be children of God, beloved and owned of Him.

LONDON CONVENTION - AUGUST 1952

With occasional intermissions, mainly during the war period, annual United Conventions in London have been held since 1931. It will probably be agreed by all who have known these gatherings since the start and who were present on this last occasion that rarely has there been a happier season of fellowship. The venue was Conway Hall, Holborn, already sanctified by memories of past occasions of uplift even although high hopes and ideals have never been fully realised. The scene at the Hall immediately before the opening session gave promise, on the evidence of "things that are seen", of good things to come. The platform was almost hidden by a magnificent floral display which, to this observer at least, brought immediately to mind the Psalmist's words "*O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness*". The zealous and loving hands which had worked so busily to create appropriate surroundings for our devotions became the means of reminding us that our God is One Who most certainly delight in flowers—He made so many different kinds! Around the walls there was visible evidence of the equally tireless labours of other brethren who were concerned, not with the visual, but with the aural, aids to the ministry, in the shape of a network of loud-speakers connected to an amplifying system which by common consent proved to be the most satisfactory one that we have yet had at Conway Hall. (The writer tried all parts of the Hall at various sessions and found only one "difficult" spot, and there was no need for anyone to sit there anyway.) Constant supervision by those responsible for the system ensured that when a speaker strayed too far from the microphone a tiny green light brought him back—of course the audience were unaware of that! Away at the other end of the building the usual care for temporal refreshment was being taken by a third group of brethren, busy in their accustomed role.

Punctually at 3.0 p.m. on Saturday afternoon the Convention was opened by Bro. A. O. Hudson, who gave the Address of Welcome, outlining some of the hopes and ideals around which the gathering had been planned. At 3.30 he gave place to Bro. C. T. Ward of Kettering, who addressed the friends on "*The New Life in Christ*", setting before them a standard of Christian conduct to which all of us would wish to attain and few ever really do. The evening session, addressed by Bro. H. Chrimes of Altrincham, on "*The Kingdom in Manifestation*" was intended to be of particular interest to newly interested friends and to this end the meeting had been advertised by means of special invitation cards. It is uncertain how many, if any, newly interested

friends were present but there was a goodly gathering of those whose interest had already endured the years, and our brother's arguments in favour of the literal interpretation of many Scriptural prophecies received close attention.

Sunday morning commenced with a Praise and Helpful Texts meeting led by Bro. F. B. Quennell of Warrington, after which Bro. E. Bullard (Forest Gate) delivered an interesting talk entitled "*The Lord's Plantation*", based on Isa. 41. 19, enshrining within its references to the many trees of the Lord's planting a most helpful outline of "Kingdom" expectations. In the afternoon Bro. T. W. Watson (Aldersbrook) took as his theme the Psalmist's words "*The Lord thinketh upon me*" and in a very helpful and encouraging manner laid stress upon the certitude of Divine care for all who name the Lord's Name. The evening session was ministered by Bro. B. J. Drinkwater of Birmingham, who held the brethren's attention in his own characteristic way with a meditation on Philip's words "*Shew us the Father*", and it must surely be that all present felt these words crowned a most inspiring day. Part of the evening service was devoted to a ministry of song by a conducted choir of brothers and sisters in the Lord, who rendered two anthems, "*The Lord is my Shepherd*" and "*The day Thou gavest*". This carefully prepared offering of praise imparted a quiet dignity to the service that well matched the tenor of Bro. Drinkwater's words.

The Monday morning Prayer Meeting, led by Bro. L. F. Shephard (Cardiff), was followed by an address "*I will rejoice in the Lord*" by Bro. F. Musk of Rossendale. Our brother's words contained within them a call to action, a reminder that we must shortly take up our duties in the world around us once again and proclaim our message and our faith, telling men both of the saving grace that is in Jesus and the judgment that must come upon a world that so far has rejected Him. The sands were now fast running out, and it was with the consciousness that the time for parting was nearly come that the final session commenced and Bro. D. Parker (Windsor) gave the concluding address "*The Power and Wisdom of God*". There was in his words an interweaving of important doctrinal instruction, and on that note the 1952 London Convention came to its close, first with a few parting words from Bro. F. H. Guard, Convention Secretary, in which we were reminded of the many blessings we had received during the course of the gathering, and of the joyful services rendered by so many who had cared for the interests and needs of those attending, in so many ways; and finally in

the traditional manner by the singing of "God be with you till we meet again".

The number in attendance was not quite up to the standard of recent years, but the singing appeared, to the writer at least, to be of about twice the usual volume—and there is no doubt that the spirit manifested on all sides was wonderful to behold. Brethren attended from many parts of the country and all parts of London and from every

London meeting; even although in the ordinary week-by-week arrangements of the year some of these will not meet each other again perhaps until another such gathering, it is good to know that on this August week-end we have been able to realise a little of the unity that we speak about so often without always finding it so easy in practice, and yet which does in fact exist between all who are "truly His".

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107 The Son of God. 115 Satan.

108 The Holy Spirit. 116 Angels that Sinned.



BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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

Vol. 29, No. 10

OCTOBER, 1952

CONTENTS

| | | |
|---------------------------------|-----|-----|
| BETWEEN OURSELVES | ... | 146 |
| ZECHARIAH'S KINGDOM VISION | ... | 147 |
| THE FLIGHT FROM EVIL | ... | 151 |
| HOW A SCHEMER BECAME A SAINT... | ... | 153 |
| ISRAEL, AWAKE! | ... | 155 |
| "I MAKE PEACE AND CREATE EVIL" | ... | 156 |
| GATHERED GRAIN | ... | 157 |
| MINISTERS OF THE KINGDOM | ... | 159 |

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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 time has come to renew the list of readers who by reason of old age or infirmity are unable to meet the cost of the "Monthly". It should hardly be necessary to repeat our assurance of the pleasure with which we send to those who are thus situated, and it is earnestly desired that all such will continue to have the "Monthly". But we must know that you are still with us to receive it; oftentimes we do not hear from year's end to year's end from some of the very elderly ones and we do not really expect to. As this year draws to its close please do let us know that you need it still, as soon as the renewal notice appears in your copy, or even sooner. Better it is that you write us, or get someone to do so for you, as soon as you read this. (If you have been in touch with us during the last six months of course you need not write; we shall know you still want it.)

Particularly does this apply to all our German and Continental friends generally, who are unable to remit money because of currency restrictions. We have a goodly number of German readers and do not wish to send copies where they are no longer needed. If you cannot write in English then write in German; but do send a card to say that you still desire the "Monthly".

* * *

We now have a stock of Christmas cards generally similar to those offered last year and can supply at once. Please order early if possible. The cards are complete with envelopes, in packets of 10 at the following prices, post free, the cards in each packet being of well-assorted values.

4/3 5/- 6/- 7/-

CAXTON HALL

The hope that Caxton Hall may become a united meeting place for all London brethren where joint worship may be given once every month has never been relinquished. At this present time there is a deep desire to make this ideal a reality and with the wish that our Master's Will may be made known, the first part of the October gathering is to be a prayer meeting devoted to this end. There must be a number of brethren scattered over London who echo this desire in their own hearts; a very pressing invitation is extended to all such brethren to make known their own thought as to what may be the best course to adopt in order to realise this ideal. It will be sincerely appreciated if all whose hearts impel them so to do will write Bro. G. H. Jennings, Grove House, Roding Lane South, Ilford, Essex, with such words of suggestion, advice, counsel, as they feel would be helpful to those who at present are charged with the responsibility of the arrangements.

The next meeting is to be on Saturday, 18 October and the time is now short. Do please sit down and write your thoughts, in the consciousness that there are many members in the Body, and each has something to contribute to the general good. It may be that your own suggestion is just the one that will make all the difference to the meetings. Remember the ideal—our practical unity in worship and the presentation of the faith that is in us to the world which as yet knows it not.

Following the prayer meeting, which commences at 6.30, there will be an address by Bro. F. Linter

of Stockport. The meeting is being announced in a number of Christian denominational periodicals and it is hoped that a goodly number of brethren will make the effort to attend, not only for the opportunity of praying and worshipping together, but also to welcome those of other communions who may respond to these announcements and join us in our gathering together.

This is a serious and sincere appeal. It is earnestly and definitely desired that every one who reads this notice and feels a sympathy with the aims of Caxton Hall meeting should write to Bro. Jennings at once with suggestions: all such letters will be received with appreciation and will be carefully considered. And it is trusted that as many as possible will gather at the meeting to join in true supplication to the Heavenly Father for guidance and confidence; it cannot be that such a meeting, whatever the outcome, will be otherwise than spiritually uplifting to all who partake.

CAXTON HALL

(Tudor Room)

Saturday, 18th October, 1952

6.30 Prayer Meeting Bro. A. O. Hudson.

7.15 Address. Bro. F. Linter (Stockport).

8.15-9.0 Fellowship.

ZECHARIAH'S KINGDOM VISION

An exposition of Zech. 14.

"Behold, a day cometh to Jehovah!" With this striking phrase the prophet Zechariah introduces one of the finest symbolic descriptions of the day of Divine intervention to be found in the Old Testament. The gathering of the forces of evil—the arising of God out of His place—the scattering of those evil powers and the establishment of the Kingdom. What more cheering subject could be presented to a suffering and subject people?

It is probable that Zechariah saw these strange and beautiful scenes in vision, and was led to record them in writing. Thus did the Holy Spirit convey dispensational truth under symbols which the prophet appreciated without difficulty; things which his knowledge of Israel's history and his familiarity with the writings of the prophets his predecessors, made readily recognisable. Thus did he see Jerusalem encompassed with armies as it had been so many times in its stormy career; he saw the Most High, the God of Israel, descending in glory upon the Mount of Olives with ten thousand of His holy ones just as Isaiah had seen the Lord in His Temple and Daniel had seen the Ancient of Days surrounded by attendant hosts. He saw the enemies of the Lord smitten before Him just as the rebellious hosts of Korah had perished in the presence of the Shekinah glory flaming out from the Tabernacle in the wilderness. He saw broad rivers flowing from Jerusalem bearing life whithersoever they went just as his fathers had sat by the wide canals of Babylonia in the time of exile and seen those wonderful irrigation works, traces of which survive in Mesopotamia to this day, bringing life and beauty to what most otherwise have been a barren and thirsty desert—as indeed it has been since the canal system was destroyed in the early days of this Christian era.

We who would interpret these glowing words aright generally realise that Zechariah used terms and allusions taken from such things but that the events of which he speaks are mightier far than can be contained within the scale of those long past events and should be interpreted in line with the great principles of Divine dealings with man. Zechariah pictures the last great conflict as though it comprised nothing more than a great military force gathered against the city of Jerusalem itself. In reality the scale of present-day events is so great

and the issues involved in the transition of this present world order into one controlled by the powers of Heaven are so momentous that something much more fundamental than a clash of armies in Judea is needed to meet the requirements of the prophecy.

"Behold, a day cometh to Jehovah." For many long centuries men have had their day, and liberty too to try any and every form of government their wit could devise. The result has been the precipitation of this great Time of Trouble, a period which at the time alluded to in Zechariah's fourteenth chapter has nearly run its course. Now it is God's turn. A day cometh to Jehovah; a day in the which He "arises to shake terribly the earth"; a day in which He will at last vindicate Himself and His own standards, and bring the power of evil to the dust.

"And thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee." A strange statement to children of Israel. They were so used to being made the spoil of others, of being plundered, persecuted, sold into slavery, that the idea of they themselves dividing spoils of victory in their own cities was an almost unheard of suggestion. But the prophet founds his allusion upon real history. There was a time when Israel *did* divide the spoil—upon the occasion of their coming out of Egypt, when the Egyptians, in haste to speed their going, gave them jewellery, gold, raiment, anything they chose to ask, and so "Israel spoiled the Egyptians". That was upon the occasion of their first great deliverance—this second "spoiling" is to be upon the occasion of their last great deliverance and it is fitting that Zechariah should just hint at the analogy between their beginning as a nation and that "beginning again" which is to mark the ending of "this present evil world". The later chapters of Isaiah dwell in detail on that "spoiling"; how the riches of the Gentiles are to flow into Israel; how "in their glory shall ye boast yourselves". Although it is true that the regathered nation is to acquire great wealth and material prosperity in the land, and the wealth of the nations is to be gathered unto her in abundance (Isa. 49. 18-23, chaps. 60, 62), constituting a rich spoil indeed, let no one imagine that this is all that is intended. There is a greater spoil which the regathered people will take of the nations; an offering to the Lord of righteously inclined Gentiles whose consecration to the service

of God, no longer accepted to the High Calling since by this time the Church will be glorified, finds expression in a willing association with the nucleus of the earthly kingdom then being gathered in the Holy Land to be God's instrument of salvation to all men. Those prophecies which speak of the final regathering of Israel make provision also for the stranger, the proselyte, who throws in his lot with the people of God, and this gathering of zealous missionaries from all nations, already instructed in the momentous events then in progress and looking forward to the imminent establishment of the Kingdom will be the most glorious "spoil" that Israel will have ever taken of the nations. (Isa. 44. 5, 49. 21-22, 60. 10).

"For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be encompassed as in a net (Heb.) and the houses shall be rifled, and the women ravished. And half of the city shall go forth into exile (Heb.) but the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city."

This is one of the very few texts which speaks of the seeming success of those hosts which are pictured as coming against Jerusalem. The Lord goes forth and defends His own, but at first reading it seems that He is too late to save at least half of His people as well as the beloved city from falling into the hands of the foe.

The parallel passage in Ezekiel 38 and 39 if indeed it does speak of the same event, gives no indication that the forces of evil meet with any success at all. Divine power renders them impotent before they have committed any sacrilegious act against His land and people.

The argument in favour of limiting this verse to the record of a successful military invasion of Palestine is strong until one begins to enquire concerning the people who are then inhabiting the land. Who are they? Whence came they? What are they doing?

To answer these questions briefly it is sufficient to recall the main principles of the Divine Plan. After the selection and perfection of the Church of this Gospel Age and her exaltation to association with the Lord Jesus Christ in the heavens, God is to gather an earthly people who by reason of past training are, like the Church but in lesser degree, ready to occupy a position as leaders and missionaries to the whole world of mankind when the Millennial work is commenced. The law of the Lord is to go out from Jerusalem—none could suggest a more fitting Federal centre for earth's administration. The powers of evil will make a final assault upon this citadel of God's holiness, and with their defeat the work of the Kingdom will commence.

According to Ezekiel, the peculiarity of that new nation is that it has renounced the accepted standard of mankind in respect to national defence. It prospers, "having neither bars nor gates". It becomes known as the "land of unwalled villages" and the evil forces go up against it with the avowed intent of plundering what they suppose is, in a military sense a helpless nation.

Yet the ensuing disaster is complete and decisive. The unarmed people will be proven invulnerable against their enemies. There can be only one reason. The Lord has fought for them—with His own weapons.

And if God fights for Israel it can be only because Israel has trusted fully in Him and renounced carnal weapons; for this is the great lesson which God is now waiting to teach the world.

This second verse therefore supports the suggestion that the regathered nation is mixed in its character. It has some within its fold who have come that they may be used of God in the service of mankind, having already renounced the weapons of the Devil. It has others within its fold whose motives are less noble, who partake to some extent of the spirit of the world around them. There is a period of time during which the new nation develops and excites the jealousy and envy of other peoples. That jealousy and that envy finds expression at last in the making of common cause against this new nation. It may not be a military invasion; we in these days are familiar with the term "economic warfare" and it is easy to imagine a determined attempt on the part of world finance to throttle the life of this nation which is attempting to set the example of a new spirit in human affairs.

Perhaps that is why the city is said, not to be "taken", but "encompassed as in a net". The weaving of designs against the holy people with the object of crushing their national existence; "The houses rifled and the women ravished"—their present store becoming a prey and their potentialities for future development and prosperity threatened and besieged by implacable enemies. "Half of the people shall go into exile"; a familiar word, that, to Zechariah and his hearers. Israel went into exile for one reason and one reason only—apostasy. Now in the time of returning favour there can be only that one reason again. The half of the city that goes forth into exile represents those in the new nation who have joined it with mixed motives. The stress and strain of that last day of trouble separates them from a people apparently appointed to death, a nation apparently doomed to destruction. Not sharing

the faith of their brethren, they cannot discern the imminent approach of God to deliver and they depart back to the nations from which they came. That is when the Lord will "purge Jerusalem by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning". (Isa. 4. 4.)

Who are left? The "half" of the people which is "not cut off from the city". Defenceless? In the eyes of the world, yes. There seems nothing to prevent the designs of Jerusalem's enemies from being completely accomplished upon the faithful remnant who hold fast to the promises of God.

Perhaps it is here that Ezekiel's prophecy of the invasion of Gog and Magog has its fullest application. Plans are laid for the complete subjugation of the Holy Land and the trumpet sounds for the attack. The way has been prepared by attempts to destroy the trade prosperity of the Holy Land, a world-wide campaign of misrepresentation by radio and every other means of propaganda, and as a climax possibly a great military invasion. The fate of the righteous nation seems sealed. As, thirty-five centuries previously, the Egyptians said of the escaping Israelites "They are entangled in the mountains; the wilderness hath shut them in" so will it be said again, "They are prey for us".

"Then shall the Lord go forth, as in the days of his fighting." That is the literal rendering of words of the most tremendous import. That brief expression describes the great event which virtually concludes the Time of the End. The day of Divine intervention has come, and God moves. Zechariah takes his picture from another time when God's people were delivered. "The Lord your God shall fight for you" said Moses at the crossing of the Red Sea, "and ye shall hold your peace" (Exod. 14. 14). There is more than passing interest in that allusion, for the *manner* of deliverance has its analogy also. Israel, escaping from Egypt, faced by the impassable barrier of the Red Sea, manifested that supreme degree of faith which was evident on so few occasions in their history but which, when present, made it possible for God to fight with His own weapons. On the basis of their faith He opened a channel through the Red Sea for their deliverance, and the whole host passing through that channel were saved, the waters "a wall unto them on the right hand and on the left" becoming the means by which they were delivered forever from the power of their enemies.

In exactly the same way will God come forth to the salvation of His people at the time of need. "His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east;

and the Mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove towards the north and half of it toward the south. And ye shall flee to the valley of my mountains; for the valley shall reach very near." Just as a channel was opened through the Red Sea for deliverance, so now the prophet sees a channel of deliverance straight through the centre of the Mount of Olives, a valley through which the people of the city might stream to find refuge "in the east".

This passage is clearly symbolic. The Mount of Olives is three-quarters of a mile broad and only two hundred feet high—half the height of St. Paul's Cathedral. A literal valley as described would be no protection at all against a modern army. But when viewed as an allegory, how eloquent every phrase and every symbol. "His feet" to rest upon the hilltop just as God descended upon the top of Mount Sinai to talk "face to face" with Moses! He Whose touch causes the mountains to smoke; He Who rides the clouds as in a chariot, come down to earth to save His own! Of course even Zechariah knew that this would never be literally fulfilled. "Will God in very truth dwell with men on the earth" queried Solomon at the dedication of his Temple. "Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee! How much less this house that I have built!" That symbolic descent causes the Mount of Olives to be cloven into *two* mountains, one toward the north and the other toward the south. Why north and south? Is it because the people in that day are to find protection *between north and south*? The powers of Divine rule are symbolised by the north, as witness Lucifer's allusion to the "sides of the north" in his attempt to share sovereignty with God. One recalls also those wonderful words, "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King" (Psa. 48. 2). May we not therefore conclude that these are symbols of the glorified Church (the north mountain) and the resurrected "Ancient Worthies" (the south mountain) between whom the people of the new nation will find protection? Says Zechariah in a previous chapter. "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 . . . and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem" (Zech. 12. 6). Those "governors" are the Ancient Worthies.

It is probable that when these stirring events

are enacted in the earth the Church of this Age will have been gathered to her Lord and will be waiting for the promised time of revelation to all mankind. It is also probable that before this final conflict takes place the heroes of faith of Old Testament days will have been raised from the dead and have come to the forefront of affairs in the chosen nation, quickly adapting themselves to the new world in which they find themselves and fast becoming acquainted with all that has transpired since they were previously on earth. The great "cleavage" of this symbolic "Mount of Olives" will take place at just the right time in God's Plan, when the day of action has come.

How will God deliver? How will He scatter that mighty host which has come up against His people?

