



# BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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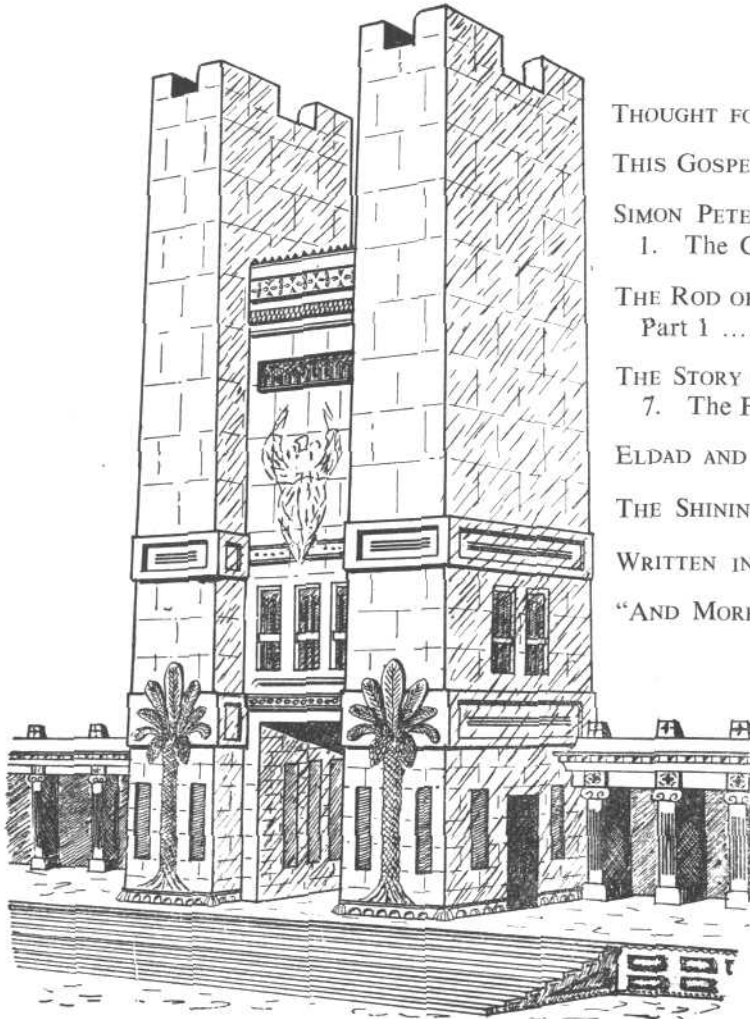
Thou, therefore, endure  
hardness as a good  
soldier of Jesus Christ

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

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## Thought for the Month

*"Go through, go through the gates: prepare ye the way of the people: cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people."* (Isa. 62.10).

Every year at its opening is a year of opportunity. Not for nothing is this the time of making new resolutions for good. And the very fact of making New Year resolutions is an admission that the past has not been perfect but the future can be better. Particularly is this so with the outlook of the Christian faith. The constant theme of the Old Testament prophets, "The best is yet to be", is also a basic principle of the faith. This old world is breaking down and coming to its end; there is no doubt about that. And probably very soon. But a better world is to succeed it and in proportion as we hold an intelligent understanding of the nature and purpose of that new world whose Administrator is the Lord Christ so do the gates open wide that we may go through—the gates of opportunity and of Christian service. For it is our mission as followers of Christ to prepare the way and lift up the standard. That means to proclaim the things that are to come as infinitely better than the things which now are, and to expound and maintain the Divine principles of enduring life in contrast to the ways of the existing permissive society which only leads to death. There is a wonderful future in store for mankind, if they will have it, but pitifully few know anything about it at this present. There is crying need for those who do know to point the way and lift up the standard.

That is where so much potential endeavour comes short. There is an increasing tendency for Christians and Christian organisations to channel their energies and abilities into aspects of

medical or social work, caring for the sick and suffering and abnormal and misfits to the detriment of their High Calling in Christ. Of course the Christian should do all these things; his Lord did the same, healing and comforting the sick and the weary. But when He did these things He also told them the glad tidings and that was something that related not to this world with all its sorrows but the future world with all that God purposes. No conceivable amount of Christian service can cure all or even more than the veriest fraction of the evils of this world; only God can do that, and the greatest boon that can be conferred upon any of suffering humanity is a positive knowledge and hope of the destiny which surely awaits them. For this life is not the only life; it is only a commencement, a babyhood stage. Neither is growth and development terminated at the end of this threescore years and ten. God has not created men and women with all their wonderful potential which is nowhere near exploited to the full in this life, in order that He might select a few for heavenly glory and cast the rest into the void as waste. His permission of the power of evil in this life is a mystery but it too has a purpose. The next stage of life for all is one in which evil will no longer oppress but growth and development and achievement will continue apace, and if any man fails then to attain the place in God's creation for which he is created and so does become waste after all, it will only be because by the exercise of his own free will, untrammelled by any external alien influence, he will not have God and will not subscribe to the fundamental laws of his being. Whatever our work for Christ, it must be infused with this message of hope, God's purpose for man's future, the Gospel of the Kingdom.

## THIS GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

There can be no finer message for the New Year than the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom. This is the age-old commission of the Christian, to tell the good tidings of the Divine purpose in creation to all who will listen; to be instant in season, out of season, preaching the Word; to shine as a light in the world, and to hold forth the Word of Life. From that day, more than nineteen centuries ago, when Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice and said "*Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell in Jerusalem... HEARKEN...*", that mission has never been abrogated. The message of repentance and conversion, of High Calling and Restitution, has gone on through the centuries, finding its way into every corner of the world, even as was predicted by Jesus, bearing fruit appropriate to this Age; and goes on still, and will go on, into that Millennial Kingdom Age which is to succeed the present, bearing again rich fruit in that day to the glory of God.

Now there are two aspects to this theme, both of which repay examination. First, what is this Gospel of the Kingdom; second, how and to whom shall it be preached? Both questions need to be answered not only in the light of our understanding of Scripture texts but also in harmony with the examples set by our Lord and his apostles, who are for all time the patterns and guides of our own Christian life and activity.

And these questions must be answered. We stand to-day amid the misery, turmoil and destruction, uncertain what the future is to bring forth. Our faith has survived; we believe still in the coming of the Kingdom. Let us thank God for that. Our liberty to preach the Gospel without let or hindrance, to worship how and where we will, to serve our Lord according to the dictates of our own consciences, is ours still. Let us thank God for that also. But the status of Christian discipleship is not given to us for purely selfish ends, nor that we should organise ourselves into an exclusive little religious club that shuts itself away from the world and refuses to face up to the tremendous problems that are a bitter legacy to the sons of men. The Church of this Gospel Age is truly a separated Church, a suffering Church, a Church living by a power not of this world; but it is also a universal Church, a missionary Church, a Church that is the earthly sanctuary of the Holy Spirit of God, and in the power of that tremendous dynamic it must, like the rider of Revelation, go forth conquering and to con-

quer—or else perish.

In this post-war world, then, we must preach the Gospel of the Kingdom. What is that Gospel?

The answer can be sought within the framework of our Lord's first recorded public utterance (see Mark 1.15). That utterance enshrined two exhortations and a statement of fact. "*Repent... Believe the Gospel... The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.*"

There are two phases of the Kingdom of Heaven (or Kingdom of God—the terms are used interchangeably in the New Testament). One phase is heavenly and the other is to be earthly. The earthly phase of the Kingdom was *not* then, at that time, at hand; but the doors of the heavenly phase were about to swing open to admit those who would enter. "*The law and the prophets were until John; since that day the Kingdom of Heaven is preached and every man presseth into it.*" (Luke 16.16). The invitation to the earthly phase will not be issued until Christ's reign upon earth has commenced at the time of his revelation (*apokalupsis*) to all men in his Millennial Kingdom, and that in turn must wait until the last entrant to the heavenly phase has completed his earthly course and has been "changed" as Paul puts it in 1 Cor. 15.51 to heavenly conditions, to be joined with the Lord Jesus Christ in the kingship and priesthood of that Millennial reign, even as it is written "*They shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.*" (Rev. 20.4.).

Repentance, then, is the first theme to be stressed in our proclamation of this Gospel. "*Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out*" thundered the stentorian voice of the rugged Galilean fisherman who took the lead on that first day of Gospel preaching (Acts 2.14). "*And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem*" wrote Luke in milder words (Luke 24.27). The people had been in some measure prepared for this message by the forthright denunciations of John the Baptist, and, to those who had been students of the Hebrew Scriptures, the passionate eloquence of Isaiah "*Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow*" (Isaiah 1.18). So it should be with us; in all our endeavours to enlighten men with the light wherewith we ourselves have been enlightened, right in the forefront we must place the demand for repentance and conversion. Not until the wicked man has turned from his evil ways and

begun to do that which is lawful and right can he begin to appreciate the principles by which alone he shall save his soul alive (Ezek. 18.27). And not until the one who hears has repented of his own share in the world's sin, and—more than that—repented of all the sin that is in the world and has come to Jesus to learn how he may help in the recovery of the world from that sin, is it of much avail to speak to him of the future glories God has in store for humanity.

Here there is exemplified one of the great principles by which creation is ordered. Repentance and conversion implies reason and persuasion. It cannot be effected by force. It is impossible to bring about true repentance in a man against his will. Neither is it God's design. No man will be coerced into righteous dealing. God has created man a creature of free will, and although it is a primal law of creation that "*the soul that sinneth, it shall die*" (Ezek. 18.4) and although it is clear to us that there is some quality in the state of sin which inevitably destroys the life of the one who harbours sin, no man will be made righteous and forced to continue in life against his own will. Even although in the Millennial Age all men will be awakened from the sleep of death and introduced to a new world order in which the outward practice of evil is, by Divine power, completely restrained, it is only that they all may have the opportunity freely to accept, or reject, Christ without the hindering effects of surrounding sin upon the would-be righteous. It will still be necessary for each of those awakened ones to hear the Gospel preached, and hearing it, to repent, and be converted, and come to Christ in absolute surrender and dedication, if they are to reap the benefits of Christ's Kingdom upon earth. Unless they in this manner do become citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven, they will be denied entrance into the Holy City (see Rev. 21.27) and, dying in their sin, be as though they had never been (Psa. 37.10).