A full answer to this question would involve a detailed examination of Ezekiel's 38th and 39th chapters. Suffice it now to say that God will not move against that host with weapons like to their own. He will not call His people to take swords and javelin, or their modern counterparts, to wage war for the defence of the right. The dread sentence is outlined later on in this fourteenth chapter "*Their flesh shall consume away as they stand upon their feet, and their tongues shall consume away in their mouths, and their eyes shall consume away in their sockets.*" The entire picture is consistent with the coming of a great, a nameless terror, a PANIC, upon the hosts of the nations; a widespread and infectious fear of something which cannot be defined in the attitude of that defenceless, confident nation away yonder in the Holy Land. The voice of propaganda dries up and is silent. The eyes of the intelligence services find out nothing that will help them in their plans. Every proposal for the continued prosecution of their devices is most unaccountably frustrated and the forces which may ultimately advance to the attack will find that their supplies and reinforcements are in a totally incomprehensible manner vanishing from their rear. The very forces of Nature seem to be united in conspiracy against this world plan to subjugate the nation "gotten wealth and goods, dwelling in the midst of the land". Although they know it not, the powers of the Millennial Age, those powers which are to prevent the infliction of injury to others before the aggressor has been able to act, are already abroad in the earth, and against the inexorable Will of Heaven the resolution of earth falters and is broken. God saves His people in the face of apparently certain defeat by powers evil men can neither understand nor withstand.

We as yet know little of the weapons in God's

armoury. Accustomed as we are to thinking of war in terms of rifle and bayonet it is not always easy to realise the abhorrence with which the Most High regards these devices for destroying that which His own hand has created. We do know that Satan does not cast out Satan, and that the rule of the shepherding rod is God's own alternative to the oppressive rule of force to which man pins his faith. Hence we must be prepared to consider and re-consider our views of the detailed outworking of God's "vengeance upon His enemies" in proportion as our own understanding of His guiding principles becomes more perfect.

"And the Lord my God shall come, and all the holy ones with thee."

Here comes the stupendous climax to this earth-shaking event. After the discomfiture of the enemies of God, and amidst the national rejoicing that will then sweep over the new nation, the great revelation for which they are constantly waiting, the revelation or "*apokalupsis*" of the Lord Jesus Christ takes place. Zechariah, in the exaltation of the vision, beheld "The Lord my God" descending upon the mountain just as though he beheld heaven coming to the succour of earth; and he penned the glorious details of that vision in language fitting to the event.

The Book of Enoch records just such an awe-inspiring scene, one so notable that Jude quotes it in part in verse 7 of his epistle. The passage as it appears in the Book of Enoch is strikingly similar to the vision of Zechariah.

"The Holy Great One will come forth from His dwelling, and the eternal God will tread upon the earth, on Mount Sinai, and appear in the strength of His might from the heaven of heavens.

And all shall be smitten with fear, and the Watchers shall quake, and great fear and trembling shall seize them unto the ends of the earth . . .

But with the righteous He will make peace, and will protect the elect, and mercy shall be upon them.

And they shall all belong to God, and they shall be prospered, and they shall all be blessed.

And behold! He cometh with ten thousands of His holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to destroy all the ungodly, and to convict all flesh of all the works of their ungodliness which they have ungodly committed, and all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." (Compare Jude 14-15).

That conception of God coming in glory for the eventual deliverance of His people was very dear to the children of Israel. But no man can see God, and live; and the glory of the reality was of necessity hidden from the prophets and people of old, for they knew little or nothing of a Messiah Who was to come, to suffer, to die, to rise again, and then one day return in the glory of His power and with His holy ones, to fulfil all those glorious symbol scenes of the Old Testament.

So that although Zechariah used the words "*Adonai Jehovah*" the "Lord God", we realise that the fulfilment of the vision is in that day when the "Son of Man is revealed", when the righteous shall "shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father". That is the real point at which "this present evil world" comes to an end and the "world to come, wherein dwelleth righteousness" has its beginning. Upon that day, the power of the forces of evil to inflict injury to men comes to a complete end, and another law begins to operate which declares in Ezekiel's words, "He that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge".

So ends the "day that cometh to Jehovah" referred to in verse 1, a day significant for strange happenings. No wonder that Zechariah goes on to say "*And it shall come to pass in that day that the light shall not be clear nor the darkness thick,*

but it shall be one day foreknown to the Lord, not day, nor night, but it shall come to pass that at evening it shall be light."

This day of gathering the new nation, of assaults against it, of the defection of the unworthy, of the coming forth of God to defend, of the miraculous deliverance and the victory of faith, and finally the glorious appearing of Jesus Christ and His Church, is surely a "day" of mingled darkness and light, of obscurity and clarity, but most certainly a day of which it may be said "at evening time it shall be light". The evening of this special "day that cometh to Jehovah" is overtaken by the brilliant sunlight of the Millennial Day, whose sun "shall go no more down" for before its close sorrow and sighing shall have fled away.

The change of one word from the Authorised Version rendering makes all the difference to the emphasis of Zechariah's inspired comment on this glorious consummation to so strange a work.

"*So shall Jehovah be king over all the earth.*" This is the manner in which the sovereignty of God and the authority of His Son Jesus Christ will be made known to all men.

"*In that day shall there be One Lord, and His Name, One.*" The old cry of the nation, "Hear, O Israel, The Lord our God is ONE, Jehovah" will be heard again and so will the names of the idols be caused to perish out of the land.

To be concluded

The Flight from Evil

*Pastoral Counsel
for Christ's disciples.*

In the Revised Version the word *appearance* is rendered *form*—"abstain from every *form* of evil." Evils have different forms. Sometimes they are crude and repulsive forms; sometimes they are attractive forms. No matter what the form, if we know the thing to be evil, sinful, injurious, either to ourselves or to others, we are to abstain from it. The Apostle has enumerated some of these forms of evil, namely, "*Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envying, murders, drunkenness, revellings and such like, of the which I have told you before, that they that do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.*" (Gal. 5. 19-21) He says that these are the works of the flesh and that they are *manifest*.

To Christians these forms of evil must be very repulsive, because to be a Christian at all, one

must have the New Mind. And the New Mind, in proportion as it is developed, will cleave to that which is good. We are to remember, however, the Scriptural admonition that all these grosser evils have, for the Christian, a more refined form, as, for instance, when our Lord declared that "He that hateth his brother is a murderer." This is quite a free line of distinction that applies to the Christian. We can see that that spirit in a Christian which would content itself with hating, instead of killing, a brother would be a very evil condition for the heart and would mean death to the New Creature.

Evils may be summed up into three forms—actions, words and thoughts. Evil actions are those which would be easily discerned by others. Evil words might not be quite so manifest. Evil thoughts, along any of the lines referred to by the

Apostle, or along any other lines, are injurious, sinful, and should be abstained from. If, by reason of the weaknesses we have inherited and which belong to our mortal body, we be not fully able to master these evil propensities, we must show God that we are striving against them to the best of our ability. And as to what is the ability of each, is for himself and God to determine.

We should abstain not only from the evil things, but we should also seek to abstain from every *appearance* of evil. We should abstain, so far as possible, from doing things that we know to be good, if our friends or neighbours might misunderstand and consider these things to be evil. In order that our influence for the Truth may be the greater, we should avoid, not only evil in its every form, but everything that has an evil appearance.

To our mind, *evil thinking* is one of the greatest evils with which God's people have to contend. They can restrain actions and words to a considerable extent and they are, as the Apostle says, to seek to bring also every *thought* into obedience to the will of Christ. This does not mean that an evil thought would not cross the pathway of the mind. But the character of the thought should be discerned, whether it is mean or hurtful, and if so, it should be considered as a deadly foe and immediately a warfare should be waged against it, lest it fasten itself in some degree.

Has the Apostle suggested an impossibility when he says, "Abstain from every form of evil"? It is possible for us to abstain as New Creatures, to be out of sympathy with all forms of evil—to be antagonistic thereto. But on account of the imperfections of the flesh, one may not always be able to do this actually. It is the duty of the New Creature to see that the evil thought is battled against, if indeed, it should ever attain full development. It is to wage this warfare against sin that we have enlisted with the great Captain of our salvation. He showed his own fidelity to righteousness and is the Father's Agent for abolishing sin.

And it is for those who would walk in the Master's footsteps to join in this crusade against sin. The first place to begin the crusade is in our own minds, in our own dealings. The Scriptures tell us to fight a good fight in our own flesh—not against sin in someone else. And to this our Lord refers when He warns us to overcome in ourselves ambition, pride, lasciviousness—not to let them conquer us as New Creatures. We are to conquer these things in the fallen flesh, in which we all share—some more and some less. According to our zeal we will have the Lord's approval. And accord-

ing to unfaithfulness in this matter, we shall lack that approval.

The Decalogue of the Law Covenant was composed of prohibitions—"Thou shalt not." God's dealings with those who will become members of the "House of Sons" seem to be different from this. Instead of telling us what we shall *not* do, He tells us what we *shall* do.

How will it be with those with whom God will deal during the existence of the Messianic Kingdom, under the New Covenant arrangement? We answer that during the reign of Christ they will be under a very similar arrangement to that of the Jews under Moses. "Thou shalt", and "Thou shalt not", will be enforced by the great Mediator. And the enforcing will be necessary, because of the sins and imperfections and degradation in which the people will be. In harmony with this we read that "*Whosoever will not obey that Prophet will be destroyed from among the people*". (Act 3. 23.) The word *obey* implies a command and that the command is backed up by the authority to enforce.

The fact is that there will be a reign of Law in Messiah's Kingdom. "*And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the Law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem.*" (Isa. 2. 3.) And those who will not fall into line with his law will have tribulation that they may learn righteousness. "The judgments of the Lord will be abroad in the earth" (Isa. 26. 9) and the people will take notice of these. They will not be dealt with as under the Covenant of Grace. The *will* will not be taken instead of the *deed*.

On the contrary, the great Mediator will, during the thousand years of the Mediatorial Kingdom, instruct and reward and bless and uplift all the willing and obedient, to the intent that all those during that reign who desire to be helped will be helped and will be ready to be turned over to the Almighty at the close of the Age. "*And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.*" (1 Cor. 15. 28.) Not, therefore, until the end of that Age will any of the world, under the New Covenant arrangement, reach sonship. But if, by that time, they have been perfected as sons, and will endure the tests then given, the Father will accept them and give them the blessings of eternal life.

HOW A SCHEMER BECAME A SAINT

A talk together about Jacob and Esau.

The characters of Jacob and Esau were entirely different. Esau was a skilful hunter and man of the field. Generous and warm-hearted, he attracts our sympathy. He cared only for the pleasures of the moment; was worldly, irreligious, indifferent to parents' wishes, uninterested in the Divine Covenant and unmindful of its privileges and responsibilities. Heb. 12. 16 says he was profane and Weymouth renders this "ungodly". Esau was the favourite with Isaac.

Jacob was "mother's darling". He stayed at home, followed domestic occupations and busied himself with flocks and cattle. His interests centred in his home. Although crafty, subtle, mean and deceitful he showed strength of character, patient endurance and warmth of affection. Long years of discipline and suffering were needed to purify him and make him worthy of the Divine Covenant and Blessing and to turn him from a schemer into a saint. He believed in and sought after his father's God and held spiritual things in reverence. At Bethel, Haran and Penuel he showed his conviction that God was with him to guide and bless. He conquered himself at last and proved himself a "Prince with God".

Esau was in some respects the better man; a fine country gentleman popular with all. Still he never prayed; a secular soul, he never built an altar—never felt the need of one. He was just a man of the world. Jacob on the other hand was a bargainer and incites our contempt, but he had one redeeming feature; deep down in that clever calculating heart there was devotion—he never went anywhere without building an altar and praying to God. The result was that Jacob grew finer and better while Esau grew coarser and sank into obscurity. Jacob became one of the outstanding figures in Jewish history. The passion for spiritual things proved to be Jacob's salvation. All lives to be successful must be lives of one desire; the greatest desire of all is worship and service.

One day, weary after the chase and faint with hunger, Esau found Jacob preparing a pottage of lentils. He cried, "Feed me I pray thee with the red, this red". The verb expresses eagerness extreme and he added no noun but pointed to the steaming dish (Gen. 25. 30). Verse 34 says, "*he did eat and drink and rose up and went his way; thus Esau despised his birthright*". These words

describe graphically Esau's complete indifference to spiritual privileges—no regret, no sad feeling that he had prolonged his life at too high a cost. If Jacob was cunning and mean in taking advantage still it must be said he valued the privileges which Esau despised.

God had marked out Jacob as the heir to the promises but Isaac struggled against God's will and his assent was obtained by craft. Is there any excuse for Jacob's subtlety? Jacob sought no earthly good; it was not the elder brother's share of the father's wealth that he wanted. All that was Isaac's he resigned to Esau and went away penniless. But Rebekah and Jacob should have trusted God to bring about what He had predetermined. Had Rebekah's faith been pure and exalted she would have known that God would somehow fulfil His word without her help, but the fault began with Isaac and Rebekah probably considered she was preventing a grievous wrong.

In order to obtain Isaac's blessing Jacob impersonated Esau, but he did not keep up his acting well for when Isaac asked how he had obtained the venison so quickly he replied, "because the Lord thy God brought it to me". It was not Esau's character to see anything providential in his success in hunting and this as well as the short delay, may have aroused Isaac's suspicions.

When, later, Esau revealed what Jacob had done, we read (Gen. 27. 33), "*Isaac trembled very exceedingly*". This was not mere vexation at having been deceived but he felt he had been resisting God. He persisted no longer in his sin; acknowledging the Divine purpose he had no word of blame for Rebekah and Jacob but confirmed to him the blessing.

"Is he not rightly named Jacob?" (a supplanter) said Esau, and in thus playing upon his brother's name Esau has had a lasting revenge, for the bad sense which he put upon the name has clung to it. Originally the name "Jacob" meant one who follows at another's heels (Gen. 25. 26).

Rebekah, advising Jacob to flee to Laban at Haran, said, "tarry with him a few days until thy brother's fury turn away" but she saw Jacob no more for he was away forty years.

Evidently on the way Jacob's thoughts were very full. Would God confirm him in the possession of that which he had secured by fraud and cunning?

Thus meditating he had drawn near to God. Then he had a dream which assured him that though in distress and fleeing for his life yet he was the object of God's love and care. He was to learn that all that was to happen was a part of the working out of Divine Providence. One object of the dream was to show that Jehovah watches over the whole earth and that messengers to and fro come from Him and return to Him. Jacob vowed a vow (Gen. 28. 20), the translation of which is poor and gives a wrong sense. The Revised Version margin is better. Jacob did not say, "if God will be with me . . . then shall the Lord be my God" but his vow implies no doubt on his part but is his acceptance of the terms of the covenant. "*If the Lord will be with me . . . so that I come again to my father's house in peace and the Lord will be my God then this stone . . . shall be God's house; and of all that Thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth to Thee.*" Surely a vow of gratitude!

The Divine care and blessing promised at Bethel are shown in the account of his sojourn at Haran from whence Jacob returned blessed with numerous family and rich in goods. Equally marked is the severe discipline in order that the darker features of his character might be purified and that he might learn to put his reliance not in unworthy scheming but in simple faith in the love and blessing of God. While at Haran Jacob the deceiver was deceived; he served fourteen years for his wives and stayed another long period without any settled hire. At the end of this period Jacob's trust and faith in God are seen in Gen. 31. 5, "The God of my father hath been with me".

On the homeward journey God gave Jacob another vision of angels (Gen. 32. 1). What a sense of protection they must have afforded; yet when approaching Esau he took all reasonable precautions and prayed. His message to Esau was humble; he called Esau his lord and himself a servant and enumerated his wealth and thus showed he required no aid nor need claim even a share in Isaac's property, but Esau made no answer. Jacob's extreme distress in spite of Divine encouragement repeatedly given him shows his faith was very feeble, but it was real, and he sought refuge in prayer. His prayer was a pattern of humility, earnestness, and faith and shows grateful acknowledgment of past mercies, confessions of unworthiness, believing and pleading of God's promises and a plea for protection. Having quieted his mind by prayer he used his best judgment. Gen. 32. 14 says that he sent five hundred and fifty head of cattle in five droves as a present.

A crisis in his life was approaching. Jacob was to receive the final lesson which humbled and broke

down his selfwill and convinced him that he could not snatch the blessing from God's hand but must accept it as a gift of grace.

Jacob was alone and there wrestled a man with him. (Gen. 32. 34.) A Man—such he seemed to be to Jacob but Hosea (12. 4) calls him an angel and in verse 30 Jacob recognised in him a manifestation of God.

We often speak of Jacob wrestling with God but this is only a half truth; at the outset it was God wrestling with Jacob. He had come to the land God had covenanted to give him and was about to enter into possession. All his life long Jacob had leaned on his own cleverness; his quick mind had already planned how best Esau's wrath might be appeased. Suddenly he was caught by an antagonist, someone he did not know but who evidently meant to humble him. God could not allow Jacob to think that his cunning was winning the land; God must resist Jacob till he was willing to receive the land as a gift. The angel disabled Jacob by touching the hollow (the socket into which the end of the thigh bone is inserted). Probably the muscle was strained but Jacob had a persistent nature and fought on doggedly though he was practically defeated.

We cannot doubt that the angel who had the advantage could have hurried away from the man he had humbled but God does not act that way. Jacob, emptied of self, clung to his antagonist and God took pleasure in Jacob and lingered in his presence. So long as Jacob in self satisfaction demanded the surrender of Canaan God barred his progress but as soon as Jacob acknowledged his powerlessness and became a lowly suppliant God stayed in his company. His sole quarrel had been with Jacob's arrogance which would seize as a prize what could only be bestowed as a gift, but when arrogance was smitten the Victor remained to bless. Jacob's wrestling began where God's finished but it was no more the wrestling of self confidence. Jacob would not let Him go without obtaining from Him a blessing. He who was beaten back in his wealth now carried all before him in his poverty. The old name which commemorated his crooked dealing was changed to Israel, "Perseverer with God". "*As a prince hast thou prevailed.*"

As he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him. Why this small detail? It was bright full day within and without; to Jacob, Nature had a radiance it never had before because the breach was healed between himself and God. The shadows had fled and there was sunlight in Nature and sunlight in his soul.

Israel Awake !

*A call to
spiritual alertness*

"Awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." (Eph. 5. 14.)

One of the worst perils of those who go exploring in arctic regions is that of "falling asleep". Once the desire for sleep has overcome one of the party, the other members have to be constantly watching him in case he should fall asleep and perish in the snow. It often happens that it is impossible to save them this great peril, when, reluctantly and sadly the others are compelled to press on their way and leave the sleeper to sleep on.

How many of us who have started the exploration into the unknown spiritual regions have started off with shining eyes, and beating pulses, with the blood warm and glowing within us and hearts eager for the great adventure of faith which we have decided to make. How many of us have become discouraged, lethargic and sleepy as the journey goes on and on, and the expedition loses its glamour, and the goal even has ceased to fascinate us. A dreadful numbness and paralysis has begun to creep over our souls and sapped the vitality and slowed down the circulation, so that the life-giving joy which formerly sent the warm, zealous blood coursing through our veins, and spurred us on in our quest has become cold and sluggish. Such is the state of many who set out in the race set before us, and St. Paul, anxious to arouse them out of their apathy, gave these challenging words quoted above.

If our spiritual appetite has gone and we no longer have any inclination to the spiritual food, and, like the children of Israel when given manna in the wilderness, we begin to long for the fleshpots of Egypt, let us seek to create an appetite. It is said that appetite comes with eating, and so it certainly is with our spiritual food. As the refreshing water of the Word of Truth begins to slake our thirst and the Bread of Life to appease our hunger, we begin to "live" again. Our souls are invigorated, we breathe, we open our eyes, we awake from our apathy, we become alert, refreshed, restored and strengthened. The stupor which has been holding us in its icy grip loses its hold on us. We get up, stumbling, maybe, but praise God we are up and on our feet once more, the spiritual food and drink is sending the warm blood pulsing through our veins—the old zeal sets our hearts beating and spurs us forward to new and greater

efforts, to loftier heights, and, by God's grace, to victory, in the strength of Him through Whom alone victory is possible.

May God grant us by His power to shake off any drowsiness that may be creeping upon us, and enable us to be ever watchful "lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping".

Let us keep our prayer life alert and full of life and activity, and if this, too, has become torpid, we can call to the Saviour to help us, and He will stoop to our necessity and restore the precious communication, so that we may once more hear His voice, and so that He may "speak comfortably" to us and guide our feet into the way of life.

"For thou wilt shew me the path of life, in thy presence is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Ps. 16. 11.

Come and drink deeply of that Fountain of Life, and find Light and Life.

Another thing which stimulates and quickens the sluggish circulation is to praise the Lord and thank Him always for the blessings of His Love, the glorious promises of the Gospel, which are all 'yea and Amen in Christ Jesus', for the beautiful things of the earth—the works of His Hands, and for the love of dear ones and friends and brethren of the Household of Faith. There is so much to thank and praise Him for, and as the Psalmist says by this we enter into His courts, and His gates.

"Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them and I will praise the Lord." Ps. 118. 19.

Praise and thanksgiving will open our hearts to the morning glory, as the lark soars at heaven's gates with its thrilling notes of praise and exquisite joy, and then descends to its humble nest—very simple and very lowly. Here we have a plain symbol of the text that "He resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble".

When we realise that all is given to us in the "free gift of grace"—free grace, we shall learn like the lark, to praise and glorify Him who has given us such blessings and treasures, and to be ever, like the lark also, hovering over our own humble nest, examining ourselves lest anything has crept in unawares to separate us from the Angel of His Presence.

God keep us, in these troubled and difficult days, from drifting into indifference, or casualness. May

He grant us the power to "shake ourselves from the dust" and if we have even lost the power to do that, may He be gracious and send someone who will shake us, even though it be roughly, so long as it has the effect of awaking us out of that dread

sleep, which even the sound of the trumpet cannot penetrate, but falls on unheeding ears.

"*Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice; cause me to hear it.*" Song of Solomon 8. 13.

" I MAKE PEACE AND CREATE EVIL "

The 45th chapter of Isaiah describes the great power of God and His determination to work all things after the counsel of His own Will. (Eph. 1. 11). The seventh verse in full reads as follows:

"I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil; I the Lord do all these things."

"Evil" in the Old Testament refers not only to the principle of evil as such, but also to the various manifestations of evil. Sin, suffering, disease, calamities, death itself, are all evils. The Lord refers here to His own creative power by which He brought all things into existence. He shows also that to the good things He has created there are the opposites which automatically come into existence at the same time. "God said 'Let there be light' and there was light." Darkness is the absence of light but darkness can only be known by its contrast with light. So soon as light had appeared, men could discern what darkness meant. But in "dividing the light from darkness" God was preparing for a greater work—the introduction of man upon earth and his gradual development through an experience of sin to become worthy of being called a son of God. The word "make" in "I make peace" has the thought of doing work or fashioning a thing. The Lord has set out to "make" peace—that peace on earth which is to be the culmination of His Plan has to be "worked out" through many long centuries. It does not come into being immediately. And in thus setting out to make peace God has revealed its opposite—*evil*. Not that God has sponsored or endorsed evil, but that in setting up righteousness as His standard he has "set up" evil as the opposite principle before men. As Paul says, "By the Law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3. 20). In this sense has God "created" evil—He has made the principle of evil what it is by setting up His own principle of righteousness in opposition to it. He has done this as a matter of permission and not by direct act.

The eighth verse carries on the thought from creation into the work of the Millennial Age. "*Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness. Let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring forth together. I the Lord have created it.*" The picture is that of the heavens opening and pouring down rain upon the thirsty earth, which opens to receive the rain and then brings forth its tender shoots and buds, growing up into the vegetation and fruits of the earth. God first forms light and darkness. *That is creation*. He then sets to work to "develop" peace and righteousness, and in so doing sets up evil as the principle which has His disapproval and which will not endure when "peace" has been made. *That is the story of His dealing with man during this present evil world*. Finally He causes the heavens to pour down their blessings upon the earth, and so it is that "as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations" (Isa. 61. 11). *That is the consummation of the Divine Plan*.

There is a vital truth hidden in this 8th verse. The word for righteousness in the first phrase is *tsedeq*, meaning the principle of righteousness. That in the second phrase is *tsedeqah*, which refers to the embodiment of righteousness in the character and conduct. Thus the skies, "pouring down" the *principle* of righteousness, will result in the earth (humanity) bringing forth the *fruit* of righteousness in their hearts and lives—all as the result of the Lord, in His wisdom, setting out to *develop* righteousness in man although by following that course He must needs for a time permit the existence of evil.

A significant side issue to the 7th verse is the fact that the Zoroastrian religion, which was built upon the idea of an eternal conflict between two great influences, light and darkness, good and evil, personified as Ahura-Mazda and Ahriman, had its

rise very soon after the days of Cyrus. In this verse it is as if the Lord foreknew this and declared that Good and Evil are by no means powers in themselves which could hold the world and its fate at their mercy, but that He, the One True God, was Lord of both good and evil and that He was in full control of the situation. Since Isaiah's prophecy

was recorded nearly two hundred years before the days of Cyrus and the rise of Zoroastrianism we have here one more evidence of the Divine foreknowledge in the compiling of the Scriptures; as Isaiah himself declares in another place, "*New things do I declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them*". (Isa. 42. 9).

GATHERED GRAIN

WHAT HAPPENED TO NOAH'S WORKMEN?

What happened to Noah's workmen? There must have been a vast army of men engaged upon the construction of the great vessel which became the means of Noah's deliverance. The transportation of the necessary material to the site of building must itself have been a task for many men; then the erection of the vessel, its interior rooms and fittings, living quarters for the family, store rooms for food, and so on. What became of these people who laboured so diligently to complete this great structure?

They all perished!

Not one of those, outside the family of Noah, who helped to build the vessel accepted the opportunity of deliverance which it afforded. There can be no doubt that the opportunity was theirs, if they would accept it in faith and belief. But no one apart from Noah and his family, did believe. And they all perished!

We may spend a lifetime working zealously and tirelessly in the service of the Lord, helping Him build some system or organisation through which His work can be performed for a while, but that of itself does not guarantee our acceptance with Him. We can so easily become of those who have done many wonderful works in His Name, and yet be disowned by Him at the last. There is not really any salvation by works. Our acceptance with Him depends upon our own personal oneness with Him, our "deadness" with Him, our submission to His moulding of our life and character into His likeness. These are the things that will endure when all our outward organizations and works, like Noah's Ark of ancient time, have disappeared into nothingness. For when they have served their purpose, and are waxing old, then are they ready to vanish away.

* * *

AN EXAMPLE TO AVOID

In his book "*A Pilgrimage to Palestine*," Dr. Harry Fosdick tells of his visits in 1928 to the High Priest of the Samaritans on Mount Gerizim.

The tiny remnant of this people, who once had a Temple on the Mount in rivalry to that at Jerusalem, still holds to the traditions of their fathers and still treasures a copy of the Pentateuch—the five books of Moses—which experts consider may date from the time of Ezra, and in that case is easily the oldest manuscript of the Old Testament in existence. The point of Dr. Fosdick's narrative is the striking resemblance between the complacent bigotry of the old High Priest and the attitude of some Christians of to-day, quite sure that they, and they alone, have the monopoly of Divine Truth and that all who differ with them must of necessity be in error. His narrative runs:—

"As guests of the High Priest we sat in his tent and through a skilled interpreter talked with the venerable old man about his religion. His complacency, his sense of superiority, his certainty that these few Samaritans alone among men knew the truth about God and practised it, were fascinating. The millions around him, he said, were forgetting the Divine Law; only his little group of despised people were keeping it. He nestled comfortably into that conviction. From every point of view, he said, the Samaritan religion alone was perfect. Could Jews or Christians divide their edition of the Ten Commandments into two tables so that the same number of words and letters would be on each? Never! The Samaritans could with their edition! He had visited, so he said, London, Paris, Constantinople, and had always tried with open mind to welcome new truth, but had come back to Gerizim certain that no new religion was so flawless as the Samaritan. All others were simply more or less pleasing superstructures; only the Samaritans had solid foundations in the Mosaic Law. So the old man, venerable of aspect, amiable in spirit, talked on into the night, archaic as the blood sacrifice he had just administered."

Surely we need to be watchful that we, who have such wonderful opportunities for advancement in the knowledge of Divine Truth, do not fall into the same petty, narrow groove. How different

the exultant words of the Apostle, when, comparing our position with the blinded people of old, he cried:

"We all, *with open face*, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory unto glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord." (2. Cor. 3. 18.)

* * *

WORDS WHICH HAVE CHANGED THEIR MEANINGS

It is noticeable that the brethren usually avoid using greeting cards containing the word "merry", because it has come now, in common usage, to refer to light and noisy pleasure. The word did not always convey this idea, for James 5. 13 says "Is any merry? let him sing psalms". In the Scriptures, the word properly denotes cheerful, pleasant, agreeable, and is applied to a state of mind free from trouble—the opposite of affliction—happy. As Proverbs 15. 13 says, "A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance:"

The word used here in James means literally, *to have mind well*, happy and free from trouble, to be cheerful. James' advice to this "merry" heart is:—"Let him sing psalms," let him express his joy in notes of praise; Paul, expressing the same thought in Eph. 5. 19 says, "*Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;*"

The sentiment in this verse is well expressed by the poet who said:—

*In every joy that crowns my days,
In every pain I bear,
My heart shall find delight in praise,
Or seek relief in prayer.*

The expression "Good luck" is another instance of how words change their meanings in course of time; it now carries the thought of chance or fortune.

In Psalm 118. 26 we read "*we have blessed you out of the house of the Lord.*" But in the Prayer book version this verse reads "*we have wished you good luck, ye that are of the house of the Lord.*" Wycliffe's Bible quaintly translates Gen. 39. 2 "*And the Lord was with Joseph and he was a lucky fellow.*" From these it is plain that at the time of these early translations the expression "Good Luck" meant the prosperity that came from the blessing of the Lord.

* * *

ENDURANCE

It is related of Polycarp, the saintly Elder of the Church at Smyrna, who lived contemporaneously with the Apostle John, that, apprehended by the Roman authorities and commanded to renounce his Faith, he replied "Eighty and six years have

I served the Lord Christ, and all that time He has been true to me. How then can I deny him now?"

Eighty and six years—and still confident. Still looking for "a city which hath foundations" in sure and certain belief of the integrity of God's Word. Still ministering to the flock as a faithful pastor, "watching for their souls, as one that must give an account" (Heb. 13. 17) and finally sealing his testimony with his life. And we, in our impatience, lose heart and lose faith because after ten years, twenty years, perhaps forty years, we do not see the Divine Plan moving to its consummation as rapidly as once we expected.

* * *

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 acknowledgement; 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.

Ministers of the Kingdom

*A glimpse of
the future.*

The Divine Promise is that the Kingdom of God will be amongst men—"under the whole heavens". The Scriptures state that both our Lord and the New Jerusalem, or glorious Kingdom of Messiah, are to come down from heaven to earth; and they call our Lord, therefore, Immanuel (God with us). During that thousand years God will in this sense dwell with men, walk with men. We already have this to some extent in our experience as Christians. God is with men, and Christ and the Church are with men, more or less contradicting and putting to shame the things of darkness of the present time.

But with all these suggestions it is not necessary for us to suppose that the Kingdom will be earthly. On the contrary, the assurance of the Scriptures is that the Church must become spirit beings before they can inherit the Kingdom: "We shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," while those of this class who have been previously dead will have an instantaneous resurrection; and thus we shall be "forever with the Lord"—not forever with the Lord on the earth, but in the spirit condition. The angels are always in the heavenly condition, whether they are in heaven with the Father or on earth, and we shall always be in the heavenly condition—the spirit condition.

Nothing in the Scriptures indicates that there will be a restriction upon the Church, that she should remain in one place more than another. The intimation seems to be that, after she shall have experienced her change, the Church will be for a short time absent from the earth and in the presence of the Heavenly Father. We read in the forty-fifth Psalm that the Bride is to be brought into the presence of the Great King, arrayed in glorious clothing of wrought gold—"in raiment of needlework". The members of the Body of Christ will all be on the spirit plane, whether they are afar off or near the earth. This is what our Lord meant when He said, "I go to prepare a place for you"—in the Divine family. This particular place is one that has never been filled by any others.

The various orders of spirit beings created by the Father occupy each its own sphere. But there is no Church of Christ amongst these. The Church of Christ is invited to occupy a place next to the Lord, next to the Father, higher than all the other planes of spirit beings. At the First Advent this place had not been prepared for the Church, although the Lord had it in mind. Our Lord

ascended up on high to prepare this place.

We are not sufficiently informed respecting the spirit condition to know just how it will be possible for the Lord and the Church to *remain* in the Father's presence and maintain the government of the earth. Perhaps this course is possible. Yet again, such will perhaps not be a wise arrangement. Perhaps it will be necessary for them to be absent from the immediate presence of the heavenly Father and to approximate the earth, just as with Satan and his angels, who are in *Tartarus*—cast down, separate because of sin. But Satan is to be bound for a thousand years; and the position which he has occupied is to be vacated. The entire Church is to be "caught up in the air" to be with the Lord forever—not in *Tartarus*, but "forever with the Lord", that where He may be there they may be also, in harmony with the Divine will, to execute the Divine purposes.

Our thought, then, is that Christ will be very closely associated with our earth, just as Satan's kingdom has been. But as Satan and his angels have been doing an evil work, so Christ and His Church will be doing a powerful work, a good work, a work on the spirit plane. The "members of Christ" are the ones that are mentioned as "kings and priests unto God", who shall reign on the earth.

Then there will be earthly agents of this Kingdom, just as Satan has his agents, who are sometimes under his control through ignorance and superstition, sometimes from mesmeric power, all of which will be removed at that time. But the agents of Christ will be intelligent and willing. At that time the Ancient Worthies will be "princes in all the earth". All mankind will gradually come into fellowship with the Kingdom and, proportionately, indirectly, become associated with the Kingdom itself. Just as any good man helps a government, so all mankind will be blessed in proportion as they approve and uphold the Divine arrangements.

Thus the Kingdom will be spreading for the thousand years, not only from one individual to another, but gradually bringing them back to full perfection. We read that "*of the increase of His Government and peace there shall be no end*". It will conquer everything before it. Nothing shall stop it. Every evil thing having been destroyed, every creature in heaven and on earth and under

the earth will be heard praising God. Every knee will bow and every tongue confess; and His Kingdom will be without an opponent "from the river unto the ends of the earth"—having accomplished its purpose.

The Kingdom will then cease, in the sense that Christ will deliver the authority over to the Father. (1 Cor. 15. 24-28.) This does not mean that the Law of God will be disregarded, as it has been during the reign of sin and death. To meet the exigencies of the fallen condition of mankind, and

to bring back as many as possible into harmony with the Divine arrangements, a special Kingdom will be established—the Messianic Kingdom—which will come in between the Divine government and mankind, because mankind in its weak condition will be unable to meet the requirements of the Divine Law. But when this Kingdom has restored mankind to perfection, it is the Divine purpose for Messiah to relinquish this subordinate Kingdom, which will merge into and become a part of the great Kingdom of Jehovah.

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108 The Holy Spirit. 116 Angels that Sinned.



BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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

Vol. 29, No. 11

NOVEMBER, 1952

CONTENTS

| | | |
|-------------------------------|-----|-----|
| BETWEEN OURSELVES | ... | 162 |
| ABRAM OF THE MOST HIGH GOD | ... | 163 |
| THE THREE EPISTLES OF JOHN | | |
| 23. I John 5. 1-2 | ... | 166 |
| ZECHARIAH'S KINGDOM VISION | | |
| Conclusion | ... | 168 |
| IN THE DAYS OF THE PATRIARCHS | | |
| Part I | ... | 171 |
| THE BURNING BUSH | ... | 173 |
| HE SHALL GIVE HIS ANGELS | | |
| CHARGE | ... | 174 |
| FOSSIL THEOLOGY | ... | 175 |

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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 report of London Convention which appeared in the September issue omitted to mention one of the most important sessions of the gathering, the Baptismal Service, which was held on the Sunday morning. A goodly number of brethren gathered at the Seventh Day Adventist Church, Walthamstow, kindly loaned for the occasion, to participate in the service and witness the ceremony as those who had come forward symbolised their consecration to the Lord. The service was conducted by Bro. G. H. Jennings, who also gave the baptismal discourse, and Bro. J. H. Sharman baptised the candidates, not into any Church or sect of men, but, in symbol, "into Christ." It was a simple and happy ceremony.

* * *

At this season of the year the Benevolent Committee are busy making special arrangements for a little Christmas cheer for some of the old folk in our midst. Gifts and all communications should be sent to Bro. E. Allbon, 20, Sunnymede Drive, Ilford, Essex, and all such will be gratefully acknowledged. It is deemed proper to say at this point that the Bible Fellowship Union has no responsibility for the Benevolent Fund whatever, but is glad to assist its work by publishing an occasional notice such as this. Consequently it is requested that all communications do go to Brother Allbon as above suggested and not to Welling.

* * *

Bro. F. Lardent has a new type of monthly wall calendar for 1953, size 10in. by 7½in. (the "*Christian Home Calendar*"), having one sheet per month with picture in black and white of English countryside scenes, with text for each day. The price including postage, is 2/3d. each, three for 6/3d., five for 10/-. Please order direct from Bro. F. Lardent, 174, Forest Hill Road, London, S.E.23.

* * *

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* * *

The bookroom has in stock a few odd copies, new, of books which are no longer in print or will

no longer be stocked by us, and in order to clear these few we are offering them at half price plus postage. When these are gone no further copies will be available.

Palestine the Land of my adoption (Clapham). Full description of Palestine with several coloured plates and many photographs. 195 pages, 7/6d.

The Pilgrim's Progress. Large book in handsome modern type and modern tinted illustrations. 313 pages, 7/6d.

The Man who did not sin (Newman Watts). Imaginative story of the Millennial Age. 150 pages, 3/6d.

In Green Pastures. Well-known book of daily readings by J. R. Miller. 3/-.

Scottish Metrical Psalter (words only). 2/6d.

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We now have in stock once more two useful books, "The Seven Churches" (Blacklock), a very fine paper covered treatise on the seven churches of Asia, 5/- p.f., and Arthur Way's "Letters of St. Paul", a modern English translation of the Pauline Epistles and Hebrews, 11/- p.f. Both books are recommended to students and the general reader.

* * *

There will (D.V.) be a meeting at Caxton Hall on Saturday, 15 November, at 6.30 p.m. At the time of going to press it is not possible to give details of the arrangements but it may be taken that there will be the usual sessions devoted to the ministry of the Word, with opportunity for praise and prayer, and fellowship. A very sincere invitation is extended to all our brethren to join those who regularly attend this monthly gathering and realise afresh the strength of the "tie that binds."

Gone From Us

Sis. A. Cronk (*London*).

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

ABRAM OF THE MOST HIGH GOD

Some Lessons from an old story

The story of Abraham's victorious conflict with the four kings of Babylon is one of the strangest and most intriguing in the Bible. Not only does it introduce the mystic figure of Melchisedek, Priest-King of Saliem, but it intrigues by reason of its apparent separateness from the rest of Genesis. It is a scrap of political history of the times, in which Abraham became involved, but having no apparent connection with his life before or after. We hear no more of Melchisedek, or of the Babylonian kings, or of the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah. And yet the story has been recorded for a purpose, or it would not be there at all. As one reads the narrative and reflects upon this warlike aspect of Abraham's character, so unlike the picture so consistently presented in the rest of his life story, the reason surely begins to appear. The idea of Abraham as a man of faith is a very familiar one; in this chapter and here alone he is depicted as a man of war, battling for the triumph of right, and that in turn reminds us that we who are the "children of faithful Abraham" are called, not only to go through life sustained by a firm and unwavering faith, as did he, but also when occasion demands sally forth to engage in Christian warfare for the defence of the things we hold dear and the driving of God's enemies from His domain. The fact that the weapons of the Christian warfare are "not carnal" does not by any means belittle the value of the lessons we can draw from this incident where Abraham showed most convincingly that he was by no means a novice in the arts of material warfare.

The climax of the story comes when Abraham, returning from his defeat of the retreating Babylonian kings, bringing with him the recovered captives and their goods, receives the patriarchal blessing of Melchisedek, the Priest-King of the land. The great truth which stands out so plainly is that Abraham did not receive the Melchisedek blessing because of his faith, but because of his successful warfare. Melchisedek is a picture of Christ in His glorious Millennial reign just as Aaron pictures His suffering sacrificial life in this Age. Is this story of Genesis 14 intended to illuminate the contrast between the two pictures? Faith, devotion, suffering and sacrifice are all part of the Christian life just as all these things were characteristic of our Lord's life on earth, and all

this was pictured by the High Priestly service of Aaron. Abraham experienced all these things in his life also and so that life became a marvellous allegory of the life of any and every Christian. But warfare is also a characteristic of the Christian life—the Apostle Paul counsels that we take unto ourselves the whole armour of God that we may be able to withstand the assaults of the Devil. We are to resist every encroachment of the world and every enticement that would draw us away from our consecration to God. We are not only to avoid sin in ourselves; we are to condemn it in others, holding up the standard of God's righteousness and making known the Truth that is mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. It is when we have accomplished that task that we can look for the Melchisedek blessing and be called to sit on one of those thrones on which the glorified saints shall sit and reign the thousand years. This story therefore can have much to teach us and we do well to look at it not only from the historical viewpoint—for of course it really did happen—but also, and more intently, as an allegory teaching important truths to us as we, like Abraham, forsake our native land to go to one which God will show us.

Abraham had lived in Canaan some twenty years when these stirring events broke into the even tenor of his life. How long the family lived at Haran before the death of Terah we do not know, but it is probable that the departure from Ur of the Chaldees was thirty or forty years in the past. That had been a big step, to give up the luxury and refinements of a civilised city and go out "not knowing whither he went" as the writer to the Hebrews puts it. A fitting picture of consecration! All that the world has to offer, given up and left behind for—what? A visionary promise of a better land that one has never seen, with the certainty of hardship, loss, suffering, in the attaining of that land. Ur of the Chaldees was a busy sea-port and a commercial city; it is more than likely that Abraham was a prosperous merchant or trader of some sort. When he came into Canaan he had to become like everybody else there, a keeper of flocks and herds. It might be that he had never in his life before lived in a tent; henceforth until the day of his death he lived in nothing else.