After repentance, "believe the Gospel". There is no real difference between "the Gospel" as such, and the "Gospel of the Kingdom". There are many facets of Truth which one must "believe" after conversion before the beauty and harmony of God's Plan of the Ages can be appreciated in its fulness. First of all comes full and complete acceptance of Christ, of his life and death, as essential to the salvation of the believer. We can and do according to our several philosophies define to our own satisfaction just why this acceptance of Christ is necessary in the sight of God to our reconciliation with him, but the fact remains when all is said and done that it is an act of faith and love which brings us to the feet of Jesus and leads us to say "Lord, I believe

... thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God". It is that belief, reinforced by the outward evidence of a change of heart which we call conversion, that brings justification by faith, the condition of being at peace with God and of reconciliation with him (Rom. 5.1).

This justification however, fails of its greatest potentiality unless it leads the believer to dedicate his whole life to the service of God in the interests of his Plan. That realisation of Divine goodness which led the believer to acceptance of Christ and consequent justification should logically lead him on to explore the deeper mysteries of the Divine dealings with men, and realising God's purpose of blessing for all, to place himself at the Divine disposal to be used in such manner and at such time as God will ordain. And this we call consecration.

The highest level of Christian experience to-day lies in the profession and practice of the consecrated life—but it is not a monastic life. It is not a life which is given to shrinking and withdrawal from the world and its problems, the fears and sorrows, the strifes and perplexities, of the world of men. The term itself is taken from the function of the Levites of old in the economy of Israel. They were set apart from the nation in that they served purely in the things of God, they possessed no material inheritance in the land, they were commissioned to devote themselves heart and soul to the duties of their calling; but they were to live amongst the people, scattered through the length and breadth of the land, sharing the people's joys and sorrows, and ministering to them in the things of the spirit. They were to be teachers, counsellors and leaders in the higher spiritual matters of life; and this is the duty of the consecrated Christian of to-day.

There is an object in this, The Christian, if he does in fact fulfil this commission, becomes qualified thereby for the much greater work of the next Age when all men will be summoned before the great white throne of Rev. 20.11 to learn of God's plans for their welfare. This Gospel which Jesus exhorted his hearers to believe does not end with the translation to heaven of the faithful consecrated Christians of this Age. The stage will then be set for those "Times of Restitution of all things" to which Peter referred, an Age during which all men, the dead as well as the living, will be brought back to life upon earth and experience the benefits of an earthly order of society over which Christ and his glorified Church will have assumed control.

Other discourses of Jesus show that this Gospel includes also a recognition of the fact that the powers of this world will not submit to this new state of society without a struggle. Jesus knew, what men have not yet realised, that the existing

order based on force and selfishness must inevitably effect its own destruction. We in our day see what seems most assuredly to be the final phase of that headlong descent into catastrophe. Jesus told his disciples that He would return to earth at this crisis, his presence (*parousia*) being at first known only to his own followers, the while the world rushed heedlessly along its doomed course. Later on there would come the dawning consciousness of a new influence making itself felt in the world, and at length, when all who are of the Church had been translated to spiritual life to work forever with Christ, the full revelation of himself in his glory to all men. From that latter point of time the Kingdom of Christ on earth commences to date, and the binding of Satan, that he may deceive the nations no more, be counted an accomplished fact. And of course that tremendous sequel must await the final collapse of the "kingdoms of this world" (Rev. 11. 15). Hence part of this Gospel is that truth so fervently held by the Early Church, that the systems of this world order are quite incapable of reformation and must inevitably pass away and give place to the universal Kingdom of Christ.

"*The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!*" It was the heavenly phase of that Kingdom upon which emphasis was laid in the days of the First Advent, but behind that emphasis lay the promise of the earthly. Now in our day the position is different. This Age has all but run its course; the pattern of world history, the events of to-day, the mood and temper of men, all tell us that. It is with confidence that we proclaim the imminence of the earthly Kingdom, and if we interpret the present signs aright as pointing to the Second Presence of our Lord being already an accomplished fact, then most certainly the time of his revelation to all men is within measurable reach. And if we are in fact perceiving the first rosy fingers of dawn, the herald of that "*astrape*" which shall shortly flame over the eastern hills and turn the darkness of earth's night into meridian day, why then surely our commission is to thunder forth as never before the message that first was heard on Jordan's banks:

"*Repent... Believe the Gospel... The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!*"

\* \* \*

How then, and to whom, shall we preach this message?

Peter at Pentecost, Paul to the Athenians; these men were in no doubt over the matter. Words they had but recently heard, vibrant words, thrilling words, sounded still in their ears. "Go ye, make disciples of all nations." "Ye shall be my witnesses... to the uttermost parts of the earth." "And as ye go, preach, saying 'The Kingdom of

Heaven is at hand.'" There can be no mistaking the import of these words. We are to be Christ's missionaries, ambassadors of his Kingdom, bearing the glad tidings wheresoever it can find lodgment.

This is truly a "sowing," but not the "sowing" in a dispensational sense which is followed by a harvest at the end of the Age. To realise this clearly will avoid some confusion of thought. "*So is the Kingdom of God*" said Jesus, "*as if a man should cast seed into the ground... and the seed should spring and grow up... first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear... and immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.*" (Mark 4. 26-29). That is the dispensational sowing at the commencement of this Age, and He that sowed the seed *is the Son of Man*. He, too, comes to gather the harvest at the end of the Age (Rev. 14.14-16). Although we as Christ's followers are intimately concerned with this dispensational sowing and reaping, this is not the same thing as that personal, individual missionary work which goes on during every century of the Age, sowing and reaping progressing side by side. Throughout all this Gospel Age, yea, and throughout all the Millennial Age which follows it, our commission remains unchanged; "Go... *make disciples* of all nations."

The primary purpose of this commission at the present time is for our own experience and training. The Father knows full well that though the Gospel be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, though we faithfully and strenuously fulfil our commission to be his witnesses to the uttermost parts of the earth, though we make ourselves all things to all men that we might by any means save some, there will only be a "little flock" that will give heed and come into present-day covenant relationship with God. No other outcome can be expected. God has determined that the masses of humanity shall be reached and converted by ways of reason and persuasion; man will attain his destiny on a basis of intelligent conviction, and it is necessary therefore that before "world conversion" on a universal scale is even attempted there must be a fully trained and qualified body of "missionaries" able and ready to carry out that stupendous work. The discharge of that responsibility is in Divine wisdom to be the mission of the Christian Church. The present time therefore is the training-time; this world as it is now is the training-ground; the adverse conditions of the present order of society the means by which each member of that Church will become so inflexibly set for the righteousness of God and so experienced in and sympathetic with the woes of the "groaning creation" that he will be abundantly able, in that day, to turn men

from sin to serve the living God.

If then we do believe in this coming Kingdom of God upon earth and its standards, we will want to proclaim it now. If this Gospel is so good to us then we shall not want to hide it. Like Jeremiah of old we shall feel like saying "His word was as a burning fire shut up within my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay". We know that men need this message, that it will solve all their problems and bring about peace on earth. We know that it is a good message, fraught with mighty power for the reclamation of the world. We know that it must be preached, for so it is written; and with Paul we can only cry out "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel".

Therefore the strongest incentive to consistent and persistent witness to the Gospel is the effect of that witness upon ourselves. The consequence of its impact upon the world in general is merely secondary—at present. The time when the world's needs come to the forefront for attention is not yet—it lies just around the corner, where the light of the Messianic Kingdom is gathering ready to break forth upon the world. And as for ourselves, let us pause and reflect, what history has shown to be a truism, that the Christian movement or fellowship that loses the missionary spirit signs its own death-warrant. Christianity is essentially a missionary faith, and the light that is within us can only continue to burn if its radiance is continually flowing outwards to give illumination all around.

How shall the witness be given? Shall we leave it to the eloquent tongues of those gifted with fluent speech and the swiftly flowing pens of those who can set down their vision on paper? By no means. This is a work in which all who are Christ's, simple or cultured, slow-thinking or quick-witted, can have their place, each serving according to the measure of the Spirit which God has bestowed. We must never forget that the Apostles themselves were, for the most part, illiterate, uncultured men of the workaday world, unused to the finely polished speech and intellectual outlook of the wise and learned. It was their possession of the Holy Spirit, their love for their Lord, their consciousness of a mission to be

performed, that gave them both inspiration for their message and the words in which to clothe it. So it can be with us. Be they never so halting and stumbling, the words in which the simplest child of God expresses the faith which for him or her has transformed the world are messengers of Divine Truth to another who is ready for the living waters. And for those who cannot speak at all, there is the Christian life to be lived, more powerful by far than any sermon.

There is no set rule, then. Clearly the more usual as well as the most spectacular method of spreading the message is by public oratory and the printed page. Many less obvious methods will commend themselves to some, and there is no limit to the variety of means by which "Christ is preached".

The disciples, of course, had one means only—word of mouth. There was no printed page in their day. Now we have various means of mechanically recording human speech so as to multiply its scope and circulation a thousand-fold—printing, pictures, films, the radio, to name but a few. And all of these, to the extent that is practically possible, could and should be laid under tribute to play their part in preaching this glorious Gospel. If the children were to hold their peace, said Jesus, the very stones would cry out; and so now, if one form of preaching seems to have lost its effectiveness or its appeal, we must expect some other means to be found to take its place, for the Gospel must be preached.

It was said by men of old time "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also". What a testimony! Those early Christians in their faith and zeal rocked the Roman world, and so imperative was their challenge that the old paganism fought desperately for a while, trembled—and fell. We too, if we will, can turn the world upside down, and take our stand beside those stalwart pioneers of those early days. But we shall only do it if, in full confidence of faith, and burning zeal for the service of our Lord and Master, we declare, in season and out of season, whether they hear or whether they forbear, the message of the Age, the message of to-day, the message for every man—"Repent... Believe the Gospel... The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

The supernatural can never be disproved. The supernatural is in a higher sense the natural, it is the atmosphere in which we confess ourselves the children of God. Men say we want a Bible with no miracles, no inspiration; but the time is coming when we shall want no other Bible than one of miracle and inspiration, because it brings man

nearer to God. The supernatural is the believer's home. There will always be a testing of the Bible. Reasoning men will revolve around it with their questions, but alongside of these will move those who trust, and who go on opening deeper and deeper truths to feed mankind.

*Dr. Phillips Brooks.*

## SIMON PETER — FISHER OF MEN

### I. The Call

He straightened up from his task as his brother approached. Andrew was looking more than usually thoughtful; he was always the more serious of the two and given to times of quiet reflection whilst Simon got on with the net-mending and other tasks demanded by the necessities of their fishing business. When there was vigorous action or hard work to be done it was to Simon that their father Jonah turned, but when it was a matter of quiet calm judgment as to where the fish shoals were likely to be found he always consulted his quieter son; Andrew was the more reliable in such things. Jonah was farther along the beach at the moment, cleaning the boat from the remains of the last catch, and Simon with his usual energy was repairing and adjusting the tackle. He had good-humouredly accepted the fact of his brother's absence and consequent failure to take his own share of the morning's work, knowing that he had gone to see their spiritual leader, John the Baptist, whose instruction in the things of God they had both accepted and whose company they sought during all the moments they could snatch from the arduous business of earning a living.

Simon noticed nothing unusual in his brother's demeanour at first. He was not observant of such things. He motioned Andrew to a pile of nets still requiring attention and bent anew to his own work. Conscious, suddenly, of the other's continued silence, he looked up again, and their eyes met. Andrew's glance was serious; there was also in it a look of wonder, of awe, and strangely, of exultation. Simon's eyebrows lifted in interrogation; he knew his brother and he realised that something out of the ordinary had occurred. "We have found the Messiah" said Andrew simply. The half-mended net slipped through Simon's fingers and fell to the ground. He straightened up slowly as his mind took in the significance of his brother's words. He was not naturally quick at grasping ideas; his dexterity of mind lay more in the realm of physical things, reacting quickly when the wind blew the boat off course or sensing the subtle changes in the weather which betokened the imminent onset of the sudden gales which so often swept across the Sea of Galilee from the opposite mountains. So he stood still for a minute, slowly considering what he had just heard.

"The—Messiah?" he queried, half sceptically and half wonderingly.

Andrew was looking across the calm sea. "We

were with the Master" he said slowly "and there came by one of those whom he had baptised, a man from Nazareth, Jesus the son of Joseph. And as he passed us by, the Master lifted up his voice and cried "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world". And we looked into the eyes of Jesus and from that moment we knew that we were his men for ever. And we went home with him and we spent the night with him and he told us things about the Kingdom of God that even the Master had never told us and we knew that he is indeed He that should come".

Simon stood, taking it in.

"And what says the Master, that you are going to desert him?" he asked at last.

"He said that his work is now finished, that he was sent to herald this coming one and that we must now follow the true Light which is to enlighten every man that cometh into the world. 'He must increase, and I must decrease' he said."

Simon came to a rapid decision. "Take me to him" he demanded, and began immediately to walk away from the beach, leaving Andrew to hurry after him and resign himself to the seven miles walk back to Capernaum.

So Simon met Jesus.

The serene eyes rested upon him, and Simon stood motionless. Then the quiet voice, words which were never in all his life erased from his memory. "You are Simon the son of Jonah. You will win the name of Kephas—the Rock". That was all, but it was enough. Simon knew then that he had found his life's destiny—to follow and serve this Man to the end.

How much more was said at that meeting we do not know. The call to be of the Twelve and to give up his secular occupation to follow Jesus was not yet; that was six or eight months future. For the present he was to spend part of his time with Jesus as formerly he had spent it with John, but he still continued to earn his living as a fisherman. The two brothers were soon on their way back to Beth-Saida and their father, full of the new thing that had come into their lives and doubtless extolling the praises of the Man of Nazareth in the ears of all their relatives and neighbours and friends. From time to time they were with Jesus, as at the wedding in Cana of Galilee where they witnessed the first miracle, the turning of water into wine. They saw the healing of the nobleman's son at Capernaum. They may possibly have accompanied Jesus on his first visit to Jerusalem where he drove the money-changers

out of the Temple and had his historic conversation with Nicodemus. If so they must certainly have been with him as He passed through Samaria on his way back to Galilee and had the memorable talk with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. But all this time they were like so many others, disciples of Jesus who companied with him when he was in their district and went back to their daily work when he was not.

But a change was to come. King Herod had cast John the Baptist into prison and John's work was finished. There was only Jesus to follow now. And Jesus, returning from his first Passover at Jerusalem to preach in the synagogue of his native Nazareth, had been unceremoniously rejected by the townfolk and without much doubt excommunicated. Leaving Nazareth, He and his parents—for there is no evidence that Joseph was yet dead—and such of his brothers and sisters as were not yet married, came to dwell in Capernaum by the lake-side; this was to be Jesus' home and headquarters for the next eighteen months whilst he travelled throughout all Galilee preaching the gospel of the Kingdom. And quite naturally one of the first things He did was to seek out Andrew and Simon.

This time it was Jesus who walked the seven miles between Capernaum and Beth-Saida and there, as He had expected, He found the men He sought (Luke 5). Standing on the seashore with the customary crowd around him, He talked to them about the things of God and the coming Kingdom. Finding the crowd pressing upon him, He looked round for Simon, who was most certainly not very far away, and climbed into his fishing boat, asking him to put off from the land a little way. From that vantage point He finished his discourse.

It was many years before the fishermen of Beth-Saida ceased to talk about the marvellous thing that happened next. Jesus had told Simon to put out into the lake and let down his nets. Simon had demurred; they had already toiled all night and caught nothing. It was evident the fish shoals were nowhere near their end of the lake and their knowledge of the habits of the fish told them that at the moment they would be wasting their time. But Jesus insisted and so Simon and Andrew complied, just to demonstrate to Jesus that no matter what He knew about the things of the Kingdom of God, He understood nothing about the technique of fishing. To their intense astonishment the net filled almost immediately with such superabundance of fishes that it threatened to give way and they had to make frantic gestures to their business partners, James and John the sons of Zebedee, to bring their own

boat to the rescue. And so four very much impressed and subdued men got safe to land with the heaviest catch of fish they had ever landed.

This was the great turning-point in Simon's life. He had come up against a power greater than he had ever imagined and of a nature he could not understand. In the face of what the Lord had done all his old self-esteem vanished. "*Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord*" was his spontaneous exclamation. From self-assertiveness to humility, from arrogance to contrition, he became as in a moment a new man, Christ's man, and Jesus, looking upon him, knew that the time had come to make him and his companions the spear-head of his mission. "*Follow me*" He said to them "*and I will make you fishers of men*" (Matt. 4 Mark 1). "*and straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him*". This marked the end of the old life. During that first six months or so they had combined their discipleship with their fishing business; now the fishing business was finished and they were to be with Jesus all the time. Simon, and his brother Andrew, and John with James the sons of Zebedee, as men with a single mind turned their backs upon the old life and entered together upon the new. And although it was probably several weeks before he formally ordained the Twelve to be his apostles (Matt. 10 Mark 3 Luke 6), there is not much doubt that this was the point of time at which there began that close identification of this band of men with Jesus which set the seal upon their apostleship. Philip and Bartholomew were certainly already in the company, and there were probably others.

It almost seems as if these still very immature believers were to be given incontrovertible proof of our Lord's Divine authority in order soundly to establish their faith in him at the outset, for side by side with the daily preaching, in the open and in the synagogue, of which they were, at present, only silent witnesses, there followed miracle of healing after miracle of healing. Almost immediately they were spectators of the wonder that was wrought in the synagogue at Capernaum, where He cleansed the man afflicted with an unclean spirit, to the amazement of the beholders. From thence the little party entered the home of Simon and Andrew—probably the family home of their father Jonah—to find that Simon's wife's mother had been stricken with a fever; Jesus restored her to health and she arose and ministered to their needs. Then at sunset, the news having got around, the door to the house was besieged by hopeful villagers bringing their sick and maimed for healing at the hands of this wonderful Man. Simon and his fellows must have had plenty to think about that night.

Incidentally, this little story about Simon's wife's mother will bear a second thought. It is upon this incident, recorded by three of the Evangelists, that the knowledge that Simon was a married man is founded. Church tradition goes on to say that his wife accompanied him on his evangelistic journeys in later life and ultimately suffered martyrdom before him. He is supposed to have had a daughter, Petronilla, and a son. Of all this there is no evidence, only various allusions in the works of early Christian writers. Perhaps the most that can be surmised with probability of truth is that Simon's wife shared his faith and became one of the band of women who are occasionally mentioned in the Gospels as endorsing and supporting the mission of Jesus and "ministering to him of their substance" (Luke 8.2-3). There is however just the possibility that she had died young, before the time of this incident; one might ask how it was, if the daughter was in the house all the time, that the mother, newly risen from a sick bed, should be the one to minister to the men. On another point, the story militates against the idea so often met with, and inherited from mediæval times, that Simon Peter was an old man at the time of his call. If his wife's mother was still alive—and few lived beyond the age of sixty or seventy at that time—he himself was not likely to be much out of his twenties if at all. The fact that he survived the death of Jesus by at least thirty years and

even then did not die a natural death is a pointer in the same direction.

In this manner, then, the Call came to Simon Peter. Like his illustrious predecessor Isaiah, he felt himself to be a "man of unclean lips" (Isa. 6) in face of the glory of his Lord but he was accepted and commissioned to bear the message to all Israel and eventually to all men everywhere. Like Isaiah, too, he had no conception at the start what was going to be involved in the life he had chosen. There were to be times of light and dark, times of achievement and of failure, times of exaltation to the heights and of despairing descent into the depths. But at the end he emerged "more than conqueror". That is the value of the story of Simon the Galilean fisherman, of Peter the Apostle and evangelist of Jesus Christ, to us as we in our time follow in the same way. So very human, so very prone to hasty and ill-considered judgments, so quick at coming to the wrong conclusion and so liable to panic at a time of crisis! And yet, on the other hand, so warmly devoted and passionately loyal, so certain that all his Lord had promised would assuredly come to pass, and at the end, so quietly convinced that the star he had followed all his life was no chimera, but a reality which would lead him without fail into the heavenly Kingdom. "*We did not follow cleverly devised myths... but were eyewitnesses of his majesty*".

*To be continued.*

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## HOLINESS AND OBEDIENCE

*"Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: ye shall be unto me a holy nation"* (Exod. 19.4-6) Here are God's first words to his people; He speaks of redemption and its blessings, fellowship with himself: "*Ye have seen how I brought you into myself*". God's will is the expression of his holiness; as we do his will, we come into contact with his holiness. The link between redemption and holiness is obedience.

Obedience is the path to holiness because it is the path to union with God's holy will... it is not itself holiness: but as the will opens itself to accept and to do the will of God, God communicates himself and his holiness.