Another wonderful picture of our consecration, that! Strangers and pilgrims in the earth! Ur to Haran, Haran to Moreh, Moreh to Bethel, Bethel to Egypt, Egypt to Mamre, Mamre to Gerar, Gerar to Hebron; constantly wandering and never possessing in his own right any portion of the land that God had promised him until at the last he had to buy a piece in which to bury his beloved wife.

But he found God in that country! In leaving Ur of the Chaldees he left behind him for ever the worship of Sin the Moon-god; in Babylon he left behind him for ever the worship of Marduk the false redeemer. In coming to Canaan he found the God of his fathers, the God they had worshipped before they went down to Ur to live with the idolators. He found Canaan a land that worshipped the Most High God, and he found Salem, the city of peace, not far from Mamre where he spent most of his life, and Melchisedek who was both king of Salem and Priest of the Most High God. In answering the call to "come out" he had found God, and until the day of his death he dwelt as it were in the presence of God.

So, for that twenty years—and eighty years more, for Abraham lived one hundred years in Canaan altogether—he lived his life and awaited the fulfilment of the promise. To his seed God would give this land; in him and in his seed would all families of the earth be blessed. That was the promise that sustained him as he went quietly about his daily occupations. Though it tarry, it would surely come, it would not really tarry. It was in that calm confidence that Abraham adjusted himself in his surroundings and soon found that he was becoming a prosperous man. His flocks and herds increased and his neighbours began to look on him with respect. Peaceable, likeable folk, these neighbours. Abraham seems to have got on with them very well, probably much better than he had done with the people of Ur. These Amorites of Canaan were themselves descendants of Shem, and they were worshippers of the Most High God. (It was only twenty years ago that that fact was established, but it seems clear now that Abraham must have found the religious views of the Canaanites much in line with his own). It must have been that Abraham anticipated a promise to be given by Jesus two thousand years later and that in giving up father and mother and houses and lands for God's sake he had received even in this life an hundredfold; and there was still the fulfilment of the promise for the future.

Into this quiet life of peace and prosperity there came the shattering blow of invasion. "It came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch

king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of nations, that these made war . . ." (Gen. 14. 1.) The story is probably familiar enough. The four Babylonian kings had marched into Canaan to subdue the rebellion of the five cities around the Dead Sea. The insurrection was quickly crushed and the invaders commenced their homeward journey taking with them the spoil and captives, among whom were Abraham's brother-in-law Lot and his family. Upon hearing the news, Abraham summoned his own private army, three hundred and eighteen strong, pursued the retreating enemy, attacked and defeated them, and returned in triumph with the recovered captives and their property.

The historical truth of the story used to be attacked on the grounds that none of these kings were known to history; that objection no longer holds good. Amraphel king of Shinar is the Hebrew form of the name of Babylon's famous king Hammurabi, (*Ammu-rapi* in his own language). The kings of Babylon claimed Divine honours and this one's name was written *Ammu-rapi-ilu*, "*Ammu-rapi-the god*" and this becomes "Amraphel" in Hebrew. "Arioch," king of Ellasar, is the Hebrew form of Eri-aku king of Larsa, (Eri-aku, meaning "*Servant of the Moon-god*" was a Semitic name but this king is known in the inscriptions by his Sumerian name "Rim-Sin," having the same meaning). Chedorlaomer king of Elam would in his own language be written *Khudur-Lagamar*; this name has not yet been found but he was most probably a son of *Khudur-Mabug* king of Elam at the time Abraham departed from Ur. Tidal king of nations is a mistranslation by a very early copyist; the reference is to the king of Gutium, a land lying to the east of Babylonia.

These were the lands and these were the men whom Abraham had known in his youth. Now they had followed him into his new life with God and would make this land also subject to their rule. This was a time for action. Without hesitation he summoned his "trained servants" (these were really professional soldiers, attached to the service of a great "sheik" like Abraham for the defence of his property and people) and led them himself to the pursuit and attack of the Babylonian army.

It has been thought strange that so small a force as three hundred and eighteen could put to flight the armies of four kings. In fact these kings, and all the kings of antiquity, were little more than petty chieftains and their armies, especially when engaged on distant expeditions such as this, little more than raiding parties. Plenty of inscriptions now exist relating the stories of wars and sieges similar to this one and more or less contemporary

with this one in which the numbers of the contending forces are given and they are often measured only in hundreds or at the most a few thousand. When the city-state of Umma laid siege to and captured the city-state of Lagash in the days of Eannatum II, the inscriptions say "the carnage was frightful!"; but there were only six hundred men in the army of Umma! It is reasonable to expect too, that Abraham's men were familiar with the country-side; the Babylonians, a thousand miles from their own home, were not, and just as in the case of Gideon's army some eight centuries later—and in much the same territory—the smaller force assumed the initiative and took the enemy by surprise.

So Abraham returned home in triumph; but even in the day of triumph he still retained his separateness from the world around him. The king of Sodom in gratitude for the deliverance, offered Abraham the whole of the recovered goods, asking only that the liberated captives be restored to him. Abraham's reply is a noble one. "*I have lift up mine hand to the Lord, the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth*" he says "*that I will not take . . . anything that is thine, lest thou shouldest say 'I have made Abraham rich.'*" It would have been a grievous snare to Abraham had he accepted the other man's offer; he could hardly avoid thereafter being associated in some way or other with the king and people of Sodom. So the king of Sodom went back to his own city with his people and his goods, and Lot and his family went back with him. Abraham was left alone, but in his isolation he cherished a reward and a treasure of much more lasting value than anything he had relinquished. He had the blessing of Melchisedek.

Now this blessing of Melchisedek was a most important thing. It was the climax to a solemn ceremony in which, for the first time in Bible history, bread and wine are used in a ceremonial fashion. All the parties concerned were present in the valley of Shaveh, "the king's dale," a locality now quite unknown but probably quite near Jerusalem. Abraham himself, with his band of retainers, flushed with their victory; Aner, Eshcol and Mamre, the Amorite chieftains, and their men, who had apparently gone with Abraham under his leadership and helped in the victory; all these were worshippers of "the Most High God." The king of Sodom was there; the lack of mention of the remaining kings of the five cities leads to the conclusion that they perished in the original battle; see vs. 10. Presiding over all was the venerable figure of Melchisedek himself, the acknowledged overlord of all these chieftains and kings, overlord

not only in secular things but also in the things of God, a priest upon his throne.

The bread and wine was evidently partaken of by all the nobilities present as a ritual feast. It was a symbolic acknowledgement that the blessings of life and prosperity come from God above. God had been merciful, and by the hand of his servant defeated the invader who had threatened to deprive them of life and prosperity. Hence the next stage in the ritual was to invoke the Divine blessing on the means of that deliverance. "*Blessed be Abram of the most high God*" i.e. let Abram be blessed of God. "*And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thine hand.*" Note how all the glory is given to God.

The final act in the ceremony is equally impressive. Abraham comes forward and in the sight of all the spectators solemnly lays before Melchisedek, as the representative of God, tithes of all the recovered property. God had wrought the deliverance; one tenth of the wealth must be returned to God. That is tantamount to a recognition of Divine sovereignty; in symbol, it is a yielding of life and all that life holds, in dedication and consecration.

That is the picture for us. A day will come when the age-old conflict with evil will have ended so far as the Church is concerned, and the greater Melchisedek comes forth with bread and wine to meet His faithful saints. Just as Abraham stood before the Canaanites and received the Divine blessing because of his valiant warfare, so will the Church be blessed in the sight of all men. "*Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father.*" Just as Abraham received of the bread and wine at the hands of Melchisedek, so will the glorified Church enter into the joys of the "wedding feast" at the "marriage of the Lamb."

That is not all. There is bread and wine for others also, just as there was for Aner, Eshcol and Mamre, the "people of the land" among whom Abraham sojourned. With the ending of the Gospel Age and the glorification of the Church the forces of evil will have been defeated and driven far away; there has been deliverance for the captives and an opening of the prison for them that are bound. The dawn of the Millennial Age and the establishment of the Kingdom means bread and wine for all men; and it is then that tithes of all are presented to God, the heartfelt consecration of life to God of every right thinking one among all the resurrected hosts whose deliverance has been so much greater than that of those few who came back with Abraham.

This experience must have been a turning point

in Abraham's life. Previously he had exercised faith in God and had followed the call; one wonders though, how much he had proved God. Up to now Abraham had always been on the defensive—he had separated himself from the idolatry of Ur and departed out of Egypt as soon as his presence began to become obnoxious to them. Now for the first time he had taken the offensive against the forces of evil, and—perhaps to his own surprise—found that God was with him and endowed him with power to achieve a striking victory. Perhaps there

is a lesson for us in that also. We get so used to withdrawing from contact with the world and its wickedness and in our assurance that God will one day rise up to make an end of evil fail to realise that, even so, there is a case for our doing something towards it here and now. If Abraham had never taken the offensive and gone out to smite the army of Chedorlaomer he would never have received the blessing of Melchisedek. There is always the possibility that something very similar may yet prove to be true of us.

The Three Epistles of John

Comments on the writings
of the "Beloved Apostle"

Part XXIII. I John 5. 1-2

"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him" (vs. 1).

Belief in the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth is the beginning and end of our Christian faith. It lies at the centre of all that Christianity means to us and it enshrouds and embraces every phase and aspect of the Christian life. In verse 1 this belief is an indication that we are "born of the Spirit"; that points to the beginning of our walk along the Narrow Way. In verse 5 the same belief is an assurance that we shall overcome the world; that points to the end of our walk. It is true that in an accommodated sense we can say that we are overcoming, or have overcome the world, here and now, but in the strict and truest sense of the word we cannot say we have overcome until the earthly life has ended and we have passed the final test. It may well be that here in this passage John is thinking more of present experience than final achievement, nevertheless the idea of the last judgment can never be far from his thoughts, and when in verse 4 he tells us that the victory which overcomes the world is our faith he must surely be thinking of the same thing that inspired Peter to write *"that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ"* (I Peter 1.7).

It might reasonably be asked at this point if John's statement in verse 1 requires us to hold that anyone who professes mere belief in Jesus and His redeeming work without going on to full consecration of life and possessions and talents to God

is to be accepted as one born of God—spirit-begotten. If such is indeed the case, then the whole structure of belief in the peculiar work of this Gospel Age, the selection from amongst the nations of a fully consecrated company who form the "Church" of this Age and in association with Christ will dispense Divine blessings to mankind in the next, falls to the ground. Such a position is unthinkable; the whole tenor of New Testament teaching is to the effect that God invites those who will to present themselves unreservedly "living sacrifices" (Rom. 12. 1) on the basis of the justification by faith which is already theirs by virtue of their already declared belief in Jesus. Not all who are thus justified by faith take the further step of consecration, but none who do not do so can become members of the Church and hope eventually to be joined with Christ in the spiritual Kingdom beyond the Vail. These references to being "born of God," or "begotten again" can only apply to those who are in the way eventually to attain the spiritual Kingdom. So we must conclude that John has a deeper meaning in his expression "believeth that Jesus is the Christ" than is apparent on the surface.

Perhaps there is a clue in the 22nd verse of chapter 2. In that verse John tells us that he who denies that Jesus is the Christ is an antichrist. That may seem a sharp sentence to pass for what may after all be but a thoughtless or ignorant denial on the part of one who may not even know what he is talking about. But it is obvious that John is not thinking of such a case. He is thinking of the wilful, intelligent denial that comes after the subject has been properly presented. In his own day he was, of course, referring to the Gnostics and others

who were corrupting the infant Church with their heresies, claiming that Jesus of Nazareth was but an ordinary man into whom the Divine Christ entered and remained as a kind of tenant for three and a half years, departing when the "man Jesus" was nailed to the Cross and leaving Him to his fate. Against that heresy, born of the endeavour to conform Christian teaching to the principles of Greek philosophy, John uttered his denunciation in no uncertain terms. Those who held or accepted such views were worthy to be called antichrist. That attitude of John seems to show that in all his epistles he is dealing with the heights and depths of Christian experience; he is not concerned with the elementary truths or the immature "seekers after God" at all. To John, the expression "believing in Jesus" means everything that is involved in the logical consequences of belief. It means not only a mental acceptance of the truth regarding Jesus and His mission; not even justification by faith, which comes in consequence of such belief coupled with repentance and acceptance of Jesus as a personal Saviour. It means the life of consecration, the continual walking after the Spirit, the being buried with Christ by baptism into His death. All that is what John means by believing that Jesus is the Christ, and only such as go to that length can take to themselves this assurance that they are indeed "born of God".

There is a connection here with the preceding chapter. Having established the fact that we who have thus believed in Jesus are "born of God" there is a tacit assumption that our love has gone out to God, and built upon that, the reminder of what has been repeatedly said before, that we who thus love God must logically and obviously cherish feelings of love for all our fellows who are similarly "born of God."

In chapter 3 we are told that to love one another is the commandment of God. In vs. 11 of chapter 4 there comes the pleading exhortation "If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another". That puts the matter on a higher plane than that of mere commandment; it now becomes a moral obligation. Now here in chapter 5 John takes it a step farther and removes the thought of command or obligation out of the argument altogether. He states as a demonstrable fact that anyone who loves God will obviously love his brother also; the two loves must go together. Love for God cannot exist unless there is love for brother. Then following up his advantage, he drives the lesson home with the second verse "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments".

This theme has already been treated at length

in the notes on chapters 3 and 4. It cannot be stressed too much or too often. Probably that is why John returns to it time and again. Love for the brethren is a most important factor in our Christian lives and, despite the stringent urging of John here in his epistle, one that is often found exceedingly difficult to put into practice. True, we always pay lip-service to it and even when our bungling mismanagement of affairs within our fellowship has resulted in a physical separation of believers who ought still to be worshipping and working together we try to excuse ourselves by saying that we still regard our separated ones as brethren and still have Christian love for them. It is doubtful if the Almighty endorses our words; still more unlikely that He will lightly excuse a condition of things where mutually antagonistic groups of disciples maintain themselves in separate "camps" asserting doggedly that their own views of Divine things necessarily constitute "Truth" and the extent to which their opponents differ is the extent to which those opponents are in "error". There is certainly a case for the orderly gathering of Christians into varying groups adapted to the varying spiritual needs of that creature of indeterminate characteristics, man; but even though one believer feels that he is brought closer to God in the reverential surroundings and ritual of a High Church service, and another only in the Puritan simplicity of a Quaker meeting-house, there can always be a oneness between such, born of mutual respect for each other's beliefs and convictions, in the sober realisation that the Holy Spirit has said "*in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth*" (2. Tim. 2. 20). Such a oneness can reveal itself in a hundred ways without any "sacrifice of principle" or "lowering of the doctrinal standard" or any of the other sops to conscience which we are so ready to invent to excuse what we know inwardly is our betrayal of our Lord's own heartfelt prayer "*That they may be one, as we are*".

To be continued.

When the heart is quiet and the door is shut on the world, we can give thanks to God for sleep, for merriment, for our opportunities to worship with others, but let us not neglect to give thanks for this same quiet hour when the heart communes with God and is still.

* * *

He that is much in prayer shall grow rich in grace. He shall thrive and increase most that is busiest in this, which is our traffic with Heaven, and fetches the most precious commodities thence.

ZECHARIAH'S KINGDOM VISION

An exposition of Zech. 14.

Part 2—conclusion.

The quiet voice of Jesus seated beside the well in Samaria, where a woman, wide-eyed and wondering, sat listening, told of living water which should flow from everyone who believed in Him Who had come to give life to the world. Eagerly she asked for that living water which confers the blessing of everlasting life upon all who drink. Jesus could not grant her request, for He was talking about the River of Water of Life which shall flow for the benefit of all mankind in the Millennial Age, and that Age has not yet come; but our Lord's apparently casual reference to this wonderful symbol is enlivened with fresh interest when we come to the words of those prophets who discerned, in spirit, the rolling waters of that river gushing out from the sanctuary of God.

It was given to three prophets to see that fair vision. Ezekiel, when he beheld the symbolic Temple which enshrines the laws and ordinances of the Millennial reign; Zechariah, when he looked upon the symbolic conflict which marks the day of Divine intervention for the establishment of God's Kingdom upon earth; and John the Revelator, when he saw the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven, a picture of the reign of Christ and His saints over the nations. The glowing descriptions written by these three men tell us much about the manner in which the Law of the Lord will go out from Zion.

The early part of Zechariah 14 deals with the last great conflict prior to the announcement of the Kingdom—the time of "Jacob's Trouble," which is brought to an abrupt end by the intervention of God Himself. It has already been seen that a time is to come when a new nation grows up in the Land of Promise, having been regathered from all parts of the earth and become conscious of their great destiny to be earthly instruments of God's Plan for human salvation. By a miraculous deliverance in its darkest hour that nation stands out as reserved for Divine service, and under the leadership of stalwart heroes of past generations, raised from the grave and fully ready to assume the reins of government, the delivered and purified people stands ready to carry into effect those laws and ordinances which are then to be proclaimed from Heaven.

Verse 8: "*And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea. In summer and in winter shall it be.*"

This symbol of the river which brings life has its origin in the Genesis story of the garden of Eden. Trees flourish only where there is moisture, and therefore rivers. The trees of life of Genesis 2 were dependent upon the river of life which flowed through the centre of the garden. When man was cut off from the garden and its life-giving trees he was separated from the holy river also. Communion with God was interrupted; the cherubim stood with flaming swords barring access to the lost Paradise.

Now Zechariah sees twin rivers issuing forth from the holy city—Jerusalem. One stream goes out to the "former" sea—by which is meant the sea in front, or in the east. (The Jews, when speaking of direction, always pictured themselves as standing facing the east, so that "former" "before" or "in front" becomes the same as "east", and "hinder" "behind" becomes the same as "west".) The "former" sea, therefore, is that sea which lies to the east of Jerusalem, the Dead Sea, and the "hinder" sea that which lies to the west, the Mediterranean.

Ezekiel, also, saw the river of life issuing from the sanctuary at Jerusalem and going down into the Dead Sea, and said that in consequence the waters were healed and became filled with fish (Ezek. 47, 9). The Dead Sea at present is an excessively salt sea, so much so that no fish can live in its waters save a few spots near its banks; nor can vegetation grow on its banks, save around certain "oases" of fresh water. In this symbol of death changed into life the prophets revealed how the river of life will flow into the sea of death and transform it into a sea of life. That is the work of the Millennial Age.

But what of the other stream, that which flows into the western sea? Can it be that this is a suggestion that since the Mediterranean sea is connected with all the oceans of the earth, the river of life is to reach all mankind and permeate all nations with its sweetening and life-giving influence. That seems to be the thought of Isaiah

when he said (11, 9): "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea".

The rivers of Palestine are for the most part torrents in winter and dry in summer. These rivers of life seen by Zechariah are to continue their flow both in summer and winter. They will never cease to flow. The Hebrews regarded winter (September to March) as the time of sowing and the summer as the time of reaping. The Millennial Age is to be a time of sowing followed by reaping; and the rivers will flow right from its commencement and onward into eternity. So long as man lives upon earth, and needs the life-giving influence to maintain his life before God, so long will the Holy Spirit continue to shed abroad the power by which righteous men shall live. The river will never cease to flow.

How pertinent, then, the phrase which both concludes the story of the attack on Jerusalem (vs. 1-7), and introduces the story of the Kingdom (vs. 8 to the end): "*And the Lord shall be King over all the earth. In that day shall there be one Lord, and His Name One.*" (vs. 9).

Now Zechariah goes on to describe the introductory glories of the Kingdom: "*All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem; and it shall be lifted up and inhabited in her place*" (vs. 10).

The Hebrew has the words "*Ha Arabah*" for "a plain", referring to the great plain country stretching from Western Palestine down into the district south of the Dead Sea. The verse means that all the high peaks of the land sink down into the plain, leaving Jerusalem, the holy city, alone exalted upon its ring of mountains. Thus is the "mountain of the Lord's house" to be "established in the tops of the mountains" (Isa. 2, 2).

Geba and Rimmon were in the north and south of Judea, respectively, and the reference here pictures the extent to which Jerusalem will attain prominence as the only exalted city in the land. Then comes the promise of the city's prosperity. From the Tower of Hananeel in the north of the city to the Kings Wine-presses in the south; from the sheepgate on the north-east corner to the "corner gate" on the north-west corner; from north to south and east to west the entire city is to be built to the glory of Jehovah. There is abundant scope in this verse for both literal and spiritual fulfillments.

Vs. 11: "*And there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited.*"

The "utter destruction" to which reference is

here made is the "*cherem*" or ban which came upon idolators and those who rebelled against God, involving punishment by the loss of property or of life (Exod. 20, 22; Deut. 7, 26; Ezra 10, 8). The idea is that of the removal of the curse consequent upon the removal of the sin which occasioned the curse. So John, in after days, speaking of the same time and the same thing was able to say: "And there shall be no more curse" (Rev. 22, 3).