Obedience: Not knowledge of the will of God, not even approval, not even the will to do it, but the doing of it. Knowledge, and approval, and will, must lead to action. The will of God must

be done. It is not faith, and not worship, and not profession, that God here asks in the first place from his people, when He speaks of holiness; it is obedience. God's will must be *done* on earth, as in heaven. A moment's reflection will make the reason of this clear to us. It is in a man's work that he manifests what he is. I may know what is good, and yet not approve it. I may approve, and yet not will it. I may in a certain sense will it, and yet be wanting in the energy, or the self-sacrifice, or the power that will rouse and do the thing. Thinking is easier than willing, and willing is easier than doing. God wants his will done. This alone is obedience. In this alone it is seen whether the whole heart, with all its strength of will, has given itself over to the will of God; whether we live it, and are ready at any sacrifice to make it our own by doing it. God has no other way for making us holy.

*(Andrew Murray 1890).*

## THE ROD OF GOD'S ANGER

A Study in  
prophecy

### Part I.

*"Ho, Assyrian, the rod of mine anger and the staff of my fury. Against a godless nation I send him, and against the people of my wrath I command him" (Isa. 10.5-6 RSV).*

The 10th chapter of Isaiah commences one of the most important prophetic passages of the Old Testament. Its significance resides in the fact that besides having its primary fulfilment during Isaiah's own day, in the Assyrian king Sennacherib's military campaigns in Judah during the period 710-701 B.C., campaigns which ended with the destruction of his army by Divine intervention, it also constitutes a set of guide-lines to the interpretation of other O.T. foreviews of the events which terminate this present world-age and usher in the Messianic era upon earth. There are a number of striking factors connected with the theme which serve to draw attention to its importance in prophetic study; these will be alluded to in order.

The first four verses of Isa. 10 belong to the preceding chapter. The section from chap. 8.5 to 10.4 comprises the Lord's message to the Israel generation of Isaiah's day warning them that judgment for their apostasies must inevitably come upon them, but the denunciation is combined with the consoling promise that after the judgment will come repentance and blessing and the coming of the Prince of Peace. Verse 5 of chapter 10 starts a new theme; this continues to the end of chapter 12. First of all, in 10.5 to 10.11, "the Assyrian" is hailed as God's instrument of judgment upon Israel. In his arrogance he claims that what he is doing is by his own power and in his own strength, but he does not know that in reality God is using his ambitious designs as the means of Israel's chastisement and when that purpose is achieved he himself will be destroyed (vss. 12-19). Vss. 20-23 leads on to a vision of the far-distant future when Israel will have learned the lesson of this judgment and returned to its own land in peace and prosperity. Vss 24-27 record God's appeal to Israel to have no fear of "the Assyrian" but to rest upon God in faith; as though to test this faith the rest of the chapter, vss 28-34, is a vivid description of the manner in which the invading armies will advance upon and encompass Jerusalem, ending again with the assurance that they advance to their own destruction. As an account of the literal Sennacherib's campaign back in Isaiah's day this is the end of the story, but the greater fulfilment

which Sennacherib prefigured does not end here; it goes on into chap. 11 with the next stage in the Divine programme following the destruction of world evil, the arising of Christ to establish his Millennial Kingdom, the conditions of which are described up to verse 9. Vss 10-16 continue with the theme of the restoration of Israel to the Holy Land at that time; chapter 12 completes the story with the picture of converted and purified Israel, secure in its own land, ready for the part it is to play in the work of world conversion which is the purpose of the Messianic era.

In the O.T. "the Assyrian", referred to in this way five times by Isaiah and several times elsewhere, is always a foreview or a memory of Sennacherib. Because of his boastful claims and arrogance against God he was regarded by every generation of Israelites as the great prototype of God's greatest enemies. Certain "End-Time" prophecies of Daniel, Zechariah and Micah, in addition to Isaiah, are expressed in phraseology reminiscent of that momentous invasion of Judah by this ruthless conqueror.

The prophetic allusions to Sennacherib's campaigns and their relation to the Divine judgment and, later, deliverance, which came to Israel, can only be understood in the light of some knowledge of the history of the period. The historical accounts of this king's military activities in Judah and his disastrous end are found in 2 Kings 18.13 to the end of chap. 19, 2 Chron. 32.1-23, and Isa. chaps. 36 and 37. There is also Sennacherib's own account. A century ago there were discovered at Nineveh two six-sided clay cylinders inscribed with the Assyrian king's own account of the same campaigns. These inscriptions supplement and considerably amplify the Scripture narrative; it is true that Sennacherib says a great deal more than the Bible about the treasures he took away from Judah and is virtually silent about the details of his calamitous defeat at Jerusalem. That, perhaps, is only natural. But the accounts are valuable aids and do throw light upon many of the details which the Scriptures record only briefly. The cylinders, made by the order of Sennacherib fifteen years after the events they record, remain to this day, one in the British Museum and one in the University of Chicago, strong witnesses to the truth of the Bible.

The year was 711 B.C.; Hezekiah was king of Judah and the prophet Isaiah his faithful counsellor. Sargon, king of Assyria, was away fighting

in the east. Taking advantage of the opportunity, the western tributary states of Palestine and Phoenicia had revolted under promise of help from Egypt, help which in the event was not forthcoming. Sargon's son, the Crown Prince Sennacherib, invaded the west as Commander-in-Chief of the forces and suppressed the revolt. The Philistine stronghold of Ashdod was besieged and taken. In 710 the Assyrian turned his attention to Judah, which was on the defensive; this is when towers equipped with weapons were erected on the walls and Hezekiah built his famous tunnel to carry water to the pool of Siloam (2 Chron. 32.1-8) Hezekiah made peace with promise of tribute, and Sennacherib went on to subdue Lower Egypt and return to his own land.

This year, 710 B.C., was the commencement of nine troublous years for Judah. Within four years Sargon was dead and again the Palestinians were in revolt, still under promise of help from Egypt. By 702 Sennacherib, now king, was on the spot again, this time prepared for a thorough settlement of the problem. He first took possession of the Lebanon district and conquered the commercial port of Sidon, so gaining control of the sea-going trade of the Phoenicians, which was one of his objectives. At this the coalition began to break up. The three States of Moab, Ammon and Edom sent messengers to the king with assurances of friendship and submission; they were spared the horrors of war. The Philistines were overrun, only the city of Lachish holding out. Hezekiah alone refused submission and prepared for another siege. (This is where 2 Chron. 32.7-23 and 2 Kings 18.13 to 19.37 apply). This time the Egyptians did come out to help but the Assyrian forces defeated them; with most of Judah in Assyrian hands and Egypt proved a broken reed, as Isaiah had warned would be the case, (Isa. 20. 4-6; see also Isa. 36.6), Hezekiah submitted and paid heavy tribute, (2 Kings 18.14). Sennacherib says that he sent over two hundred thousand captives to Nineveh out of Judah; the Bible is silent as to this save a possible allusion in Isa. 22.

The Philistine city of Lachish was still holding out and this being the one remaining obstacle on the way to Egypt, Sennacherib's forces commenced a siege. For the second time Egyptian troops, aided this time by Ethiopians, advanced into Palestine. The Assyrian had to divide his forces, some to hold the Egyptians at Libnah in the south of Palestine, some to maintain the siege of Lachish, and another detachment detailed to surround Jerusalem, despite the agreement with Hezekiah, and demand its capitulation. This was the stage of which so much is said in Kings, Chronicles and Isaiah. Conforming to the

prophet's advice, Hezekiah put his trust in the Lord and defied the Assyrian general. "*Then the angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and four score and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed...*" (Isa. 37.36-37). That was the end; Sennacherib never returned. And for many years afterwards the people of Israel had peace.

All this and many other details not alluded to at the moment, form the background to several Old Testament foreviews of the events characterising the destruction of evil at the end of this present Age. The basis for this understanding seems to reside in what seems at first sight to be a most unlikely text, Isa. 20.1; "*In the year that Tartan came unto Ashdod (when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him) and fought against Ashdod, and took it*". The Assyrian word "tartan" (*tartanu*) signified the commander-in-chief of the army, and this was Sennacherib's office when he captured Ashdod in 711 B.C. and then turned his attention to Jerusalem in 710. Now this year 710 seems to be a significant one in the revealed timing of the Divine purpose. It forms the exact mid-point between the institution of Israel as the chosen nation of God at Sinai in 1452 B.C. and the final rejection ("*your house is left unto you desolate*"), at the Crucifixion in A.D. 33. It is also the mid-point between the birth of Ishmael in 2057 B.C. and the completion of the conquest of Palestine by the Arab descendants of Ishmael under Caliph Omar in 638 A.D. from which time Arabic claim to possession of the land subsists. It is also the mid-point, certainly within a few years, between the commencement of the Hebrew prophetic ministry in David the king, accession 1017 B.C., and its end with the death of Malachi about 403 B.C. during which time the Divine messages of warning and hope were constantly in their ears. There is fairly reasonable ground for thinking that, within a century or so at any rate, it also forms the mid-point of the entire history of this present world-age, from the warning period which immediately preceded the Flood to the similar warning period which constitutes the "signs of the times" of the approaching Messianic Age.

All this can hardly be accidental; at this time also, Isaiah, according to Isa. 20.2-3, was to conduct himself in a stipulated manner to make himself a "sign" to all observers, declaring that within a few more years the power of the existing great world-ruler, Egypt, was to be broken before the rising strength of a new tyrant, Assyria: Elsewhere in Isaiah it is revealed that the new usurper was to be destroyed by Divine interven-

tion before even realising the fruits of victory and *that in all this Israel would learn the futility of placing its trust in any earthly power, and eventually turn to God for deliverance.* The likeness of all this to what is so often foreseen in Scripture as the manner in which the kingdoms of this world will eventually become the Kingdom of God is so marked that one might very reasonably conclude that here we have a kind of Divine marker, *saying in effect; here in the events of this short period, commencing with Sennacherib's first threat to Jerusalem in 710 B.C. and culminating in his final overthrow in 701, there is enshrined a picture in miniature of the more spectacular events staged on a greater scale, which are to mark the period of the ending of this present age and the overthrow of all its forces of evil.* At the very least, the details of this nine-year period, as recorded in both the Scriptures and Sennacherib's inscriptions (Taylor cylinder, so called after its discoverer), can throw some light upon the significance of various allusions in Daniel 11, Micah 5 and Zechariah 14.

Of these three, Micah is the earliest in point of time. Contemporary with Isaiah, and therefore himself involved in the events of Sennacherib's campaign, from some internal indications his prophecy would appear to have been spoken or written before the fall of Samaria and the Ten-Tribe captivity. He foresaw the Babylonian captivity, *still more than a century future, and he may well have foreseen the Assyrian invasion of Judah before it occurred on the basis of what he already knew of Assyrian oppression in Samaria.* At any rate, in his 5th chapter, which is a Messianic preview, he brings together in masterly fashion the conflict between the evil forces of this world, symbolised by "the Assyrian", and *the irresistible power of the Ruler who emanates from Bethlehem, interwoven with the triumph of God's faithful ones who are delivered from the Assyrian and proceed then to evangelise the nations.*

The second analogy enshrines the words of the revealing angel to Daniel in his 11th chapter. The passage describing the deeds of the "king of the north" *who at the Time of the End invades and ravages and crushes all opposition until he meets his own end at the standing up of Michael, the champion of Israel, is so reminiscent of Sennacherib's invasion in the days of Hezekiah*

*that it might almost have been written with that story in mind. Were Daniel 11 the unaided work of man that might well be so, but we have to remember that this passage constitutes part of a message from above, revealed to Daniel by the power of the Holy Spirit, and the choice of words, the descriptive background, is of God. If it is manifestly analogous to Sennacherib's actions that can only be because the student is expected to follow the analogy for the detailed interpretation of the revelation.*

The whole of Dan. 11 is a guarded and necessarily somewhat obscure foreview of world history as it affects God's people from the time of Daniel himself to the end of this Age and the inauguration of the Messianic Age. The relevant portion dealing with the "king of the north" and the close of the Age is contained within vs. 36-45 and it is this portion which is capable of considerable illumination when compared with the Judean campaign of Sennacherib. The stage, of course, is immeasurably widened and the actors representative of world powers greater by far than those who in that past day wrangled over the possession of Judah. Sennacherib becomes the "king of the north", a great world power emerging late in the Age, almost at its end; Egypt the older world power which has borne rule more or less from the beginning. Judah and Jerusalem picture the regathered and purified "Holy Nation" of the End Time, awaiting that spectacular deliverance from the enmity of the world which is symbolised by the "standing up" of Michael, the Lord Christ at his Second Advent. On this basis there is much in a detailed examination of the passage to repay the effort.

Finally, against a different background and covering a much shorter period of time, there is the brief but eloquent vision in Zech. 14 describing the gathering of all the nations of the world against Israel regathered in faith, and the intervention of God from heaven to deliver his people and declare the establishment of the Messianic kingdom. Two or three allusions here are reminiscent of Sennacherib, and the analogy does facilitate the interpretation of what has often been felt to be a difficult metaphorical passage.

But the full elucidation of these three Scriptural prophecies in the light of the Sennacherib analogy must form the subject of further instalments.

*To be continued.*

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

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

*F. D. Maurice 1853.*

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## THE STORY OF THE DELUGE

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### 7. The Flood was upon the Earth

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After a somewhat lengthy consideration of the theories and hypotheses of men endeavouring to elucidate the natural causes which precipitated the Flood, we come back to Noah and his family, sitting inside the Ark, counting seven slow days from the tenth day of the second month until the seventeenth day, waiting for the fulfilment of God's word and the coming of Divine judgment. It really does not matter to us how the Flood came or what was its actual cause; all the evidence, documentary and geologic, is that it was a colossal invasion of the sea from the south, be the originating phenomenon behind that invasion what it may. We are really concerned with understanding as accurately as we can, from the brief record we have, just what was the experience of Noah and his family during that momentous year and eleven days during which the antediluvian world came to its catastrophic end.

So our thoughts come back to those eight persons of faith, the only ones in all the world who believed God, shut up inside the only possible haven of refuge from the wrath to come, surrounded by a heedless and scornful world which went on with its daily interests, unbelieving, ignorant. And far to the south of that land with its shining cities, away at the other end of the southern ocean which they had probably never even explored, there rushed towards them the Angel of Vengeance which was to sweep their land with the besom of destruction and leave God's world ready for a fresh start.

It does seem that a number of allusions in the narrative, in addition to the physical evidences, are best explained on the basis that it really was the descent to earth of the "waters of the firmament", previously discussed, that caused the Deluge. This may become more evident as the story unfolds. And if such be the case then the first act in the drama was played, not in the land of Iraq where the Ark waited, but seven thousand miles away in the Antarctic. This presentation is built upon that assumption. If in fact the premise is not justified, and the gigantic tidal wave which undeniably did cause the Deluge owed its origin to other and more mundane causes, then the effect would be much the same but on not so widespread a scale. It is this fact which lends so much support to the Valian canopy theory as the cause of the Deluge; the Bible account can hardly be satisfied by anything of a lesser nature.

Gravitating, over an immense period, closer and closer to the Poles, the masses of suspended

water finally broke through the denser atmosphere near the earth and descended to its surface, probably in the form of snow and ice crystals, bringing with them cold of an intensity that had not been known in those hitherto genial regions since man had been on earth. It has already been shown that the effect of the "canopy" was to maintain a reasonably warm and genial climate over the whole planet. That condition was abruptly terminated and the Polar seas subjected to the intrusion of colossal masses of ice-cold water. Geologists claim that at some time in recent geological history the oceans were quite suddenly increased in depth by some 300 feet; if it could be thought that this was in fact due to the waters of the Deluge then the catastrophe involved some eight million cubic miles of water and the relatively sudden addition of this to the Polar seas would have immediate repercussions.

The first would be the creation of a giant "tsunami", or series of tidal waves, spreading out from each Pole over the oceans. Tidal waves are fairly common, often due to submarine earthquakes, and can be as much as 500 feet high and travel across the ocean at 500 miles an hour. Ships hardly notice them because the wave is in the form of a long swell, sometimes a hundred miles or more from front to rear, which lifts the ship almost imperceptibly, and the real damage is when the wave hits the land, it may be five or six thousand miles away. In this instance the waves travelled northward across the Indian Ocean; as they became restricted between the converging coasts of Africa and India, and the sea-bed became more shallow, their speed lessened but their height increased. And the continuing fall of the waters from heaven sent more and more waves in succession. Then came the wind. The forcible displacement of the Antarctic atmosphere by so great a volume of alien water meant that the air had to go somewhere, and go it did, in a roaring tempest of ice-cold wind which increased the impetus of the speeding waters and followed them northward. And as it did so the warmer air of the antediluvians' homeland, laden with water vapour, was in turn displaced by the icy blast and forced upward into the upper skies, there to erupt into storms of thunder and lightning such as man had never seen before; and down came the rain, rain of unimaginable intensity, rain born of the frightful conflict between hot and cold air that was raging in the upper atmosphere, rain that heralded a complete and

drastic change in the climatic conditions of the earth.

When a tidal wave reaches the coast its waters bank up to a terrifying height and if the land is low-lying the destruction is immense. What is said to be the highest such wave recorded in modern times hit the coast of Kamchatka, Eastern Siberia, in 1737; that wave was 210 feet high. The wave resulting from the volcanic eruption on the island of Santorin in the Mediterranean in the fifteenth century before Christ is calculated to have been 100 feet high when it swept over the island of Crete, destroyed ninety thriving cities and virtually all the inhabitants, completely wiping out the Cretan civilisation. The story of the Flood has been repeated, on a lesser scale perhaps, many times in subsequent world history.

The available data is too uncertain to hazard an estimate of the height of the "forward wave" which first struck the doomed cities. Its probable speed can be calculated; leaving the Antarctic at 500 miles an hour it would travel up the Persian Gulf at about sixty miles an hour and burst over Noah's land at that speed. A glance at a large scale map will show that the mountainous coastlines of Arabia and Persia, and the tortuous entrance to the Gulf, would tend to limit the force of the waters before they began to spread over the low-lying lands of Eastern Arabia and Iraq. Nevertheless more and more water came in from the ocean, driven still by the relentless wind and the continuing fall of the "canopy" waters, so that the inundation of the land became, as Genesis says it did, progressively deeper over a span of forty days.

Perhaps the best picture of the position as it actually affected Noah in the Ark is given by the experience of the captain and crew of the U.S.A. battleship "*Waterloo*" in 1868.

During the afternoon of 8th August 1868 the seaport town of Arica, Peru, was wrecked by a severe earthquake. The "*Waterloo*", with several other ships, was at anchor in the port. Soon after dark the lookout reported the coming of a tidal wave. Says the eye-witness report "*its crest... showed frightful masses of black water below... we could do nothing but watch this monstrous wave approach... we could only hold on to the rails and wait for the catastrophe. With a terrifying din, our ship was engulfed, buried under a half-liquid, half-solid, mass of sand and water. We stayed under for a suffocating eternity; then, groaning in all her timbers, our solid old Waterloo pushed her way to the surface, with her gasping crew still hanging on to the rails.*" The report goes on to say that the ship was then carried along at a very great speed in the darkness and after a time became motionless. The crew concluded they

had run aground, and waited for the morning.

When dawn came they found that their vessel was lying on the lower slopes of a mountain *two miles* from the sea. Not far off lay a Peruvian navy ironclad, on her side, and an English three-masted sailing ship. The vessels had been carried over sand dunes, a valley and a railway line; all around was a scene of desolation. From marks on a mountain precipice near by they found that the water had been nearly fifty feet deep before it receded.

In that case the waters receded. In the case of Noah they went on until they filled the entire plain, five hundred miles long by three hundred miles wide, and increased their depth continuously under the pressure of the sustained flow from the south. To the heedless and unbelieving multitudes it must have been a terrifying sight. When tidal waves strike the lands surrounding the Pacific Ocean, Japan, the East Indies, South America, and so on, where they are comparatively frequent, advance warning of their coming is given by an observing station located on Hawaii, and the people flee to the mountainous regions. In the antediluvian world there were no mountainous regions; the land was, and is, flat and little higher than sea level. And they had rejected the advance warning. Maybe no written description can fitly convey the sight that met their incredulous eyes.

Away in the south, across the whole horizon, where normally golden fields met blue sky, appeared a long grey wall, a wall of immeasurable height, seeming almost to touch the sky, a moving wall, a living wall. Even as the spectators watched, it advanced, its upper line swallowing up the heavens, its base submerging the fields, at incredible speed, its whole visible face rippling and moving, glimpsing white streaks and patches of foam, bearing down upon them like an avenging fury. They saw now the foot of the giant wave, a surging torrent of boiling foam stretching out before it, carrying on its brow heaps of debris, and they saw that foam surge over and swallow up the long black vessel which had been the butt of their jokes for so many years past. They saw the Ark leap up as it were to meet the oncoming Flood and they saw it disappear into the depths of the great wall of water which swept over it as if it had been a matchstick. Then the avenging colossus gathered homes and palaces and temples, trees and shrubs, men and women, into one confused mass, and carried them all away, mingled with the sand and clay and gravel scooped up from the plain by the torrent. All that was left of that godless world lay buried beneath many feet of silt and mud, never again to see the light of day. And as the relentless waters rolled on,

speeding to the north, a frightful conflict began in the heavens above. The wind, whipped up to gale force, resolved itself into a tempestuous cyclone and the heavens dropped water, a torrential downpour such as the world had never known since the days of man, a downpour that was to continue unceasingly for forty days and forty nights.