The next four verses (12-15) look back to the day of God's intervention, when the enemies of the new nation were oppressing them on every hand, and speak of the means by which God delivered His people. He thus heightens the contrast between that past story of the sin and selfishness of man, vainly striving to perpetuate the rule of unrighteousness, and the fair vision of all nations coming together in a great feast of rejoicing, and to praise God for their deliverance—a theme which is marked out for attention in verses 16-19. These verses declare that all those who are saved of the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up year by year to worship the Lord at Jerusalem, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. This feast was the one in which Israel celebrated their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt, and for one week dwelt in tents or booths (the word "Tabernacle" means a tent or temporary abiding place), and by virtue of its position in the autumn of the year this feast became also a time of thanksgiving for the successful ingathering of the harvest and the vintage. Thus is pictured that anti-typical "Feast of Tabernacles" which will mark the establishment of the Kingdom. Doubtless, representatives of the nations will pay formal visits to Jerusalem to take part in acts of corporate worship at the very centre of Divine government upon earth; and, in a spiritual sense, all mankind will be able to turn their hearts toward that hallowed place and join in the symbolic "Feast of Tabernacles".

But perhaps not all will avail themselves of that privilege. There is provision made in the prophetic Word for the case of men who refuse to come into harmony with the reign of righteousness, or at best will yield but "feigned obedience". Here, in Zechariah, there is one such allusion: "*Whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts, even upon them shall be no rain*" (vs. 17).

All rivers have their source in the rain of heaven, falling upon the earth and giving rise to springs and fountains, which eventually become great torrents or placid streams. The river of life itself

is dependent upon the symbolic "rain" from heaven.

Isaiah saw something of this when he spoke of the Spirit being poured from on high, and of the hail coming down low on the forest (Isa. 32, 15-20), and in the celebrated "Restitution" chapter, in which he cries: "In the wilderness shall waters break forth, and streams in the desert" (Isa. 35, 6-7). The desert which is this world can be restored to the beauty of Eden only by the rain from heaven; and the sin-stricken human race can be restored to the Divine likeness only by the Spirit falling from on high like gentle rain, and giving rise to the River of Life which comes forth from the sanctuary in Jerusalem.

There is to be no escape from this law. "*If the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain, upon them shall be no overflow,*" says verse 18 (Margolis rendering). It is a physical fact that Egypt receives almost no rain, and that its agriculture is entirely dependent upon the annual overflow of the Nile, which in July of every year flooded the whole country, and made possible the sowing and harvesting of crops. Thus did the prophet indicate that no nation upon earth, no community of men, however remote, will be able to escape the searching insistence of that Millennial Law. "It shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people" (Acts 3, 23).

So we are brought to the grand climax of the prophecy: "*In that day there shall be upon the bridle of every horse 'Holiness to the Lord God Almighty' (Septuagint) and the pots in the Lord's House shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord of Hosts . . . and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite (merchant, trafficker) in the house of the Lord of hosts*" (vs. 20-21).

A wonderful promise of full consecration and devotion to the service of God on the part of all humanity! Every article in daily use, every pot and every vessel in Jerusalem, is to be holy to the Lord. Every activity of mankind, in all their comings and goings, shall proclaim holiness to the Lord God Almighty, even as the jingling of horses' bridles draws attention to the actions of the rider. And a rare truth is enshrined in the promise that the pots in the Lord's House shall be *as* the bowls before the altar. Paul expressed the same thought when he said that "God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him—for star differeth from star in glory" (1 Cor. 15, 38 and 41). The "bowls

before the altar" were those which held the sacrificial blood, and were used for the sacred service within the Most Holy of the typical Tabernacle and Temple. The "pots in the Lord's House" were those employed in the more menial parts of the temple ceremonies in connection with the sacrifices offered on the Brazen Altar in the Court. When God's Plan for this earth is fully accomplished, there will be no regrets on the part of perfected men upon earth that they are not called to share the glorious destiny of the Church in the heavens. The golden bowls—the brasen (copper) pots—both will be supremely content and happy in their destined environment, both fulfilling their appointed place in God's creation, both realising that in the eyes of the Heavenly Father the earthly vessels are just as essential to Him as the heavenly vessels, just as dear to His heart, and just as near to Him in the privileges of communion; for there is no "favouritism" or respect of persons with God (Acts 10, 34 and 35).

The trafficker, the merchant? There is no place at all for such in the new world that is to be. The word "Canaanite" came to be applied to "trafficker" or "merchant". The land of Canaan, meaning "The lowlands", received its name long before Abraham entered, and because it was, even then, a land of merchants, the name came to indicate a merchant. For many thousands of years it was the trading centre of the earth, until Venice, Portugal, Holland, Britain and America, in turn, wrested commercial supremacy from the previous holder. Bargaining and trafficking led to rapacity and greed; men fought wars and conquered other peoples for the sake of material gain; to this day the insensate scramble goes on, and the great nations seek to wrest from each other those possessions which will give them control of the choice things of the earth, and vested interests continue to hold sway.

In the new order these things shall not be. In the day foreseen by Zechariah a new nation, in a new land, will have set a new example. In supreme faith they will have faced the unbelieving world with calm confidence in their God and without other defence; and God will have honoured their faith. A new spirit will have gone out amongst the nations; a new power will have taken control, and service, sacrifice, gifts for others will triumphantly replace the selfishness and greed which for so long has lain heavy upon the heart of man and separated him from his inheritance. The Golden Rule will be fully in operation, every man will be his brother's keeper, "*and in that day there shall be no more the trafficker in the House of the Lord of Hosts.*"

In the Days of the Patriarchs

*An excursion
into archæology*

PART I.

The period between Abraham and the Flood is one that has always been tantalising to Bible history students by reason of the very brevity of the Genesis narratives. During this whole period, some four hundred years if the Masoretic chronology is followed, or some twelve hundred years according to the Septuagint, the only events and incidents recorded are those of the Tower of Babel, the migration of the sons of Joktan, and the statements that Nimrod built a number of cities and Peleg was so named "because in his days was the earth divided". Not much for a period which saw the settlement of the "world that now is" by the descendants of Noah, the birth of three great races of mankind, and the development of at least four great civilisations! And when at last the Bible lifts the curtain in the days of Abraham, the earth has been peopled and those civilisations had seen their best days and were already in decline.

A century ago nothing whatever was known of the times before Abraham. Usher's chronology, with but a few minor variations, held the field and no one dreamed that the land which Abraham left to go to Canaan already had a long and glorious history. The patriarchs who lived between Noah and Abraham were usually pictured as simple pastoral folk living in tents and keeping flocks and herds. The few stories of kings and cities that lingered in traditions were put down as mythical legends and dismissed from serious consideration. It is perfectly true to say, as has been frequently said, that the earliest reliable historical date was the entry of Cyrus into Babylon and the end of the Jewish seventy years captivity in 536 B.C. Back of that, history became increasingly vague and unreliable.

Of course research continued. Archæologists have been busy digging up the past and are still doing so. Scholars and historians have been busy piecing together the fragmentary records that have been discovered and weighing up the evidence of the numerous relics that have come to light, and are still doing so. In consequence the science of history has expanded its scope immeasurably—and is still doing so. Accurate dating is being pushed ever farther back into the past and Bible records are being increasingly confirmed and illuminated. Twenty-five years ago reliable dates went back to 1000 B.C. To-day they go back to Abraham,

2000 B.C., and the rather vague, shadowy period which lies behind the "Father of the Faithful" is now being lighted up by the discoveries of the past ten years.

The purpose of this short treatise is to note some of these latest findings in their relation to the Bible record concerning the period from the end of the Flood to the departure of Abraham from Ur. In order to set things in their correct relation one to other it will be necessary occasionally to suggest certain approximate dates, but it must be understood that these dates are only tentative since there is no real agreement yet even among the authorities and very little reliable matter on which to base a definite system of dating before the time of Abraham. It may be more useful to set the various events against the background of the patriarchs' lives given in Gen. 11. In that chapter we have a connected chain of names, father to son, from Noah to Abraham, which we accept as a true historical record—the only really satisfactory link that exists—and if we can say that a certain event was probably toward the end of Shem's life and another when Terah was a small boy we shall probably convey a more intelligible picture than would be afforded by a string of dates.

The old question as to whether the Masoretic (Hebrew) chronology (427 years from the Flood to the Covenant) or the Septuagint (Greek) of something like 1,200 years, is the correct one, is outside the scope of this treatise and will not further be touched upon except to remark that the longer period is assumed in this series of notes probably to be nearer the truth.

Twenty years ago the world was electrified by the news of Sir Leonard Woolley's discovery, at Ur of the Chaldees, of an eight foot strata of water-laid clay, deep down below the city ruins, which betokened the catastrophe of a flood of gigantic proportions. Almost at the same time a similar discovery was reported at Kish, two hundred miles distant, and it soon became apparent that most of Mesopotamia is covered with this great "Flood layer". This was immediately hailed as concrete evidence of the Bible Deluge. Since, then, however, two more "flood layers" have been discovered, with definite evidence of several centuries'

civilised life between each of them, and it seems clear that Abraham's native land was visited by at least three, and perhaps more, devastating Deluges over a period of some centuries, many years before his own time. Beneath the earliest of these "layers" there has now come to light numerous relics of a still earlier race of men and if the bottom layer was indeed deposited by the Flood of Noah's day then we have here articles that were made by the ante-diluvians, the men who lived before the Flood. In any case, the discovery in Northern Mesopotamia, during the past ten years, of similar objects belonging to a much simpler and more primitive state of society than that which characterised Abraham's kinsfolk, enables us for the first time to trace, in reverse, as it were, the wanderings of the sons of Noah almost to the point where they emerged from the Ark in the "mountains of Ararat".

The setting for the whole of the events with which we shall have to do is the land through which the rivers Tigris and Euphrates flow on their way to the sea. Its modern name is Iraq and its name before the 1914 war was Mesopotamia. During later Old Testament times (Jacob to Malachi) the southern half was called Babylonia with its capital city Babylon, and the northern half Assyria with its capital city Nineveh. Before that, in the days of Abraham and earlier, it was known as "the land of Sumir and Akkad" ("Shinar" in the Old Testament) and whoever was strong enough to rule over at least a major part of the country styled himself "King of Sumir and Akkad." Sumir—normally written "Sumeria" in English books—was the low-lying part at the head of the Persian Gulf, its chief cities being Ur of the Chaldees, Eridu, Erech, Nisin, Nippur, and Larsa, and its people, the Sumerians, descendants of Ham. Akkad included the rest of the country, in which lay Babylon, Kish, Mari and the city Akkad. The Akkadians were descendants of Shem. The Sumerians at first occupied all the country but after the Semitic invasion the two races gradually fused into one people by inter-marriage and became the ancestors of the later Babylonians and Assyrians. Although it was the Semitic Akkadians who invaded and conquered the Hamitic Sumerians, the conquerors adopted Sumerian customs and habits until the entire people became virtually Sumerians, so that it is really correct to say that Terah and his son Abraham, natives of Sumerian Ur, although of Semitic descent were in fact Sumerians.

Genesis 10. 8-10 gives us the Biblical indication which enables us to place these events. Those verses speak of Nimrod, the "mighty hunter

before the Lord" and declare "the beginning of his kingdom was Babylon, and Erech, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar". These cities were real cities—their ruins still exist—and logically therefore Nimrod was a real person. Nimrod was of Hamitic descent and therefore of Sumerian race. "Shinar" is the Hebrew equivalent of "Sumir" and Babylon, in later days a Semitic stronghold, was in its first founding a Sumerian sacred city. (The original Sumerian name of Babylon was "Tin-tir-ki" meaning "the place of life" changed when the Semites gained possession to "Bab-ilu" (Greek "Babylon") meaning "the gate of the gods," not long before Abraham's time. Calneh was the Sumerian city of Nippur. Nimrod must therefore have lived at a time after these cities came into existence.

The only other thing said of Nimrod is that he was "a mighty hunter before the Lord". This does not mean, as has been often assumed, that a studied insult or affront to God is implied. Jewish rabbis and finally Josephus gave Nimrod a bad name and later Christian writers perpetuated it, but in fact the Hebrew expression merely means that what he did was as it were performed in the sight of God and with His definite knowledge, without involving either credit or discredit to Nimrod in the matter. The only name similar to Nimrod so far discovered in the inscriptions is that of a king who lived long after Abraham and he clearly cannot be the one intended. Sumerian legend, however, does tell of a mighty hero named Gilgamesh, "Lord of Erech", who performed deeds of valour in the sight of the gods, winning the favour of some of them and earning the enmity of others. This Gilgamesh is said to have lived at just that time which marks the end of what is called the "mythical" period of Sumerian history and just before the time when the kings and cities of whose existence definite proof exists come into view. Not long after the alleged exploits of "Gilgamesh lord of Erech" we have the written inscriptions of Mes-anni-padda, King of Ur, the earliest specimens of decipherable writing at present in the possession of scholars. It might well be therefore that the exploits of Nimrod, alluded to so briefly in the Book of Genesis, gave rise to the poetic legends of Gilgamesh which are so common in Sumerian literature.

For the present, then, we might say that Nimrod took a leading part in beginning to weld the cities of Sumir into an empire. This could well be just prior to the beginning of the period for which written documents have been found, and the cities of Sumir were just rising to city status from their original village settlements. Even so, these "cities"

were small by modern standards. Ur of the Chaldees, when it was the capital of the empire, only covered 150 acres and housed less than 24,000 people. We in England would call that a very small town; some American states might grant it the status of a city. In this case Nimrod would probably have lived about B.C. 2800, some five hundred years after the Flood, seven hundred before Abraham, and roughly when Eber and Peleg (Gen. 11. 16) were alive. Now it was between the times of Nimrod and Abraham that there occurred a most important event, having a direct effect on the outworking of the Divine Plan but not so much as mentioned in the Bible. That event was the mass invasion of Sumir by the descendants of Shem.

At the time to which the Tower of Babel story refers the tribes of Shem turned their way north-west and migrated into what is now known as Syria. The sons of Ham stayed where they were and over-spread the land, to which they gave the name of Sumir. But Noah had prophesied (Gen. 9. 25-26) that God would bless Shem, and Cainan—son of Ham—would be his servant, i.e., that the Semites would become masters of the Cainanite branch of the Hamite race. It is a most remarkable fulfilment of this prophecy that of Ham's sons, Mizraim's tribes migrated to Lower Egypt by way

of the desert and became Egyptians, Phut went eastward to the mountains where the tribal name lingered for centuries, the Cush tribes went south-east along both shores of the Persian Gulf, ending up in the Indian Punjab on the one hand where they set up a Sumerian civilisation of their own which lasted until Aryan tribes from the North wiped it out in the days of Abraham, and across South Arabia into Abyssinia on the other hand where they survive to-day in part as the modern Nubians and Ethiopians. Cainan apparently remained, and the Sumerians were mainly of his stock, and true to prophecy were eventually ruled by, and forced to serve, the triumphant sons of Shem.

The general picture we have, therefore, is that of a united journey of Noah's sons and their descendants of one or two generations from Ararat to Babel, where they separated, the sons of Ham alone remaining in the land and building its great cities and setting up a civilisation remarkable for its artistic and constructional achievement. Centuries later the tribes of Shem, who had grown up in Syria, invaded the land of Ham and after many centuries of strife became united as one race with the sons of Ham. That is how Abraham, of the line of Shem, came to be born in Ur of the Chaldees, a Hamitic city.

To be continued.

THE BURNING BUSH

"And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt." (Exod. 3, 2-3.)

It was "in the backside of the desert" somewhere in the wilds of Sinai, that Moses saw this strange thing. A more recent traveller through that same district, Louis Golding, in his book *"In the steps of Moses the Lawgiver"* has given a vivid description of something he himself witnessed which may have been the very means used by God to reveal Himself to Moses those many years ago.

"I am at this point compelled to quote the apparition of a Burning Bush which was so exact a rendering of the strange and lovely marvel described in the Bible, that I quite literally was afraid to trust my eyes. The apparition lasted several seconds, and though I was aware of its exact rationale while it endured, I still said to myself it was mirage or inward fancy. The thing happened "in the back of the wilderness" in one

of the wadis under the flank of Sinai. It was the evening of a hot and windy day. As we approached the arena where two or three wadis debouched, the winds met, and, joining forces, became a cyclone, a tall pillar of air violently rotating on its axis, its whole length defined by the sand it sucked up from the dry wadi bed. In the centre of this arena was a large thorny acacia, the only tree which grows in these regions. The sun had for some minutes been hidden behind a long bank of cloud. It remained hidden until the cyclone reached the acacia. Then in the moment the cyclone possessed itself of the tree, the sun hurled its rays obliquely upon their embrace. The whole tree went up in flame. The smoke of it soared in golden gusts. Every thorn was a spit of fire.

"It continued so for several seconds. It seemed as if the cyclone was impaled on the sharp spikes of the branches. It turned and thrust and thrust again. The bush burned with fire, and was not consumed. Then at last the cyclone freed itself, and went hurtling along one of the wadis. The tree was no more than a thorny acacia again, arid and lonely in the centre of the hills."

He shall give His Angels charge!

A discourse on Psa. 91. 11.

To the vivid mind of the Apostle Paul the existence of Satan was a very real thing. Nowhere in any of his letters does Paul suggest that the "Prince of the power of the Air" was only an imaginary being. In every reference to Satan, Paul conveys the idea as strongly as words can possibly convey, that he is the great personal Evil Spirit, into whose hands, as the Prince of this world, the rulership of this present evil world has been committed. He also calls him "the God of this world" (or age) (2 Cor. 4; 4). For many years this clear-cut conception has been losing its sharp distinction among Christian people, and even theologians have been known to state that all evil is *impersonal*. To the Lord Jesus, and the Apostles, Satan was assuredly no mere impersonation of evil, but an evil personality; as truly personal as the Archangel Michael who called down the Lord's rebuke upon him. (Jude 5; 9.)

From the earliest pages of the Divine records Satan is shown as an instigator of evil (John 8; 44), as one having the power of death (Heb. 2; 14), as one employing cunning "wiles" (or stratagems) and as an accuser of righteously-inclined people. God has given him great latitude, even allowing him and his evil co-labourers to slay the saints of God.

Taking full advantage of God's permission Satan has produced a world-order in which evil is the predominant factor; so much so that Paul describes it as "this present evil world" (Gal. 4; 4). This world-order, passing on from generation to generation, has corrupted, for centuries, the words, thoughts and activities of nearly all the human race. But for the grace of God working in the hearts of the saintly few, this corruption would have been complete. Institutions created under the Satanic influence by one generation, become the swaddling-bands to bind and fetter the next and future generations. The strait-jacket of custom is there when we are born, and it is tightly laced about us from our earliest days.

Both in and out of "Society" strict conventions are rigidly applied from which neither education nor illiteracy afford release. Deeper than any other national trait is the tendency to follow in "father's footsteps" or to do as "Mother" did. Life runs in grooves, worn deeper with each succeeding generation. Thus with the first breath, the child comes under the control of a regime behind which is the cunning seductive mind of the Prince of this world; this world-order—with

its many ramifications. It is because men have become accustomed to this general situation, and attribute it to "heredity" and "the glorious past" that the recognition of Satan's personality tends to become blurred and indistinct. Too much emphasis is laid upon the "trend of things," and not enough upon the design of this world's affairs. The "it" of sequence too often displaces the "him" who designs it. Good indeed would it be for the world if they could realise that the crises of life are produced more by Satanic design than by the drift of circumstances.

It is vitally imperative for the Christian to realise "what" or "who" he is "up against" in his daily warfare. It is no opposition of a mere impersonal principle, but of a cunning highly-placed adversary. There is the mental calibre of a Spirit mind—more comprehensive in its range and more subtle in its operation, than the mind of mere man. And that cunning mind is fortified by many centuries of experience. It has the advantage too, of seeing but of remaining unseen by its earthly opponent. It is a real foe; perilously real; an actual, personal, veritable opponent, bent upon the destruction—if God allow—of every child of God.

No child of God should be afraid to realise this fact. It should not cause fear or terror in even the least of God's saints. No matter how vividly or realistically the mind can visualise the existence or the nearness or the malignancy of Satan, there is not the slightest need for alarm. It is one of the greatest phases of victory in the Christian life, to be consciously aware of the unseen presence of a malignant foe, and yet know no fear or disquiet of soul thereat. It bespeaks a courage—a self-control—born of true faith, to realise the perils, and yet to remain unperturbed and undismayed. The Holy Spirit is thus bearing a rich fruitage in the heart.