At the first impact of the waters the Ark would have been completely submerged but its triangular shape and wide flat base would offer minimum resistance to the onrush and eliminate danger of capsizing. But it must have been a terrifying experience for the occupants, shrouded in pitch darkness and unable to do anything to help themselves. That phase passed—it probably lasted only a few minutes—and the buoyancy of the vessel brought it to the surface, where it floated, borne along by the current but in no danger.

The events of the months that followed are graphically related in the 7th and 8th chapters of Genesis, in much more detail than in the Babylonian and Assyrian accounts which have survived. There can be no doubt that the Bible account is the oldest; it bears all the signs of being the work of an eye-witness. The other records are legends, copied and re-copied from time to time by Sumerian and Babylonian and Assyrian scribes; although derived at the beginning from the same story that we have in the Bible they have been altered and modified through the centuries and combined, in some degree, with sundry recollections of other lesser river-floods which devastated Iraq in the centuries following the Deluge. Thus Noah is stated to have been king of the city of Shuruppak, which was not founded until at least five hundred years after the Deluge. The legendary narratives however have preserved a vivid impression of the onset of the Flood waters and because they do confirm that the catastrophe was due to an invasion by the sea from the south the relevant part of the account is repeated here. There are many versions—some twenty-six tablets or portions of tablets exist, giving variant details, and the translations which have been made vary greatly in style and phraseology so that it seems best to present a compound rendering which preserves the common testimony of the various tablets as nearly as possible.

“With the coming of early dawn there appeared on the horizon a black cloud. Ramman (*the stormgod*) thundered in the midst of it, and the lord Nabu (*the messenger of the gods*) marched in front, devastating the mountains and the plain. Nergal (*the god of the abyss*) made the storm to burst, and Adar (*the god of war*) advanced, over-

throwing all before him. The Annunaki (*the spirits of the earth*) lifted up their flaming torches; with the brightness thereof they lit up the earth (*this refers to lightning*). The inundation swelled up to the sky. The daylight was turned into darkness, and the waters rose on the mountains. The hurricane attacked in fury, and the deluge swept over houses and temples.

“For six days and six nights blew the flood-wind as the south-storm swept the land. The hurricane, the great-sea-waves and the diluvian rain continued in all their strength. Hurricane and flood marched on, subduing the land. The great ship was tossed by the hurricane upon the mighty waters. Then when the seventh day approached the flood-carrying south-storm subsided. The terrible great-sea-waves, which had assailed after the fashion of an earthquake, grew weaker. The sea grew quiet, the tempest was calmed, the flood ceased. I beheld the sea; its voice was silent, and the land was as level as a flat roof.

“I opened the window, and down on my face streamed the sunlight. Into the distance I peered, to the horizon bounding the sea, and there was no land. Then twelve measures away there appeared an island” (this “measure” was probably the “*geshu*” of ten Babylonian stades which would make the distance about fifteen miles) and on the mountain of the land of Nisir the ship came to rest.

“For six days Mount Nisir held the ship fast. On the seventh day I sent out a dove, and let her go where she would. The dove flew hither and thither but found no resting-place and she returned. Then I sent out a swallow and she flew hither and thither but found no resting-place and she returned. Then I sent out a raven; she flew away and found the waters sinking. She ate and rested and did not return.”

The similarity to the Genesis account is obvious; the only marked difference is that the initial stage of the catastrophe is said to have lasted for six days instead of the Biblical five months. The Bible is however much more explicit in its detailed account of the progress of the Flood. Verses 17 to 20 of Genesis 8 describe its increasing depth as more and more water arrived from the south. From indications near the site of Nineveh it would seem that the Flood reached this point which means that over the south Babylonian plain the water was at least nine hundred feet deep and could have been more. Note the indication in Genesis of the steadily increasing depth over the first forty days “*The flood was forty days upon the earth, and the waters increased, and bare up the Ark, and it was lifted up above the earth... and the waters prevailed, and were increased greatly upon the earth, and the ark went upon the*

*face of the waters . . . . and the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth and all the high hills were covered . . . . fifteen cubits upwards did the waters prevail, and the mountains were covered".* If the waters attained a depth of nine hundred feet the rate of increase would only be one foot an hour, quite imperceptible to the occupants of the Ark. It would inevitably go with the current and wind towards the north and by the end of the forty days find itself more or less toward the northern end of the Babylonian plain.

*"And the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days" (ch. 7 vs. 24).* After the first forty days, for the rest of this five months the waters remained more or less stationary, held at their abnormally high level partly by the pressure of further tidal waves coming in from the south and partly by the fierce storm-wind still emanating from the same source. But the end of this condition was at hand. *"God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaged. The fountains of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained. And the waters returned from off the earth continually" (ch. 8 vs. 1-3).* What this means is that the downrush of waters from above the Poles diminished and stopped, and with that cessation the great tidal waves ceased to flow and the gale force wind from the south died away and was silent. The turbulent skies above the Ark with their almost continuous thunder and lightning became quiet, and the torrential rain ceased to fall. A new phenomenon became apparent to Noah; another wind, not a gale as had raged from the south, but a softer, gentler wind, came from the north-east and began to urge the pent-up waters back to the source from which they had come.

This wind that God had made to pass over the earth whose effect was to assuage (*shakak*—to subside) the waters, is a most intriguing part of the story. It had its origin in natural causes which no later writer could have known about had the Deluge story been a later invention; it is one of the evidences that this account is by an eye-witness. With the disappearance of the aerial waters the sun was shining down upon the flooded plain with unaccustomed brilliance and power—the Babylonian legends all make special mention of the sunlight when the Ark was opened—and the time was April, verging on to summer. Just as the Poles were from now on going to be much colder, so the land Noah knew was destined to be much warmer. A new climate pattern was being

initiated, induced by this difference in temperature between the tropical and temperate regions. The air over the Equator is warm and light; colder and heavier air from the temperate regions is continually pouring in and driving the lighter, warmer air upwards. The earth's rotation gives these incoming north and south winds a twist towards the west so that they appear in the northern hemisphere as north-east and in the southern as south-east winds. These are known as the "Trade Winds" and in the days of sailing-ships were important aids to mariners. As the seasons change the hot region towards which the Trade Winds blow moves north and south with the sun; hence the latitude affected by the Trades moves north and south correspondingly. Hence there is a region in which the Trades blow in summer but not in winter; in the northern hemisphere this lies between Lat 30 and 42 degrees, which is the precise latitude of Iraq, the scene of the Flood.

So it came about that during that year of the Flood the changed climatic conditions produced the Trade Winds for the first time. The wind that God *"caused to pass over the earth"* to assuage the waters was the North-East Trade, blowing down from Southern Europe and Siberia into Iraq, persistently from April to September, just the relevant months in the Biblical narrative. By September the water was virtually gone.

The Flood took five months to drain away. That may seem a long time, but another look at the map shows that the Persian Gulf connects with the ocean by an extremely narrow passage, only thirty miles wide, flanked on both sides by high mountain ranges. All the pent-up waters of the Flood had to escape through that narrow passage. The water had taken five months to attain its maximum depth; it now required five months to subside.

During that five months, and for another two months thereafter, the Ark remained stranded on a mountain. Which particular mountain it was has been the subject of argument for ages—there are at least six contestants for the honour in the Middle East. The Bible says the Ark rested *"on the mountains of Ararat"*; this was a land roughly equivalent to modern Kurdistan extending from Lake Van to the south-west of Lake Urmia, about 300 miles north to south. The Assyrian tablets say it was Mount Nisir, which was in southern Kurdistan. But all the details of where the Ark landed and what happened while the Flood was drying up must wait for another chapter.

*To be continued.*

There is no witness of the Christian Church like its own unity. Jesus, knowing this, and realising how divided his followers were, prayed earn-

estly to his Father *"That they may be one; as thou father art in me, and I in thee, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."* (John 17.21.)

## ELDAD AND MEDAD

A Reflection on  
Num. 11. 27-29

Eldad and Medad had been slaves in Egypt. Born slaves of a nation of slaves, they hardly dared hope that deliverance would come in their own lifetime. Until Moses came their way. The name of Moses had been familiar for many years to all their friends and acquaintances in the slave village which was their home. He was a great man and lived at the King's Palace, and was reputedly the son of the King's daughter. Eldad and Medad knew better; it was whispered from mouth to mouth, when the Egyptian taskmasters were looking the other way, that Moses was in reality one of themselves. Some of their own kindred had seen and spoken with his father and mother. Miriam his sister, and Aaron his brother, were slaves like themselves. There was a reason, too, for Moses being at the King's Palace. He was learning all the wisdom of the Egyptians so that one day he could lead the slaves out of their bondage into a land where they could live as free men. Eldad and Medad, young men both, straightened their backs and their eyes glowed with pride and hope as they talked about that. They had been brought up by godly parents and although very few of their fellow-slaves believed in God or had any hope that He might one day deliver, Eldad and Medad had been well instructed in the ancient stories of their ancestors and they knew of God's promise to their forefather Abraham, that after many years in Egypt He would cause them to be delivered. There was no outward evidence that the time had yet come or was anywhere near, nevertheless there were days when they hoped, and talked with brighter eyes and fast-beating hearts.

Then came that bitter disappointment when Moses left the King's Palace and disappeared—none knew where. There was talk of some trouble; an Egyptian overseer had been killed and Moses was concerned in it; no one seemed to know much about the details but one thing was definite—Moses was no longer their hoped-for champion. Eldad and Medad conversed about it at times but for the most part they kept their thoughts to themselves, even yet hoping against hope that in some wonderful way God might remember them and fulfil his promise.

They had waited a long time—forty years since the disappearance of Moses and in all that long period no sign that God either knew or cared. Eldad and Medad were no longer young men now; they had both passed their threescore years and began to find the daily tale of brickmaking

strangely arduous, much more so than of yore. But there were compensations. To the little circle of slaves that, unlike the majority of their fellows, refused to worship the gods of Egypt but held fast to the dim traditions of Abraham and the promise Eldad and Medad had become pillars of strength. They still believed, strong in faith, and looked daily for the coming of the Deliverer. Somehow there was in them the workings of a Spirit, telling them that the time would not be much longer delayed . . .

\* \* \*

He came, with breathless haste, that young man, so zealous for the honour of his master and leader, the great Moses. From the centre of the camp of Israel he had run, across the level sand shimmering in the blinding glare of the noon-day sun, to where Moses stood at the gate of the Tabernacle. The seventy elders, grave, dignified sons of Israel, supremely conscious of their position of ministers to the Lord's people, made way somewhat reluctantly to give him access to the Leader. Joshua, taut and rigid in his soldier's attire, stepped forward a half pace, hand on sword, almost as if to challenge the newcomer's progress. Only Moses remained calm, unruffled.

The runner halted, panting. He was almost out of breath, but not so much that he could not turn and point, with not altogether steady finger, to the dense crowd of men and women which could be discerned, even at this distance, in the great space at the centre of the black goatskin tents. He spoke, hurriedly, his voice one in which subservience and indignation were strangely mingled, and as he spoke the enquiring eyes of the listening elders sought the face of Moses and remained fixed on him. "*Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp!*"

It was true! While the rest of the elders of Israel had gathered at the Tent of Meeting to hear the instructions of God at the mouth of Moses, the Divine Spirit had rested upon those two who had remained back there in the Camp, and now they were prophesying there among the people, telling them of the things of God, without any mandate or permission from Moses the Leader. Disapproval showed itself on each countenance; resentment that these two men should apparently have appointed themselves to proclaim and teach the truth of God without waiting for or seeking an ordination from Moses the accepted leader of the people in things relating to their covenant with God. A whispering began,

a shaking of heads; these two men were surely slighting the company of the elders, setting up their own judgment as against the judgment of the majority. This independence of thought and action ought to be stopped; the Lord surely had already shown that his favour was with the organised body of elders and the priesthood in whose care reposed the Tabernacle and all its ceremonies. What right had these two, owning responsibility to no influential company in Israel, subject to no kind of control from priest or prince, to assert for themselves the privilege of preaching to the people? Surely Moses would quickly put a stop to this incipient heresy. He had been in the mountain with God and had spoken with God and God had given him the Law which he had written with his own finger; Moses would surely very soon put these upstarts in their proper place. The elders turned towards him expectantly, still burning with indignation at this audacity. "*Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp.*"

Joshua had sprung forward, his youthful features alive with fiery zeal. The hand grasping the sword twitched nervously. There was outraged loyalty and hot jealousy for his Leader's honour in his tone, as he cried impetuously "My Lord Moses, forbid them!"

The magnificent figure of Moses stood motionless, his clear eyes piercing into the distance straightly to those two dynamic forms in the middle of the crowd, moving from side to side and gesturing with hand and arm as they addressed the multitude. Long did he gaze, and slowly withdrew his eyes from viewing that distant scene to turn them upon those who now crowded around him so closely. He looked upon the runner, waiting before him, so secure in his knowledge of duty well done; upon the righteous elders, every movement of their robes betokening the quivering of outraged dignity; upon Joshua, standing there in wrathful indignation; and as he looked, the keen eyes suddenly softened, the stern lips, almost hidden by the shaggy beard, parted in a half smile, and in an indulgent, almost fatherly tone, he asked them "Enviest thou for my sake?" The strong hands moved suddenly in a gesture of entreaty; the fine eyes looked upward with an expression of unutterable longing. "*WOULD TO GOD*" cried the great Prophet of Israel "*WOULD TO GOD THAT ALL THE LORD'S PEOPLE WERE PROPHETS AND THAT THE LORD WOULD PUT HIS SPIRIT UPON THEM!*"

\* \* \*

More than three thousand years have passed since that memorable day. We have not learned the lesson yet. We, many of us, still circle around our favourite leader, our favourite organisation, our favourite avenue of service, and refuse to

admit to ourselves the supreme truth that God, Who has all the resources of all his creation at his command, all the heart's devotion and life's endeavour of all who have given their lives to him, on which to call, is not limited to one means of expression or one channel of revelation in the world of men. The One Who "hath made everything beautiful in his time" (Eccl. 3. 11), Who has evolved the flowers and the trees, the insects and the birds, the mountains and the valleys, into a thousand different forms and has never made any one sunset exactly like another must surely be pleased to beautify his truth with the same variety of expression and diversity of ministration. The Apostle Paul tells us as much. Does he not say "*there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are diversities of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operation, but it is the same God which worketh all in all . . . all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will*" (1 Cor. 12. 4-11)? We must needs be positive in our own beliefs in Divine Truth and zealous in the discharge of the work that has been committed to our hands; that does not entitle us to assume that there can be no other acceptable service for our Lord nor that none who have not received their ordination to ministry through our own channel can share in the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit. No single well can give forth all the stored waters of the earth and no one river can carry all the rainfall from the heavens; neither can any one of us comprehend, far less expound and minister, more than the veriest fraction of the accumulated treasures of wisdom and knowledge that are gathered up within God's holy Word.

Let us then in our own service and ministry bear this great truth in mind and look with sympathetic brotherliness upon all who are serving with their talents our gracious Master. Let us seek to find true fellowship wherever the Spirit of Christ is manifest and let us, in our own allegiance to the things we ourselves have received, try to help, rather than hinder, those who are labouring in a different corner of the vineyard. The disciples tried once to restrain some who "followed not with us", and Jesus reproved them. "*Forbid them not*" He said "*for there is no man that shall do a miracle in my name that can lightly speak evil of me*" (Mark 9. 38-40). When Peter, more concerned about the Lord's intentions for others than for himself, asked "Lord, what shall this man do?" he was told, very kindly but none the less plainly, to mind his own business and see to the execution of his own commission. "*Go thou and preach the gospel.*" So with us; we enter most into the spiritual presence of our Lord if we realise that He is conducting a great work here on earth in this our

day; that to each one of us is committed some very small and yet some very definite and very important part of that work; that we individually are not permitted to view the whole work in its entirety and, indeed could not do so, but that our Master has all the threads in his own strong hands and will bring all together in one harmonious structure in his own due time. Meanwhile we do well to pray

and labour for the increase of the number of those who will serve the Lord. "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that He would send forth labourers into the harvest." The need is great, there is room and yet room for all who will come and serve our Lord. Would to God, let this be our prayer, would to God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them!

## THE SHINING ONES

A quiet  
meditation

*"Though ye have lien among the pots yet shall you be as the wings of a dove, covered with silver and her feathers with yellow gold."* (Psa. 68.13).

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

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

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

Some of the world's finest and most useful people have come from obscure corners and humble homes to shine in the affairs of men like knights in silver armour with breastplates of gold presented to all the fiery darts of a malicious opposition. David himself was one chosen from the sheepcote to be anointed king of Israel. Sallying forth in his shepherd's tunic, armed with sling and pebbles, he was the knight of God, battling with giant opposition, planting a victorious foot on a loud-voiced, bragging foe.

God's choice of men, women and circumstances rarely coincide with those of human choice.

History has proved how wise and fitting are his arrangements, far above and infinitely better than those thought out by man's wisdom.

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

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

Had human wisdom chosen the birthplace of that Son, nothing less than a golden crib in the palace of earth's mightiest ruler would have satisfied a fastidious choice. But God chose a stable with the manger of the tired donkeys for a cot and that lowly place of birth has captured the imagination of the world. Pilgrims of all nations find their way to Bethlehem, there to bend the knee, to bow head and heart upon that unlikely spot from which emerged the Light of the World. Artists have employed their finest talents, endeavouring to depict the scene, when men and angels adored the birth of One who has left an indelible mark upon the history of mankind. Yearly the scene of that humble nativity is enacted in song and story, the theme vaguely understood but closely connected with the life and hopes of humanity.

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

The prophets of Israel understood the mind of God. They had grasped his purpose. That He was no respecter of persons, that he passed by the pomps and vanities of this world, seeking and

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

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

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

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

Indeed God's ways and thoughts are not as man's. When finally the curtain rises on a new Age with a great burst of light from the ascending Sun of Righteousness in the new Heavens, seen shining with him in that bright firmament will be some of those humble, foolish, weak, despised outsiders, who in their lifetime wore neither crown nor mitre,

who occupied no important office, who played no central role in any assembly, who were not clever enough to be scholars, but who were wise and loving enough to be saints. "*Though ye have lien among the pots*" applies to goodness, wisdom and beauty in whatever form they have been shrugged off and neglected by the short-sightedness of the policies of self-seeking peoples.

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

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

"*He will lift up an ensign to the nations from far.*" An ensign for the people, for the nations, is a rallying place, a standard, a banner, enlisting and uniting them in a common cause. It is a sign of

challenge and of victory over opposing forces. When the King of kings and Lord of lords goes out to make final war against the forces of evil which have so long riddled society and destroyed the happiness of mankind, his banner will be unfurled above the fallen standards of this world. Not on his breastplate will leap the quartered leopards or the staff-hugging bear; not on his spotless flag the lion rampant or the double-headed eagle. If there is a natural emblem at all it will be the dove of peace, the emblem of love and goodwill, whose harmlessness he recommended to his followers.

God's ways are the opposite of man's. In the new heavens and new earth where all things will be created new, the differences between his kingdom and those of this world will be in strong contrast. Righteousness, right living, right thinking, justice and love will dominate and permeate the earth, for "*He shall speak peace to the heathen; and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even unto the ends of the earth*" (Zech. 9.10).

Neither the lion of the tribe of Judah, the star of David or the lamb bearing the cross, commendable though these emblems are, will so emphasise the spirit of the reigning Prince of peace, as that form of the dove which descended upon him at Jordan. When Jesus cleared the bustling merchandise out of the Temple he forbore to overturn the cages of the doves. Sheep and oxen he drove

before him with a hastily made whip of rushes; the tables of the moneylenders he threw to the floor, caring nothing for the coinage rolling in all directions, but at the seats of those who sold doves he issued a command and that they should be carried out. The gentle emblems of purity received his gentle consideration.

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

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

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

(J. G. Whittier.)

In the earliest days of Christianity it was revealed there is no power which can do battle with the beast except the Lion of the tribe of Judah, which, in the eyes of a prophet of that time, seemed like a Lamb standing as though it had been slain. If in those first days, when the life of the Church appeared to hang so precariously in the balance, there could be traced clear signs of battle joined between the great beast and the spotless Lamb, surely now, in what may be the final hours of modern civilisation, it is not unreasonable to discern a like tremendous struggle. In the midst of such a conflict it would be rather

foolish to try to make things a little better, bringing in here a little and there a little of the spirit of Christian charity. The struggle between the Lamb and the beast is one in which no quarter is asked and none is given; at such an hour nothing less than a complete surrender to the leadership of Christ can be of the slenderest service. Our halting obedience and our careful policies have undone us at the last and, if the Lord Christ can find it in his heart to make any use of us at all, it can now be only as we are ready to follow him whithersoever He may care to lead.