It has ever been God's desire to produce in His people this rest of soul, by assuring them that He and His heavenly messengers are much more than a match for all Satan's cunning and malignant power. From Psalmist days God has encouraged His people by telling them that His angels (even legions of angels) encamp round about them that reverence Him, in order to deliver them. By Apostolic pen, God has assured us that they are ministering spirits sent forth to minister to the heirs of Salvation. And every angelic minister, authorised and equipped with Divine Power is just

as real and personal and as veritably present as the hosts of wickedness. Jesus once said "their angels do always behold the face of my Father" (Matt. 18: 10). Their angel! As though every child of God were attended by an unseen body-guard, whose mission is to superintend the details of life's experiences allowing Satan to come near enough to test, but not to injure God's little ones. It is probably because we are not admonished to pray to the Guardian Angels, nor yet to seek contact with them, that we may not be so keenly aware of their presence with us; or it may be, though reading these promises, we forget to apply them, and fail to see, like Gehazi, till the Lord graciously opens our eyes, the chariots of the Lord, and the horsemen thereof, (2 Kings 6: 17) filling the heavens around us. As the difficulties of the way surround our future pathway, and we see indications of unrestrained fury manifested by Satan and his evil hosts, it will be an act of grace toward each other to remind one and all that the invincible armies of heaven are not one whit less personal, nor one bit more distant from our side than the evil forces on the other side. "He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways." On behalf of each child of God, old or young, weak or strong, these

Divinely-sent ministers, who come invisibly near, are equipped with Divine Power, and are commissioned by a loving gracious Father to look after His children, and keep the opposing evil forces, at just such distance that they may test, but not injure.

But while it cannot be other than comforting to know of this angelic body-guard, God has provided additional means whereby we may be protected from the subtle snares of the great "deceiver." The Devil's weapons are mainly in the form of untruths. To protect against these God has provided an armour of Truth; a full equipment to cover both heart and mind. "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." This is the part we must give attention to, deliberately and consciously; leaving the safety of our person in the hand of God and His messengers. Thus equipped with the Truth within, and protected by the angelic body-guard without, we should be able to look out on the most dangerous crises of life, with great peace of heart, assuring each other in fullest confidence, that though devils rage and men run riot, all things are still working together for good under God's protecting hand.

FOSSIL THEOLOGY—*A few words that will bear thinking about*

A lump of coal showing on its surface, in delicate tracery, the form of a fern or fish, is prized by the geologist as a specimen of the vegetation or fauna of a very remote period in the day of creation. Such a fossil is valuable as a connecting link between the dead past and living present, possessing no other value except to be burned.

In the world of theology we find many such relics of bygone ages fossilised in the form of liturgies, creeds, confessions of faith, etc., many of them originating in the Carboniferous period of religious knowledge, the "Dark Ages", which, apart from their value as antiquities, representing the mind and practice of the religious systems of their day, are of no use whatever, except as fuel.

*"For what so fiercely burns
As a dry creed that nothing ever learns?"*

It is remarkable that in this age of progress and development, men of education and intelligence should shape their thoughts and teachings after the pattern of these Theological Fossils, which are as devoid of life as the petrification that we find in the museum duly classified and labelled.

In the advanced light of medical science of to-day, the physician who would follow the old system of bleeding, pilling and blistering, and

confine his patient in a dark, ill-ventilated room would be denounced not only as an "old fogey", but as a fool, since medical colleges are continually experimenting and opening up new avenues of knowledge as to the causes and cure of disease. In like manner, theology can learn nothing so long as the minds of its teachers are moulded and shaped by the petrified dogmas of their ancestors. He who receives his credentials as a denominational teacher is not a free man if he is bound to accept as the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, the complications of doctrines handed down to him from the "fathers" of his denomination. What these men, hundreds of years ago, declared to be truth is truth, to which nothing can be added and from which nothing can be taken away. No matter what light advanced scholarship may have thrown upon the inspired Word; no matter what science may have revealed; no matter what new truths the servants of God may have brought forth from the store-house; the religious instructor of to-day must shut his eyes to the light, and stop his ears from hearing strange or new sounds, and submissively bow to the teachings of antiquated theologians, priests, and prelates as though their voice were the voice of God. There is no idolatry that has more submissive devotees than has this

worship of the stocks and stones of Fossil Theology; there is no tyranny more oppressive than is the tyranny of creed.

How is this accounted for? Very easily. Denominations are formed about the teachings of some man or set of men. These teachings are accepted as the quintessence of truth; preachers are instructed in these doctrines, and ordained to teach them; colleges are endowed to perpetuate them, and the graduate from these schools, before being authorised to preach, must subscribe to the system of practice and doctrine taught, and agree to teach the same. He is not a free man. He dare not turn either to the right or to the left under penalty of losing his commission, and with it the means of gaining a livelihood. Instead of building upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone, the foundation is human; and the

Divine injunction applies with terrific force: "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men".

There is little wonder that spiritual deadness is characteristic of so many churches, with fussy Uzzas reaching out their hands to steady the ark of the Lord; with inquisitorial ecclesiastics snuffing out the light of truth as soon as it shows its first feeble rays, and then compelling those who hunger and thirst after righteousness and truth to accept their dead forms and creeds, or else look elsewhere to have their cravings satisfied. Thank God that His truth is not committed to such hands, but is as free as the water of life to all who will go to the fountain to drink. Divine truth is not in dead forms and compiled dogmas, but it is liberty and life in Christ Jesus.

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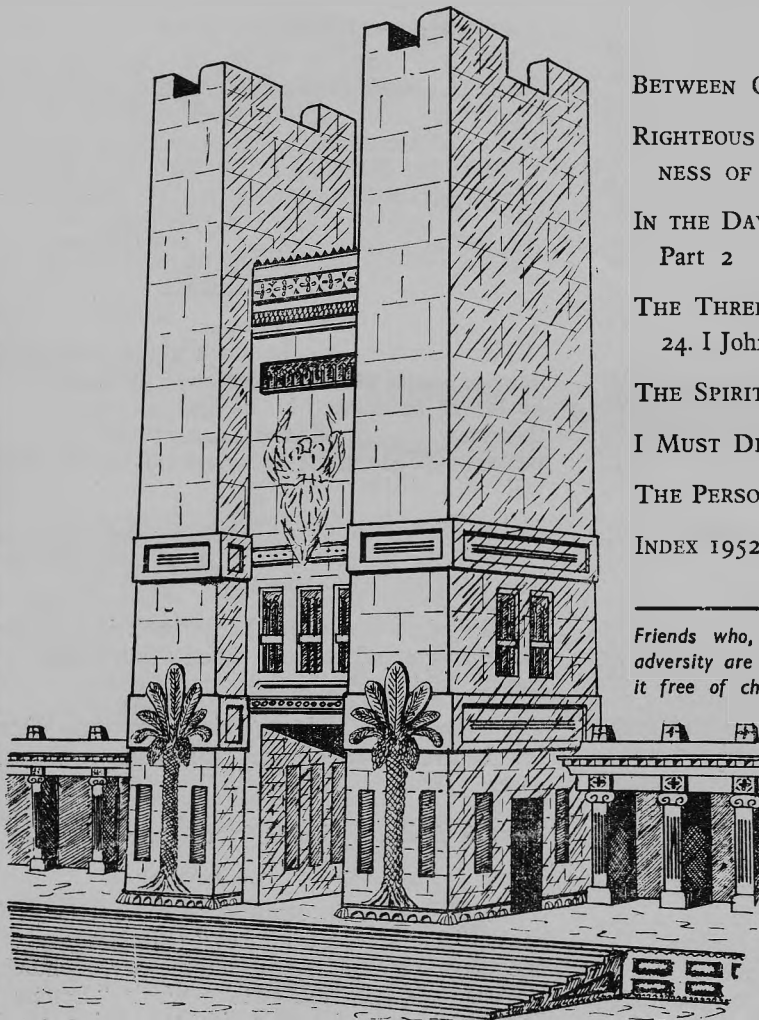


BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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

Vol. 29, No. 12

DECEMBER, 1952



CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----|
| BETWEEN OURSELVES | 178 |
| RIGHTEOUS REPROOF AND FORGIVENESS OF WRONG | 179 |
| IN THE DAYS OF THE PATRIARCHS Part 2 | 182 |
| THE THREE EPISTLES OF JOHN 24. I John 5. 3-5 | 184 |
| THE SPIRIT OF THE COVENANT ... | 186 |
| I MUST DECREASE | 188 |
| THE PERSONALITY OF PAUL... .. | 190 |
| INDEX 1952 | 191 |

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.

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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 meeting at Caxton Hall held on the 18th October was of a special nature in that the brethren gathered chiefly to join together in prayer for our Master's leading as to the future of that meeting. It was a disappointment to find, too late for announcement to be made, that Bro. Linter, who had been expected to speak, was unable to be present. His place was taken at short notice by Bro. Jennings. The prayer meeting lasted for three-quarters of an hour and in that time many present felt that there was a sincere endeavour to discern and follow the will of the Lord. The result of such a period of "waiting upon the Lord" can only be seen later on; it is necessary to "stand still and see the salvation of God", but there is every confidence on the part of those who have the welfare of this meeting at heart that the right way will be made plain. The ministry of the Word which followed the prayer meeting was deeply appreciated by many, and probably by all. Before the meeting closed, Brother Lodge presided over a short discussion during which it was intimated that the gathering at Caxton Hall would continue at least for the next two months and that by that time it might be expected that a clear lead for the future would be evident.

In harmony with this, there will be a meeting at Caxton Hall, at 6.30 p.m., on Saturday, 20th December, to which all our brethren who appreciate this opportunity of fellowship and worship are warmly invited.

The Council of Activity for the North-west, which is primarily concerned with active witness, held its annual meeting in Bolton on 11th October, at which Bros. F. Musk, G. Heap, L. Sinclair, F. Hindle and H. Chrimes were chosen to serve on the committee of the Council. The Council is anxious to assist friends in their area desiring to hold witness efforts in their own towns and such brethren are invited to write the Council secretary, Bro. F. Musk, 14, South Street, Newchurch, Rossendale, Lancs.

At this season of the year the Benevolent Committee are busy making special arrangements for a little Christmas cheer for some of the old folk in our midst. Gifts and all communications should be sent to Bro. E. Allbon, 20, Sunnymede Drive, Ilford, Essex, and all such will be gratefully acknowledged. It is deemed proper to say at this point that the Bible Fellowship Union has no responsibility for the Benevolent Fund whatever, but is glad to assist its work by publishing an

occasional notice such as this. Consequently it is requested that all communications do go to Brother Allbon as above suggested and not to Welling.

* * *

Bro. F. Lardent has a new type of monthly wall calendar for 1953, size 10in. by 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (the "*Christian Home Calendar*"), having one sheet per month with picture in black and white of English countryside scenes, with text for each day. The price including postage, is 2/3d. each, three for 6/3d., five for 10/-. Please order direct from Bro. F. Lardent, 174, Forest Hill Road, London, S.E.23.

* * *

We now have a stock of Christmas cards generally similar to those offered last year and can supply at once. Please order early if possible. The cards are complete with envelopes, in packets of 10 at the following prices, post free, the cards in each packet being of well-assorted values.

4/3 5/- 6/- 7/-

If the desired packet is out of stock we will send other cards of value of remittance.

* * *

The bookroom has in stock a few odd copies, new, of books which are no longer in print or will no longer be stocked by us, and in order to clear these few we are offering them at half price plus postage. When these are gone no further copies will be available.

Oxford Reference Bible. Minion Clarendon type. Moroccoette yapp, 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 1 inch, one copy only available, 15/- post free.

The Pilgrim's Progress. Large book in handsome modern type and modern tinted illustrations. 313 pages, 7/6d.

The Man who did not sin (Newman Watts). Imaginative story of the Millennial Age. 150 pages, 3/6d.

Scottish Metrical Psalter (words only). 2/6d.

* * *

We now have in stock once more two useful books, "The Seven Churches" (Blacklock), a very fine paper covered treatise on the seven churches of Asia, 5/- p.f., and Arthur Way's "Letters of St. Paul", a modern English translation of the Pauline Epistles and Hebrews, 11/- p.f. Both books are recommended to students and the general reader.

Righteous Reproof and Forgiveness of Wrong

An essay on an important problem of Christian living.

"Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head."—Psa. 141. 5.

In the Scriptures, the word righteous is used in a two-fold sense. In one sense, *absolute righteousness* is referred to, as when we read, "There is none righteous, no, not one". In the text under consideration the intimation is given that our Lord Jesus is the Righteous One who smites. In this sense, of course, the chastisements would come from our Lord; and the one chastised would receive them with appreciation, knowing that the Wisdom, Justice and Love of God are connected with such reproof. But there is a secondary use of the word righteous, applying to mankind. Various persons are spoken of in the Scriptures as being righteous, not because they were perfect, but because they were right-intentioned, right-willed, and manifested in their conduct the Spirit of God, the spirit of righteousness.

In this use of the word righteous, the text seems to imply that all who are the Lord's people should be able to give reproof and correction in righteousness in a manner that would be helpful to those corrected, and for their good; in a way that would bring a measure of comfort and blessing and refreshment; in a manner that would be like excellent or fragrant oil, whose perfume would linger for hours. With this thought before our minds, there is a valuable lesson here. First of all, we should be of those who receive the corrections as of the Lord, and who are glad to be set right if we are wrong in any manner; secondly, we should be of those who recognise that if reproof be proper to *give*, it should be of a kind that would not be injurious, but such as would be spiritual, uplifting and refreshing.

In order to accomplish this end a reproof should be sympathetic. We should remember that all of the Lord's people are fallen according to the flesh, but are New Creatures in Christ; and, if they be New Creatures in Christ, they have the mind of the Lord and desire to glorify Him. Any of the brethren giving a reproof from this point of view would recognise that the person reproved had not bad intentions, and would explain as gently and kindly as possible what are the real facts. A reproof of this kind should not be given suddenly; the person reproofing should judge of the proper

time, as of the Lord. Thus should any one that is righteous do in administering reproof to another. It should be done only after careful consideration and prayer, and after having arrived at the conclusion that this is the best possible way to help the brother or the sister. If all reproof were given under such conditions we may readily suppose that it would be much more helpful than is the usual reproof.

The expression, it "shall not break my head", would mean that a reproof should not be disastrous, not be crushing, but it should be anointing or blessing. To crush the head would be to kill the person. The righteous are not in the world for the purpose of doing injury to others or of harming them, but for doing good in the world. Those who injure others are to that extent unrighteous. Those who use their criticism and reproof, etc., so as to exercise a crushing effect upon the reproved are not righteous. Such should learn how to properly administer criticism. They should learn that the Apostle's statement, "reprove", "rebuke", etc., was not made to all of God's people, but to Timothy, who was an Elder. And only those should be chosen as Elders who are men of moderation, men of development, men who have learned to control their own lives and their own tongues, so that they would not crush, but that their rebuke would be helpful and intended to draw the person nearer to the Lord, and to be encouraging and helpful generally.

When St. Paul instructed Timothy not to rebuke an elder, but to entreat him as a father, the Apostle did not refer to an Elder of the congregation, but a person older than one's self. Do not rebuke a person older than yourself. Treat him as a father; likewise the elder women as mothers; and the younger men as brothers, and the younger women as sisters. In other words, an Elder is not appointed in the Church to brow-beat or to trample down the liberties of others. The spirit of kindness, gentleness, is the Holy Spirit. If an Elder rebukes in another spirit than this, he should remember that the person rebuked is not a child and should not be treated as a child—not reprimanded or denounced or told "This is all wrong!". Such an unwise course in administering a rebuke is a fruitful cause of difficulty.

It would not be wise or kind or gentle for a younger person to lose patience with older people

whom he feels should know about a matter and to say, "You ought to know all about this. I will give you a lesson". This kind of spirit has made difficulty in various places. Apparently the Apostle's remark is to the opposite of this course of conduct, and exhorts to kindness, gentleness, consideration of age and everything that might enter into the matter. It is very evident from different Scriptures that there was a family sympathy in olden times that we do not see exemplified to-day, as shown in the Apostle's statement: "*Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren; the elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters*". 1. Tim. 5. 1, 2.

In 2. Tim. 4. 2 the Apostle, as a minister of the grace of God, explains that the declaration of the Gospel may include three features: (1) reproof; (2) rebuke; (3) exhortation. But it is safe to caution all of the Lord's people against too liberal use of the first two features. In order to reprove properly, the heart should be very full of love and sympathy; else the reproofs and rebukes might be sharp and possibly do more harm than good. Even with the heart full of love, it requires a head that is exceedingly well balanced to be able to make use of reproofs and rebukes to good advantage to those who really need them. And herein God's people are to be "wise as serpents, harmless as doves". Exhortation is the form of service which quite evidently can best be used by the majority of the Lord's people. And even this form, as well as the other efforts, should be characterised by patience, long-suffering, brotherly-kindness.

"*Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him.*" (Luke 17. 3, 4.)

God does not forgive our sins until we acknowledge them and ask His forgiveness. Our Lord expressly states the propriety of expecting those who trespass against us to make some acknowledgment of their fault before we express our full forgiveness. If he "turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him".

On the other side of the question, however, a caution is necessary. The Christian is to have the loving, generous disposition of heart, a copy of the Heavenly Father's disposition. In trivial affairs he is to have so much sympathy and love that he will take no notice of the little wrongs, just as God for Christ's sake deals with us, unless it represents knowledge and wilfulness. Such a rule operating amongst Christians—a determination not to recog-

nise as offence anything that is not purposely done or intended as an offence—would be a great blessing to all, and the proper, God-like course. The transgressions to which our Lord refers are not trivial affairs, things of no consequence, are not evil surmises or imaginings, are not fancied insults, but positive wrongs done us, which are susceptible of proofs and on account of which it is our duty, kindly and lovingly and wisely, to give some proper rebuke—some intimation that we recognise the wrong and that it has grieved us and hurt us. Then comes the Divine rule respecting the one and only proper manner of rebuke given by our Lord. (Matt. 18. 15-17.) Our Lord intimates that disobedience of His commands evidences a lack in discipleship. Though He gave very few specific commandments, this command which He carefully marked out as the one, only way of adjusting a grievance, is utterly ignored by many advanced Christians.

The disposition to forgive should be with us always, and should be manifested by us at all times. Our loving generosity and kindness and desire to think no evil—or as little as possible—should be shown in all the words and acts of life. This course is God-like. God had a kind, benevolent, generous sentiment toward us, even while we were yet sinners. Nor did He wait for the sinners to ask forgiveness, but promptly manifested His desire for harmony and His readiness to forgive. The whole Gospel message is to this effect: "Be ye reconciled to God." Our hearts should be so full of this disposition toward forgiveness that our faces would not have a hard look, nor our words of reproof a bitter sting. On the contrary, they should manifest the loving forgiveness that we should have in our hearts at all times.

Our Lord particularly called attention to the difference between an outward and formal expression of forgiveness with smooth words, and the true forgiveness which is from the heart. The former, or outward forgiveness is only lip-deep, and means that a rankling of an evil, unforgiving spirit is within, and that it will be only a matter of time until the pent-up force of malice and hatred will break forth in words of slander. God reads the heart, and, whatever the lip-professions may be, He will not consider these unless the heart and the life correspond with them. It is vain, therefore, that anyone should say, "I love my brother", and at the same time seek, either by word or act, to do him injury. All the evil-speaking, malice, hatred, envy, strife, proceed from evil in the heart; hence the necessity, on the part of all who desire to be of the Lord's "Body," that they "purge out the old leaven of malice" that they may be members indeed of the unleavened loaf—the Body of Christ.

Forgiveness "in your hearts" is the condition which is always to obtain there. We should never harbour any other feeling than that of forgiveness and good-will toward all, no matter how seriously they may have trespassed against us. If this be the case, we shall be longing and anxious to exercise the forgiveness outwardly and to express it to the repentant ones. Hence we shall not seek to compel the most elaborate statement on the part of the penitent; but, like the father of the prodigal, to see the repentant one coming in an attitude of humility will touch our hearts and prompt us to go out part way to meet him, to forgive him, to greet him kindly and to put on the robe of fullest fellowship and brotherhood.

"If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matt. 6. 15.)

Our earliest definition of "Injure not" would probably have been that we should not kill or wound our enemies physically; but as we look at the Teacher and heed His words we hear Him say, "Learn of Me", and we note with the Apostle that though He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth, yet, "*When He was reviled He reviled not again [in return]; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed His cause to Him that judgeth righteously.*" (1 Pet. 2. 22, 23.)

If we are faithful pupils it will not be long until we see that the perfect law of liberty, the law of Christ, is a discernor of the very thoughts and intents of the heart; and that while we must hate all sin, we cannot hate any sinner and yet have the love of God perfected in our hearts. We see that this means, not only that we must not retaliate and revile our foes, but that we must not even wish to do so. The evil wish must be conquered and the selfish conditions which gave it birth must be utterly destroyed and replaced with love—the Spirit of Christ.

We may learn a lesson from the fact that those two grand characters, John the Baptist and our Lord, each fulfilled his own mission, according to the Divine arrangement; but that they had different missions. John's mission was pre-eminently that of a reprover and reformer, and we are to understand that as a Prophet he was supernaturally guided in respect to the various features of the course he took. Our Lord's mission, on the contrary, was a different one; He was gathering to Himself those whom John's ministry served to arouse to righteousness and to zeal to know and to do the Lord's will.

We are to be *copies of God's dear Son*, our Lord, and not to be copies of John the Baptist. We are not to stir up strife by trying to mind

other people's business, nor to seek to govern all the affairs of this world, reproving emperors, kings, or governors; but, on the contrary, we are exhorted by the Apostle to remember that what God sees fit to permit, we can see fit to endure. Even though we find many things which we cannot endorse, we may equally find ourselves able to avoid any special denunciation of them—especially of things which have no bearing whatever upon the proper understanding and fulfilling of the Lord's Word. The Apostle points out the proper position saying, "*As much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.*" And our Lord emphasised the same thought, saying, "*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.*" (Rom. 12. 18; Matt. 5. 9.)

Some of the holiest of the Lord's people err on this subject in their own families, and needlessly arouse prejudice and opposition, and make their homes unhappy, by continually finding fault with things which, though not up to the standard of saintliness and cross-bearing, are, nevertheless, not immoral or wicked, even in tendency. Parents and guardians are surely to guard against all tendencies toward immorality, etc., but to find fault with those they love, merely because they are only nominal Christians and have the spirit of worldliness, is certainly unwise. The general life of peace and joy in the Holy Spirit is the very best reproof of worldliness they can give, and the very best commendation of the glorious Gospel they profess. This is the epistle that will be read, the light that will reprove darkness.

In other words, we must not expect from, nor try to force upon the unconsecrated the details of our own self-denials. We must wait until they shall see full consecration to be their "reasonable service" and present their bodies living sacrifices to God. Pastors and teachers, however, should seek to keep continually before the Lord's consecrated "flock" the high Scripture standard, realising that many influences are continually at work to lower the standard of holiness and devotion.

How highly we, who belong to the Gospel Dispensation, should value its privileges and opportunities, seeking to "make our calling and election sure!" (2 Pet. 1. 4-11.) If those who were called with an earthly calling, to be a "house of servants", rendered but a reasonable service when they engaged in the Lord's work zealously, as did John the Baptist, and were faithful, how much more zeal and energy ought we to put forth—we who have been favoured so much more highly? "*What manner of persons ought we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness!*" (2 Pet. 3. 11.)

Let us remember that this "high calling", this "heavenly calling", to joint-heirship with our Lord in the Kingdom, is a very special and a very limited call, that it will soon end, and that so far as the Divine revelation shows, it will never be repeated.

In view of these things, let us lay aside every weight, and run with patience the race set before us in the Gospel, looking unto Jesus the author, until He shall have become the finisher, of our faith. (Heb. 12. 1.)

In the Days of the Patriarchs

An excursion
into archæology

PART 2.

The history of Sumir and Akkad prior to the time of Abraham is divided by the experts into what are known as the "historical" and "mythical" periods. The historical period is that for which concrete evidence exists in the form of written records—baked clay tablets inscribed with cuneiform writing—which have been dug up in thousands, translated, sorted, classified and pieced together so as to make a tolerably well connected history. The farther one goes back before Abraham the more uncertain become the actual dates of the various events, but the nature and order of those events is tolerably well established, so much so that several fair sized books now exist relating the histories of those times in detail.

Behind this "historical" period lies the mythical period which includes all the legends and poetic compositions referring to people and events the existence of which has not as yet been confirmed by contemporary inscriptions. Portions of this "mythical" period are constantly being taken into the "historical" period as fresh discoveries are made. Thus thirty years ago the earliest contemporary inscriptions were those of Sargon of Akkad, three generations before Abraham, and the names of Mes-anni-padda and A-anni-padda, kings of Ur long before the time of Sargon, were considered legendary and having no basis in fact. Then in 1924 tablets written in the days of those kings were discovered, and the beginning of the historical period was moved back two hundred years.

Somewhere back in that "mythical" period we who accept the Bible as true must expect to find the point where post-diluvian history began with the emergence of Noah and his sons from the Ark. Assyriologists normally do not take the Bible into their calculations and from the very beginning of archæological exploration in the East it has been customary to assume a long period of many thousands of years for the development of Sumerian civilisation. It must be obvious, however, that if these peoples did in fact spring from Shem and Ham we should expect eventually to get back to a time when the magnificent cities and gigantic irriga-

tion works did not exist, when life was on a simpler scale and men were just beginning to rebuild the earth that had been devastated by the Deluge. Until the last fifteen or twenty years no such indications had been found; explorers were continually discovering earlier and earlier relics, but all betokening an advanced civilisation of city dwellers. Gadd, in his "*History and Monuments of Ur*" had said in 1929, "*In Sumir, the works of earlier ages, as they successively became known, differ from their descendant counterparts no wise so much as in their higher excellence . . . In their flourishing days and at their lavish court the arts of manufacture rose to a perfection and beauty in their products which was never seen again . . . It is as if men not only invented nothing more than they had at the first received from Oannes, but even missed some of the virtue, as they moved from the source of their inspiration.*" (Oannes, or Ea, the sea god, was the legendary author of Sumerian civilisation.)

The latest discoveries have changed all that. The commencement of city-building is now established to have been at the time of the First Dynasty of Ur, about five hundred years before Abraham and during the lifetime of Eber (Gen. 11. 16-17.) Before that time there were only villages, the houses being simple structures built of bricks made by mixing clay with chopped reeds. These villages, or rather, their remains, are found well below the ruins of the grand cities and stand on virgin soil, at the bottom of all the accumulations due to human habitation. There is nothing earlier in all Sumeria. These were the homes of the first settlers in the south land after the Flood.

But there are earlier settlements in the North. Mallowan in 1933 found evidence of a people living a simpler life still, not in Sumeria proper, but towards the north in Assyria. This phase of human life has been named the Halafian, from the district of Halaf, where the first discoveries were made. The Halafians seem to have had no metal but they excelled in building and in making pottery. Their material resources were evidently

very limited but they were by no means barbaric or primitive. They were civilised men and women.

Finally, Lloyd and Safar in 1945 found the remains of the earliest settlements yet discovered, nearer still to the Armenian mountains, and called this period the "Hassuna period". The settlements are small in size and few in number; this was by no means a populous age in the country's history.

Here then at last, archaeological discovery begins to illuminate the journey of Noah's posterity, from Ararat to Abraham. The Ark grounded, as we know, in the mountainous districts of Kurdistan-Armenia as it was formerly known. "Ararat" is the Hebrew name for Armenia, "Urartu" in the Babylonian language. It does not much matter which is the particular mountain; in any case Noah's sons must have made their way south-eastward along the great rivers, Tigris or Euphrates, to reach the fertile plains below. The Hassuna period, found in the foothills of these mountains, might very reasonably represent the settlements of the first generation. The Halafian settlements fill the place of the next stage in their journeying, perhaps about the time of Noah's death, three hundred and fifty years after the Flood. Next in order in the Bible account would come the dispersion at the Tower of Babel, when Ham's posterity remained in the land, that of Shem went north-west to Syria and of Japhet north-east into Asia and Europe. True to this, the Ubaid culture (so-called from Al-Ubaid, near Ur, where it was first discovered) which followed the Halafian, is found scattered over a wide area from the Persian Gulf, north into the Kurdish mountains and westward into Syria. It is in this period that the first bricks are found; the earlier settlers built with dried mud and mud plaster, which is significant when we remember the words of the Tower builders in Gen. 11. 3, "*Let us make brick and burn them thoroughly.*" The building of the Tower could in that case have been a century or so after the death of Noah but before the death of Shem. At about the same time was founded the first of the cities of Sumir, Eridu, the holy city of the Sumerians. It was no more than a village at first, but in later times it became one of the most powerful cities of the land and boasted a great Temple to Ea the sea-god. This Ea, or Oannes, was reputed in legend to have come up out of the sea to teach the people the arts of agriculture and civilisation. Perhaps there was a dim memory here of Noah, the man who came through the Flood and started a new world. From now on for the next few centuries the sons of Ham had the land to themselves while the Semites were increasing and

spreading out in Syria, and it is during this period that Sumerian history becomes definite and the "historical" period begins, the cities are built, kings reign, and war begins. It is interesting to note that throughout the earliest stages, the Hassuna and Halaf periods, there is no sign that men fought each other, no war weapons found, no trace in the various works of art, pictures modelled in clay or painted on pottery, that such a thing as war had entered men's minds. It is only when city life begins and the names of kings appear, that the remains of weapons are found and references to war begin to figure in the records. It would seem from this that Noah's posterity lived peaceably among themselves for three or four hundred years at least.

Two hundred years later and the history of Ur commences with Mes-anni-padda its first king, Arphaxad the son of Shem being now dead and Eber, who is eventually to lead the migration of Semitic tribes back to Sumeria, about two hundred years old. From this time onward there was more or less continual warfare between the native Sumerians, sons of Ham, and the invading Semites, sons of Shem. Each succeeding century brought fresh waves of Semitic peoples down the Euphrates to contend for a share in the fertile plains of Sumeria, until the time of the birth of Terah, Abraham's father, at Ur. From then on the two peoples gradually coalesced into one race, worshipping the gods of the Sumerians, and remembering the great deliverance which God had wrought for them in the days of their ancestors Shem and Ham only in the shape of miserably distorted legends and traditions so far removed from the truth as to be almost unrecognisable.

But some men throughout all those years had kept the faith. The stories of Creation, of the Flood, of the Tower of Babel, all these were preserved in the form we have them in Genesis so that one day Abraham could take them with him out of Ur and into the country God was going to show him, and make them the beginnings of the Book we revere so much.

Who are the unknown men who preserved these stories for Abraham? There are certain clues in the Book of Genesis. Internal evidence shows that the story of Eden as we have it was most certainly written down by a man living in one of the cities on the Euphrates; either Babylon or Shuruppak or Erech or Eridu or Ur. He made a grammatical mistake when mentioning the name of one of the rivers of Eden which shows him to be unfamiliar with the Akkadian language; he was therefore either a native Sumerian, of Ham, or else a Semite whose forbears had lived in the country for a long

time. Some at least of Abraham's forefathers were idolators, we know from the words of Joshua, and not likely to be interested in preserving the true stories of Creation and the Flood. It might well be that these stories were written down by earlier patriarchs, Shem or Noah or Peleg, and the records preserved until the time of Abraham, but we have no means of knowing what type of writing or writing material they used. The earliest written tablets found are in a strange pictographic script, which has not yet been deciphered, and

these belong to a period which could well correspond to the death of Shem. Nothing definite is known about that period. All we do know is that when Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees he brought with him some priceless written records, preserved by God during all those centuries of Sumerian and Semitic conflict and idolatry, and those records are ours to-day in the first eleven chapters of Genesis.

To be concluded

The Three Epistles of John

Comments on the writings of the "Beloved Apostle"

Part XXIV. I John 5. 3-5

"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous." (Vs. 3.)

Somehow one is reminded of the words of King Solomon here. *"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."* (Eccl. 12. 13-14.) Man was created in order to give glory to God. He was constituted the climax and head of all God's earthly creation so that there might be one more place in His universe from whence joy and happiness and sincere worship might radiate and testify to His all-abounding goodness. He asks only one thing—obedience to His laws of righteousness, the laws which alone can guarantee the perpetual continuance of this that His hands have fashioned and made. Solomon says that to observe these laws is the duty—the whole duty—of man. Micah the Morasthite had perhaps a little clearer discernment of the Father's own outlook on this when he declared in his impassioned tones *"He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God."* (Micah 6. 8.) This is coming very near to our Lord's own interpretation of the Law. *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."* (Matt. 22. 37-40.) And that in turn is very plainly the basis of John's words. Love of God and love of fellow; these two embrace everything, and if once this truth is received into the heart there

is no longer any need of the Decalogue, for we know the law even without having it recited to us. His commandments are not grievous—burdensome, heavy, the Greek means—says John. "What doth the Lord require of thee" asks Micah, as much as to say, "He does not ask much". Perhaps one of the lessons behind the apparently trivial prohibition placed upon our first parents in Eden is that God does not really ask much of us, and what He does ask is well within our power to render, if we will. To love God; to love our brethren His sons; these things ought to be easy. And once we have attained this position we have kept his commandments. It is as simple as that!

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" invites Jesus. *"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me . . . and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."* (Matt. 11. 28-30). Here is an invitation the acceptance of which is not burdensome, a commandment obedience to which is not grievous. It is indeed the very contrary; the entrance into this condition of love toward God and love toward fellow-men, so far from being a grievous burden, actually means a lightening the burden already borne. "Ye shall find rest unto your souls." That is the final outcome of that faith which is so exercised as to lead us to answer our Father's invitation by the full presentation of ourselves in lifelong consecration to Him, even unto death.

That is the thought which comes next into John's mind as he pursues his theme. In this chapter he has reflected on the truth that, believing in Jesus the Christ, we are born of God; that in loving the one who has thus become our Father we naturally and obviously love those His other sons our brethren and in so doing find that this dual love

has brought us within the circle of those who keep His commandments, commandments that are by no means burdensome. But it is also true that he who keeps the commandments is an overcomers, and so John declares "*Whoever is born of God overcometh the world*"—is an overcomer—and then by a swift extension of thought "*and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith*". (vs 4.)

That latter phrase is the one that we very frequently quote in our communion one with another, in our devotional studies, in the word of exhortation from the platform or pulpit. Do we as often realise the connection? The "faith" of verse 4 is intimately associated with the "love" and the "commandments" of verses 1 to 3. We are born of God because we believe, because we love God and brother, because we keep the commandments, and because we have faith. All these factors enter into our overcoming and without any one of them we cannot retain that "Spirit-born" condition. The Spirit can be — and is — bestowed upon us, and can be withdrawn. We are exhorted to be "filled with the Spirit" but also warned that we "quench not the Spirit". "*Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God*" cries the apostle "*whereby ye are sealed unto the day of deliverance*" (Eph. 4. 30) where "grieve" is *lupeo*, the same word that in Mark 10. 22 is applied to the rich young ruler, who on being told by Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life "went away grieved; for he had great possessions". So does the Spirit go away "grieved" when rejected by one in whom the light has become darkness. Always, at all times, we have to remember that God has made man a creature of free-will, capable of accepting light or darkness, good or evil. That choice will be put before the world of men in the next Age, the Millennial Age, but for us, who have heard the call of this Age, the choice is before us now, and we have liberty to walk in the light of the glory of God and find that it leads us into the heavenly Kingdom at the end, and liberty to turn aside from that light and find out, too late, that we are back again where we started. There are many called, but few are found chosen—choice, elect, fitted for the purpose for which God has called

us all.

So, finally, John comes right back to his first position and asks the question to which he immediately gives his own answer. "*Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?*" (vs 5.) We are born of God if we believe in Jesus; that is the intimation of verse 1. We overcome the world if we are born of God; that is the theme of verse 4. *Therefore*, says John in verse 5, we overcome the world if we believe in Jesus. That act of belief is our part in the process; the being born of the Spirit is God's part; the having overcome the world is the product of both parts. Again we are brought up against this incontestable truth that our salvation depends upon two parties, upon the Father and upon ourselves. He will be faithful; He cannot deny Himself; He will not of His own volition let us go. But we also must be faithful; and that is by no means so assured a thing as is the faithfulness of God. He will not be unfaithful to us; but we may insist on being unfaithful to Him. John, recognising that fact, adds his own factor to the argument by pointing out in verse 4 that in the last analysis the victory is entirely dependent upon our faith.

So it all comes back once more to the old familiar theme—belief. *If ye believe!* Those of old never entered in because of unbelief. There remains to us who are the people of God a promise of entering into his rest; the achievement depends upon our belief, our faith. We are made partakers of Christ, says the writer to the Hebrews, only if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end. Even although there is that promise and opportunity of entering into his rest there is the possibility and danger that some of us will come short of it—fail to enter it. So real is that danger that we are exhorted "*Let us therefore fear, lest . . .*" We are bid to "labour", that is, to strain our best energies, to enter into that rest; lest any man fall after Israel's example of unbelief. How vital, then, how important it is, that we take to ourselves this great truth, that the one who overcomes the world is the one who *believes*, and fulfils all the implications of his belief, that Jesus is the Son of God.

To be continued.

SNARES OF PROSPERITY

It is not often that worldly success comes to a Christian without degrading his high standard of character. David was "a man after God's own heart", but that was when he was a shepherd, sincere in his simple faith. In the later years of his life, when great sins made possible only by his exalted position had left their mark on his character,

God told him he was a "man of blood", and for that reason, despite his service of the past, he was unfit to build the Temple of God. With all David's fame and achievements he failed to accomplish the dearest object of his life, and it was the corrupting influence of riches and power upon an originally noble character that caused his failure.

THE SPIRIT OF THE COVENANT

The story of a noble example.

In the heat of the day, as father Abraham sat within his tent sheltering from the burning sun, three travel-stained men drew near. With true Eastern hospitality Abraham ran forth to greet them, and besought them to rest awhile until he could minister to their needs. "*Let a little water be fetched and wash your feet, and rest yourself under the tree.*" (vs 4.)

Of his little store of the precious fluid he would share enough to cleanse and soothe their sand-fretted feet. Hurriedly he and Sarah set about the task of preparing refreshment—cakes baked on the hearth, and a tender calf, and butter and milk—which food, when ready, was spread before them under the shade of the tree. With deferential respect for his guests, Abraham stood by to minister to their requests. Hereby Abraham reveals the fact that he knew these were no ordinary visitors, and as master of the establishment, it was a token of great regard to stand and serve while they sat and ate.

The repast ended, they called for Sarah, and in an extraordinary manner referred to a long-cherished promise which had been made to Abraham some years ago by his God. "*I will return to thee the vigour of thy youth, and Sarah shall have a son*"; so said the spokesman of the little band. Sarah, within earshot, but within the tent, heard the words and "laughed within herself". For many years her maternal desire had been unsatisfied. What wonder then, as she heard these words, that she should smile, half-expectant yet half-incredulous? Had she not waited now too long? That little laugh, half-stifled, and her muttered words, reached the speaker's ears. "Wherefore did Sarah laugh. . . . Is anything too hard for the Lord?" asks the remarkable guest. And so at long last, after many expectant years, the hopes of her whole life came to pass. Those aged wrinkled arms clasped to her breast flesh of her own flesh, and maternal hopes were satisfied.

Some several times that "promise of all promises" had been renewed, and here, beneath the shade of Mamre's tree the messenger of Jehovah (who spake as Jehovah) re-affirmed it by word of mouth to sire and mother too. What recompense was that for "entertaining angels unawares"! (Heb. 13. 2.) Not only was the Covenant re-affirmed but the approximate date was set, when the promised child (without whom the covenant

could never be fulfilled) should arrive.

But this was not the sole reason for their call at Abraham's tent. They had other, sterner business to perform. Refreshment ended, they rose to go along, and Abraham, deeply moved, accompanied them some distance on their way. Then began the most remarkable conversation between the three, the prompting question of which is recorded for our benefit. "Shall I tell Abraham what I am about to do? I think I can trust him with the news!"

To this end spake the principal member of the three. In poetic language, the Lord (the Lord's messengers) had "come down" to see if the sin of Sodom was as great as its "cry", and if so, to destroy it with fire. Would it not seem strange to Abraham's ears, if He who stood pledged to "bless", were now compelled to destroy some of those families of the earth which dwelt on every hand? Had God not promised several times that in him and in his seed, all nations should be blessed? And had God not just re-affirmed his Covenant, and dated the birth of his son? If then the time for the arrival of the Seed were come, could not God defer those punitive measures upon those cities of the plains until the Seed were grown, and had had time to work reform? Thus the question might have presented itself to Abraham had he not been told.

"I know him" said the angel of the Lord "I know that he will command his children (as yet unborn) and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment, *that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him*" (vs 19).

Something "bred in the blood" would "come out in the bone" in later days, and though Abraham's earthly seed should grievously fail awhile, something ingrained in the parents' faith-built character should mature in the children's life when the process of development was complete. The "faith of Abraham" (Rom. 4. 12, 16) will become the faith of all his seed and "All Israel shall be saved" when God's due time is come.

What a testimony was that!—"I know him!" Alone in all the world in that far day, to hold true faith in God! Alone and childless, yet promises reaching on into eternity were centred in this man, who rested, like many others, in heat of day, within his solitary tent. The eye of God

could see in this lone man those deep responses of faith, which led him on, by step and step until he laid the darling of his life upon the altar-wood, and raised his hand to strike the sacrificial blow. That substratum of faith has passed from sire to sons, and through it all when grown mature, "*the Lord will bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him*". A progeny, numberless as the sands of the sea-shore, shall yet be blessed for their great father's sake, because, as sire, he passed to them the ability to believe in God—which means of course, ability to believe in Christ.

Two members of that little band went on their way, and came, at even, to Sodom's gate. "Righteous Lot" sat there and invited them beneath his roof. The wickedness of Sodom brake out, because of the angel's presence there, and summary measures were needed to hold the Sodomites in check. Bounteous harvests which brought fulness of bread, made pride of heart and carnal sin to grow. The other guest remained behind, and "Abraham stood yet before the Lord."

Then began the plea of a mere mortal man before the Judge of all the Earth! There is no story of those early days to be compared with this. Touched by a feeling for his human kin, the faithful righteous heart begged respite again and yet again for Sodom's sinful folk. "Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?" asks he. "Perhaps there may be fifty within the city who are not utterly overcome by sin! Wilt thou spare the city for their sake?" Will not the Judge of all the earth, who holds the scales of Justice for others' acts, Himself do right? Bold, courageous words are these, drawing Divinity to the bar of its own Courts and Laws! Immediate came the response, "I will not destroy the city for the fifty's sake".

The old man knew the city's guilt and knew his quota was too high. Again he puts his plea, "Wilt thou destroy the city perchance forty such be found . . . or thirty . . . or twenty . . . or even ten . . . ?" With each reduction, and renewal of the plea, the heavenly visitor concurred, until at last he said "I will not destroy the city for ten's sake". (vs 32.) Not even ten were found; but only one, and he an alien in their midst! With morning's early dawn he was urged forth, before the blow of Justice fell. The Judge of all the Earth did right. In later days God told his people He had seen "good" in taking them thus away. Some vestige still remained of innate good, to which, in resurrection days, appeal can then be made; some broken chords, which, when righteousness prevails, can be repaired and made to vibrate in unison once more.

"Shall mortal man be more just than his Maker?" is a query we must ask as we see the aged pilgrim pleading for his kind. Was Abraham more sympathetic to sinful men than God? Must God be moved by human plea before compassion could be shown? Had God relented of His purpose to bless *all* the peoples of the earth, or did He not include these cities of the plain?

That God was compassionate as well as just is true beyond all dispute. The plan to bless the world was His—it told of His great love. But how did the justice-loving patriarch stand when fronted by such baleful sin? Would he say Sodom got no more than its deserts when retribution fell? Would he say it served them right? Abraham was not more compassionate than God, though Abraham's compassion was deep and strong. He pleaded that justice might be done, and that the righteous (if there should be) should also have their deserts. But the plea he used asked for mercy in ascending scale. Mercy for a whole city, for fifty's sake, for forty's sake—nay even for ten's sake.

And the Judge of all the Earth agreed—the Judge of all the Earth had Abraham at the bar, to find how far in him tender mercy would temper strict justice. And the Judge found him sympathetic down to the degree of ten men in a city—ten men *for* a city; ten men (or less) to redeem a city from its just fate. This was the spirit of the Covenant itself. Abraham too *would* see men blessed. Abraham too would see *sinner*s blessed. That was the spirit of his God, who had said that through him and his seed, the nations should be blessed. And Abraham believed it, and let the spirit of the Promise soak in and saturate his soul.

And so, while Justice must be satisfied—this he knew quite well—the temper of the soul, catching Divine intent, grew merciful and kind. The outcome of this Divine Spirit led in due time to the gift of God's dear Son (John 3. 16.)—and Calvary! But in those early days, the flow which had become a *river* of love at Calvary, was but a tiny stream. It grew as ages passed; and still it grows; and as it grows it has borne those noble souls along who catch the Spirit of the Lord.

To-day we live in an evil world. The cry of the weak and oppressed rises up to heaven. Sins of various kinds stalk the earth. Again, God has come down to make scrutiny for righteous men. How easy it would be for us to say "it serves them right", as tidings come that some other land or people is in distress. It may serve them right indeed, but it ill becomes the children of the Lord to hold that thought. Nations may have slighted and perverted their opportunities—they may have

made false choice of leaders; or wrongly applied principles of action—but no nation is utterly responsible for that. No nation can have full cent.-per-cent. responsibility under conditions like these. Measured responsibility they certainly have—and for that they must be called to account. But none save the Judge of all the Earth is competent for that. He only can assess the guilt of man or nation. The safer thing for us to seek is the spirit of Abraham's faith—the spirit which would plead for mercy for ten men's sake, and rest content that He who is the Judge of all the Earth will do no other than what is right.

It will not be an easy thing to remain in proper balance of heart and mind, as evil after evil is committed in the earth, unless the Spirit of the Covenant controls our every thought. The scales of Justice belongs to God—and He will hold the balance true. But God will temper the severities of Judgment with His mercy, what time the guilty one repents, and forsakes his wicked ways. His plighted Covenant with Abraham and his seed speaks blessing (and mercy) for all the nations of the earth. If, like faithful Abraham, we live within the spirit of this Oath-bound Pledge, allowing it to soak in and saturate our hearts, we too shall think in mercy of Satan's hood-winked hosts, no matter who they are. It will permeate our thoughts; it will creep into very blood and bone, and make us more like Him who died for all. We speak at times of Christ-like character and its development. There is no method so clear and sure to attain that end as to be caught up in the Spirit

of the Oath and Pledge of Abraham's God, who stands to-day, as then, sworn to bless all the nations of the earth.

That ancient episode in Abraham's life affords much food for thought. It shows that the Almighty God in working out His plan, was seeking Abraham's help to make His Promise come true. But Abraham could be no source of help, unless the spirit of the Covenant and the spirit of his God, could direct him through and through. And God made test of Abraham to see if compassion for a sinful city was active in his heart. God chose a time and place to make that test. Where brazen sin had reared aloft its ugly head, Abraham passed his test acceptably. God's confidence in him was well placed.

Sin's ugly head in all its forms is raised again to-day. The present international situation affords a test, to determine what spirit we are of. The visitation of Divine Wrath must certainly come upon the aggressive nations of the world, but that is only a passing phase of the Divine Plan. God is waiting to be gracious, in His own way, to one and all. God's Spirit is still the Spirit of that ancient Covenant. He waits to bless all the nations of the earth. The Spirit of that Covenant must possess and control us too in all we say and do. It may be more easy to "blame" to-day than "bless," to be "vindictive" than "vindicative," but all who are Abraham's seed, must be possessed not only of Abraham's inheritance, but of the Spirit which if needed, would plead for all the fallen sons of men.

"I Must Decrease"

*Things written aforesome
for our admonition.*

Both St. John the Baptist and Elijah spent most of their time in the wilderness, only appearing in public life to give their urgent message of the call to repentance and to warn men of the approaching Kingdom of God—or Times of Restitution. Both were the fore-runners of a better and brighter Dispensation and both had to denounce the sins and backslidings of an idolatrous Israel.

Elisha's work was one of Restitution, and Jesus—following hard upon the teachings of John the Baptist—brought life and light, health and healing wherever He went and wherever He found sufficient faith.

In these last days, therefore, what should be the attitude of the anti-typical "Elijah", they who, bearing the Elijah message of repentance and warn-

ing of the coming Kingdom, are fighting steadily onward to call men's minds away from the everyday trivialities to the great events about to burst upon them? We can only take our example from the "Baptist" of whom Jesus said "This was the Elias which was for to come" to those who were able to receive it. For did He not say that whosoever should receive a Prophet in the name of a Prophet, should receive a Prophet's reward—and the "name" of the Prophet would imply the quality of that Prophet's message. In the case of Elijah, as is well known, this was a denouncement of the sins and evils of Israel in His times and the heralding of the Kingdom.

When some came to John and told him that all men were following Jesus, He showed no signs of

annoyance but said "He must increase but I must decrease," and then went on to tell them how the friend of the Bridegroom rejoiced to hear the Bridegroom's voice, saying "This my joy, therefore is fulfilled." This, then, is the attitude of the "Elijah" class when the Bridegroom's voice is being heard, and He Himself being followed. St. John had no qualms and misgivings that his followers were being led astray; no fears for their safety, no petty jealousies—only joy that the Master had come, and that He was calling to Him His own sheep, and that they were following Him, even though among those were his own followers. This is what the "Elijah" class should be doing in these days likewise.

The voice of the Bridegroom is being heard by the sheep and the lambs, and they will hear no other, for they are His. They know that He is guiding them by His Holy Spirit and they are happy and content, and none can pluck them from His hand.

The baptism of John by water has served its purpose, and the baptism which Jesus alone came to give, must take its place. This is the fiery baptism of the "spirit." For, as John warned his own followers, the One who should come after him would baptise with the Spirit. After Jesus rose from the dead, He told His disciples that they should be "baptised with fire" not many days hence, and as we all know they were baptised with the Spirit at Pentecost—the fiery baptism of the Holy Spirit. Baptism by fire must follow that of water.

As in those days, therefore, they who have been following the Baptist need have no doubt in following the Bridegroom, and, being baptised with the Holy Spirit, need not fear that any who truly hear His Voice shall be led into errors or dangers, for He is the Good Shepherd who gave His life for them. Of this fiery baptism St. John says

"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 no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him."
(1 John 2. 27.)

The sheep have been scattered in the dark and cloudy day, but the Shepherd has promised that He will both search out his sheep and deliver them out of all the places where they have been scattered (Ezek 34. 11 and 12). The whole of this chapter is a reproof to the false pastors or shepherds and a glorious promise that He will Himself seek and feed His sheep and lead them to the quiet pastures. St. John the Baptist was thus content and happy

to see his followers dwindling away and the flocks of Jesus increasing.

Those of us who are being "led by the Spirit of God" to-day will also quickly apprehend that there is a deep spiritual application here also, for as the new or Christ-man in each one of us increases, the old or self-man must decrease, and this decreasing of self must go on and on until the old self has dwindled completely away and Christ is "all in all"; for does not the great Apostle say that this is the hidden mystery, which is "Christ in you the hope of glory."

Are we increasing in Jesus, or are we afraid to "let go" of the things which have hitherto held us in thrall, and to trust Him implicitly, to lean upon Him in absolute trust. Let us recall here the words of the "Song of Solomon" the song of the Bride and Bridegroom. "Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness leaning upon her beloved?" This is, of course, the true Bride—they who have forsaken all and trusted implicitly in Him. Let us, therefore, not be afraid to throw ourselves unhesitatingly upon Him and let Him guide us—let us not fear to forsake the lesser prophet for the greatest Prophet of all—our Prophet, Priest and King. For has He not said that "whosoever shall put their trust in Him shall never be ashamed."

While speaking of His Second Coming to His disciples, Jesus also gave another beautiful promise in Luke 12. 37.

"Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching; verily I say unto you that he shall gird himself and make them to sit down to meat and will come forth and serve them."

Let it here be noted also, that the promise is that they shall sit down to "meat." Not milk for babes is promised, but the meat for strong men, of whom St. Paul says they are of "full age" and "have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

The Bridegroom has come and is calling out His sheep. Are we quick to hear His call or are we still clinging to old forms and old ways and like the unwise virgins have no oil in our lamps. Let us be ready to follow Him for they who do so have His gracious promise that "they shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

If it means that we are despised, and that others separate themselves from our company, and speak evil of us, what matters it if we are with Him. The way is often weary, and seems a bit lonely, maybe, yet if He is guiding us and lightening our way, we are blessed indeed, and one day we shall hear that Beloved Voice say "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

Oh! how wide and boundless is the ocean of His Love. It is only we ourselves who narrow it, as the Israelites of old who "limited the Holy One of Israel" as the Psalmist says (78. 41).

God grant that our hearts may become "hearts of flesh" and the "stony" hearts may be taken out of us as is promised, and our understanding expanded to receive the deeper and wider views of God's love and mercy which our hearts cannot receive while they are hard and narrow; for while we were yet sinners "Christ died for the ungodly." Let us remember that Jesus has said "I, if I be lifted up will *draw* all men unto me." Not *compel*, mark you, but *draw*—and this drawing will be the wonderful magnetic influence of His Love and Mercy.

Let us remember St. John's words that "he is the propitiation for our sins: *and not for ours only*, but for the sins of the whole world". (I John

2. 2.) St. John was the apostle of Love, and that is why he was able to understand the mind of Jesus more than the others, for Jesus brought all the commandments down to one. saying—"A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another."

What matters it if others do not see through our own particular telescope; if Jesus is drawing them, all is well, for He knows the hearts of men as none other can ever know them, and He who gave His life for them will find ways and means that man could never conceive of to win their souls back to Himself, and brings His sheep safely Home at last.

*"For the love of God is wider,
Than the measures of man's mind,
And the heart of the Eternal,
Is most wonderfully kind."*

THE PERSONALITY OF PAUL

*Reflections on the character
of a great man.*

Paul, in his natural character, before his conversion, resembled Bonaparte more than any other man, both in his intellectual development and energy of will. He had the same inflexibility of purpose, the utter indifference to human suffering when he had once determined on his course, the same tireless unconquerable resolution; the same fearlessness both of man's power and opinions, and that calm self-reliance and mysterious control over others. But the point of greatest resemblance is in the union of a strong, correct judgment, with rapidity of thought and sudden impulse. They thought quicker, yet better than any other men. The power, too, they possessed was all practical power. There are many men of strong minds, whose forces nevertheless waste in reflections, or in theories of others to act upon. Their thought may work out into language but not into action. They will plan better than they perform. But these men not only thought better, but they could work better than other men.

The same perfect self-control and perfect subjection of his emotions to the mandates of his will are exhibited in his conduct when smitten to the earth, and blinded by the light and voice from heaven. John when arrested by the same voice on the Isle of Patmos, fell on his face as a dead man, and dared not to stir or to speak till encouraged by the language, "Fear not." But Paul (or Saul) showed no symptoms of alarm or terror.

The voice, the blow, the light, the glory, and the darkness that followed, were sufficient to upset the strongest mind; but he, master of himself and his emotions, instead of giving way to exclamations of fear, simply said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me do?" With his reason and judgment as steady and strong as ever, he knew at once that something was wanted of him, and ever ready to act, he asked what it was.

From this time on, his track can be distinguished by the commotion about it, and the light above it. Straight back to Jerusalem, from which he had so recently come with letters to legalise his persecutions, he went to cast his lot with those he had followed with violence and slaughter. His strong heart never beat one quicker pulsation through fear, when the lofty turrets of the proud city flashed on his vision. Neither did he steal away to the dark alleys and streets, where the disciples were concealed, and tell them secretly his faith in the Son of God. He strode into the synagogues, and before the astonished priests preached Christ and him crucified. He thundered at the door of the Sanhedrin itself, and shaking Jerusalem like an earthquake awoke a tempest of rage and fury on himself. With assassins dogging his footsteps, he at length left the city.

But, instead of going to places where he was unknown, and where his feelings would be less tried, he started for his native city, his father's

house, the house of his boyhood, for his kindred and friends. To entreaties, tears, scorn and violence, he was alike impervious. To Antioch and Cyprus, along the coast of Syria and Rome, over the known world, he went like a blazing comet, waking up the nations. From the top of Mars' Hill, with the gorgeous city at his feet, and the Acropolis and Parthenon behind him—on the deck of his shattered vessel in the intervals of the crash of billows—in the gloomy walls of a prison, on the borders of the eternal kingdom, he speaks in the same calm and determined tone. Deterred by no danger, awed by no presence, and shrinking from no responsibility, he moves before us like some grand embodiment of power. The nations heave around him, and kings turn pale at his presence. Bands of conspirators swear neither to eat or drink till they have slain him; rulers and priests combine against him, and people stone him; yet over the din of conflict and storm of violence his voice of eloquence rises clear and distinct as a trumpet call, as he still preaches Christ and Him crucified. The whip is laid on his back until the blood starts with every blow, and then his mangled body is thrown into a dungeon. But at midnight you hear that same calm, strong voice, which has shaken the world, poured forth in a hymn of praise to God, and lo! an earthquake rocks the prison to

its foundations; the manacles fall from the hands of captives, the bolts withdraw of themselves, and the massive doors swing back on their hinges.

One cannot point to a single spot in his career where he faltered a moment, or gave way to discouragement or fear. Through all his perilous life, he exhibited that intrepidity of character and lofty spirit. With his eyes on regions beyond the ken of ordinary mortals, and kindling on glories it was not permitted him to reveal, he pressed forward to an incorruptible crown, a fadeless kingdom. And then his death, how indescribably sublime. Napoleon, dying in the midst of the midnight storm, with the last words that fell from his lips, a battle cry watching in delirium the torn heads of his mighty columns, as they disappeared in the smoke of the conflict, is a sight that awes and startles us. But behold Paul also a war-worn veteran, battered with many a scar, though in a spiritual warfare, looking not on the earth but on heaven. Hear his calm, serene voice ringing over the storms and commotions of life: *"I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge will give me at that day."*

INDEX — 1952

| EXPOSITORY | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Able Ministers of New Covenant | 134 |
| Abram of the Most High God | 163 |
| Adam's daughters | 92 |
| Baptism and Temptation of Jesus | 126 |
| Burning Bush, The | 173 |
| Consecration | 55 |
| Evil, Flight from | 151 |
| Faith, A question of | 137 |
| Flight from Evil, The | 151 |
| He cometh with clouds | 73 |
| Higher than all Heavens | 115 |
| In the days of the Patriarchs | 171, 182 |
| Jacob and Esau | 153 |
| Joshua's Passover | 51 |
| Keys of the Kingdom | 140 |
| Lord shall descend from heaven | 83 |
| Make peace and create evil, I | 156 |
| New Covenant, Able Ministers of | 134 |
| Out of the Storehouse | 8, 24, 40, 71, 91, 105, 120 |
| Patriarchs, In the days of | 171, 182 |
| Personality of Paul | 190 |
| Rachel and stolen images | 87 |
| Regeneration | 76 |
| Resurrection, Two views of | 45 |
| Righteous Reproof | 179 |
| Saint, How a schemer became | 153 |
| Sin | 3 |
| Second Advent | |
| <i>"Till He Come"</i> | 56 |
| <i>"He cometh with clouds"</i> | 73 |

| | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| <i>"Lord shall descend"</i> | 83 |
| <i>"Rest from their labours"</i> | 107 |
| <i>"Higher than all heavens"</i> | 115 |
| They shall rest from their labours | 107 |
| They shall see eye to eye | 122 |
| Three Epistles of John ... | 10, 19, 42, 67, 93, 99, 166, 194 |
| Till He Come | 56 |
| Tower of Babel | 12, 26 |
| Two Views of Resurrection | 45 |
| Whip of small cords | 110 |
| Ye do show Lord's death | 53 |
| Zechariah's Kingdom Vision | 147, 168 |

| HORTATORY | |
|--|----------------|
| All the righteous blood | 124 |
| At the end of the years | 131 |
| Correction with judgment | 35 |
| Despised and rejected | 130 |
| Established, strengthened, settled | 22 |
| Eventide | 6, 44, 69, 101 |
| Fossil theology | 175 |
| Gathered Grain | 21, 157 |
| Growth of Christian character | 37 |
| He shall give His angels charge | 174 |
| I must decrease | 188 |
| In Gethsemane | 60 |
| In the wilderness | 123 |
| Is life worth living? | 114 |
| Israel, awake | 155 |

| | |
|---------------------------------------|------------|
| Lord our righteousness | 14 |
| Ministers of the Kingdom | 159 |
| My son Timothy | 78 |
| No oil in their lamps | 47 |
| Philemon | 102 |
| Quiet Time, The | 29, 59, 88 |
| Spirit of the Covenant | 186 |
| Spiritual Manhood | 141 |
| Spiritual-mindedness | 111 |
| They that watch for the morning | 89 |
| Transformed | 30 |

MISCELLANEOUS

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| Book Reviews | 79 |
| From walls of the city | 139 |
| Leicester Convention, 1952 | 133 |
| London Convention, 1952 | 143 |
| Tract Fund Report, 1951 | 34 |
| Unity Convention, 1952 | 94 |

POEMS

| | |
|----------------------------|-----|
| Christ is everything | 98 |
| I that speak to thee | 125 |
| Life devoted | 125 |
| Thanks to God | 98 |

SCRIPTURES EXPOUNDED

| |
|--|
| Gen. 3. 24 (40); 14. 1-24 (163); 31. 19 (87); 41. 14 (6); 41. 40 (72); Exod. 3. 2-3 (173); 20. 5 (119); Josh. 5. 10 (51); 2 Kings, 19. 35 (91); Ezra 1. 7 (9); Job 24. 19 (3); Psa. 71. 17-18 (14, 131); 91.11 (174); Prov. 16. 6 (72); Isa. 26. 19 (25); 32. 6-8 (121); 45. 7 (156); 52. 8 (122); Jer. 10. 23-24 (35); Nah. 2. 8 (71) Zech. 14. 1-21 (147, 168); Matt. 6. 11 (6); 12. 43 (70); 15. 14 (25); 16. 19 (140); 23. 35 (124); Luke 15. 16 (41); John 2. 15 (111); 7. 53 (71); 18. 18 (41); 20. 21 (46) Acts 17. 28 (23); 28. 15 (41); I Cor., 11. 26 (57); 2 Cor., 3. 6 (134); 4. 7 (40); Eph. 4. 10 (24); Phil. 2. 10 (6); I Thess. 4. 14-18 (83); Rev. 1. 7 (73); 14. 13 (107); 22. 9 (91). |
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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. |
| 106 The Bible Hell. | 114 Times of Gentiles. |
| 107 The Son of God. | 115 Satan. |
| 108 The Holy Spirit. | 116 Angels that Sinned. |