(Rev. Paul Gliddon, 1946)

In a deep sense it is possible for me to be living in heaven, even while still on earth. My heart can be resting in the peace of heaven; my mind seeing by its light; my soul drawing strength and inspiration from that other world. I shall feel increasingly that that is the world to which I really belong, and that the things of that world matter most to me.

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. He that sets oftenest these ships of desire, that makes the most voyages to the land of spices and pearls, shall be sure to improve his stock most, and have most of heaven on earth.

## WRITTEN IN THE BOOK

Comments on  
Bible criticism

*This page discusses points cited by modern scholarship apparently impugning the veracity of Bible history or miracle.*

*Is there an inconsistency in Luke's summary of the genealogy of Christ where in Luke 3:36 he interposes the name Cainan between Arphaxad and Salah, whereas none of the three "family trees" in the Old Testament, — Gen 10, and 11, and 1 Chron 1, contain this name. Does this not impugn the reliability of the Bible generally? It is admitted the point is of little importance except perhaps to chronologers.*

It is true that the present Hebrew text (the Massoretic) from which the Authorised Version and most modern translations are derived, omits this name. The Septuagint, the Greek rendering from the Hebrew made about 250 B.C., contains it. The Septuagint was the Bible in use at the First Advent and if Luke took his genealogies from the Book of Genesis he would naturally use this version and thus Cainan would appear in his list. It is thought though that he may have had his information from Temple or family records which then also would have had the name. This however only leads to the question; which is correct, Massoretic or Septuagint?

There has been a fair amount of crossing of swords over this problem. Existing copies of the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Bible of the Samaritans, which diverged from the Jewish Hebrew several centuries before Christ, omit the name and this is hailed as evidence from antiquity which should be given due weight. The earliest extant copies of the Samaritan Pentateuch, however, do not go back before the 10th A.D. century and it cannot be dogmatically stated that the name was not included in earlier copies. More significant is the fact that neither Josephus nor Philo of Alexandria, the two great Jewish historians of the 1st A.D. century, mention the name. Origen, 2nd A.D. century, indicates that in his day it was in the Septuagint but not in the Hebrew copies he used.

Testimony to the affirmative comes from another source, the "Book of Jubilees", which is dated to about 150 B.C., the work of a pious Jewish priest. This book not only presents Cainan as the son of Arphaxad and father of Salah but gives some information about him. It appears that Cainan was a transgressor; he set out to find for himself a community whose possessions and dwelling-place he might seize by force for himself, and

while so engaged came across an ancient inscribed monument which recorded the teachings of the rebellious angels who had caused such havoc in the days of Noah. Although he knew this knowledge to be unlawful, he read it and copied it. So, says the chronicler, "he sinned owing to it". Dr. R. H. Charles, whose critical work on "Jubilees" has resulted in the present-day translation, says that internal evidence points to it being based upon an independent Hebrew text other than those which led to the Massoretic and the Septuagint. Whether such possible variant text did contain this story of Cainan's sin is impossible of verification; even if it is only a Jewish legend there must have been some foundation in older writings.

The position is, therefore:

Omits the name:

Massoretic Hebrew text (Oldest existing AD 800)

Samaritan Pentateuch (Oldest existing AD 900)

Josephus "Antiquities" AD 100

Syriac Peshitto (Oldest existing AD 464).

Includes the name:

Septuagint (Oldest existing Alexandrinus circa AD 450)

Jubilees (Oldest existing circa AD 350-450).

There is no logical reason for the Septuagint translators or the author of "Jubilees" to invent the name and incident; there is much to support the view that it was deliberately expunged from copies of the Hebrew text during the few centuries immediately before and after Christ and that when the Massorites standardised the Hebrew text during the period AD 100 to 700 this expunging was made final. There are two possible—and probable—reasons. The first is that this Cainan, recorded as a great transgressor, was "blotted out of the Book" on that account, as unworthy of a place in history. If so, he was not the only one to be thus treated. The length of the period of the Judges demands that a couple of generations have been dropped from history between Obed and Jesse in the line of Christ; in that lawless period quite likely for the same reason. The four apostate Judean kings—Ahaziah, Joash, Amaziah and Jehoakim — are omitted from Matthew's record of Christ's genealogy in the same fashion. There are other such cases. The second is that the Palestine Jews of the 1st A.D. century began making alterations to the chronological indications in Genesis to disprove the Christian claim that the appearance of Jesus at

nearly six thousand years from creation—according to the Bible chronology of their time—was evidence of fulfilled prophecy and his Messiahship. Something like twelve hundred years was lopped off the patriarchal period, in two stages; this accounts for the difference between the A.V. and the Septuagint chronology. The expunging of Cainan completely would give them another hundred and thirty years.

The general view of scholars, that the mention of Cainan is an unwarranted addition to the Septuagint text, is based purely upon the number

of versions — Syriac, Latin and some Greek, derived from the Hebrew Bible of the present era — which omit the name. The above-mentioned considerations have not been given due weight. It is much more likely that St. Luke was fully knowledgeable on this matter and that when he included the name of Cainan in his genealogy he did so on the strength of reliable and definite records which he knew to be correct. The Hebrew text (certainly) contained the longer patriarchal chronology in his day; logically it contained the name of Cainan also.

## “AND MORE THAN THAT”

A study in  
Ephesians 3

Careful students of Paul's letter to the Ephesians are prone to remark with wonder the majestic nature of the language employed in the attempt to fit the things of God into the words of men. There is far too much of this lofty thought throughout the whole Epistle to be dealt with in this article—for indeed, a whole series of articles could not scale all the heights or sound all the depths which our beloved brother Paul wrote into it.

Our attention at this time will be given to some three or four of these massive thoughts, though we know that even then the half will not be told.

The first point for our consideration is in Chapter 3, 8, where Paul speaks of the *unsearchable* riches of Christ. “*Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints was this grace given, to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.*” The word that is translated “unsearchable” is a word that has baffled all translators, for no translation has yet set forth the whole thought as expressed by Paul. Moffat renders the phrase “the fathomless wealth of Christ,” while Weymouth has the “exhaustless wealth of Christ.” Rotherham translates it “the untraceable riches of Christ,” and the Diaglott, “the boundless wealth of Christ.” Even the Concordant Version fails to translate this word accurately, for if, as this version says, the wealth of Christ is “untraceable,” what purpose could have been served by Paul's ministry? How could he inform the Gentiles of wealth which was untraceable? Does not the fact that he was charged with this mission to the Gentiles require that the subject of his ministry should be apprehensible, and therefore in some degree “traceable”?

The precise meaning of the Greek here is “that which cannot be measured out with the foot.” The situation that this phrase brings to mind is that of some young worthy nobleman, newly come into a vast inheritance, despatching his trusty steward to “ride the boundaries,” and survey the wealth

of the estate. Furlong by furlong, day after day, he goes, and yet the end seems as far away as ever. The time fails him to “measure it out by the foot”—yet with every passing step he is tracing out its dimensions, or estimating something of its buried wealth. He could report back that he had traversed a thousand stadii, but there was “more than that.”

And that is precisely Paul's thought here. As the Steward of the Lord he was tracing out the length and breadth of the Lord's inheritance, and surveying its intrinsic wealth, yet there was always “more than that.” He had never said the last word about it, at any time. No matter how he enthused about the Master's inheritance, there was always more to say—always “more than that.” And for the saint, who, in thought, traversed with Paul, the wide reaches of the Lord's heavenly estate, there was always some present satisfaction and enjoyment as they pressed along their track, but they never reached its end—there was always more to come. Thus when we “trace it out,” the track will have no end, and therefore we will not be able to “measure it out with the foot.” We may measure it day by day, but we shall not be able to “measure it out”—it is too great for that.

Our next point is in verse 10, where Paul speaks of “the manifold wisdom of God”... “*to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the Church the manifold wisdom of God.*” This is a wonderful statement, and merits more attention than can now be accorded to it. The word translated “manifold” or “diversified” has to do with a range of colours—as, for instance, the spectrum effect when light is passed through a crystal prism. The student of geology also sees this colour range as he views some rock specimen under a beam of polarised light. Among its components may be seen the sparkling green of its olivine, the dark brown of its hornblende, the

flashing red of its haematite, the shining silver of its felspar. Occasionally a specimen of more diverse and complex composition may be on the slide, and as he views the richly variegated colouring he is taught to call it "*poikilitic*." This is the very word used by Paul—the "*poikilitic*" wisdom of God; yet that is not all that Paul has to say—to emphasise this variegated wisdom of God he adds another word by way of prefix and calls it "the *poly-poikilitic* wisdom of God"—the "*much variegated* wisdom of God."

We are told that colour-makers, working with the elements now available can produce and distinguish no less than ten thousand shades and hues within the range of the visible bands of the spectroscope. Not every eye would be capable of distinguishing the slight degrees of light or shade in this vast range of colour, but to the experienced eye this range would indeed be a "*poly-poikilitic*" one.

To the angelic hosts watching with intense eagerness the expression of the Wisdom of God as it reveals itself in the experiences of the Church, the wide scope, added to the manifold variety, of their Providential leadings, day by day, can be well compared to this colossal range of ten thousand hues and shades. God's dealings take each child just as he is, each different child being the subject of a different mode of leading and development; each different child being the object towards which a different facet of Divine Wisdom is directed, so that its full individuality may be developed to its fullest possibility.

Since our "*poly-poikilitic*" range is limited to ten thousand hues and shades all we can say is that the Wisdom of our God has ten thousand hues and shades—and more than that! Here is a Wisdom equal to every emergency and every experience the long age through, in the lives of every one who will constitute the Church of God.

The next point of our survey is found in verses 18 and 19—"the love that surpasses knowledge." Here is a wonderful galaxy of words indeed. "Breadth," "length," "height," "depth"... the love... which passes knowledge... filled with all the fullness of God." Behind the "*poly-poikilitic*" Wisdom of God lies a love which outstrips all the range of our finite ken — which overleaps the utmost bounds of our present comprehension.

It is related that Nansen, the Arctic explorer, having one day bored through the ice, let down his sounding-line into the waters beneath the ice-cap. Down and down it went, but did not touch bottom. Another line was added, and another, until all the lines in the ship were tied together

and let down—but even then they failed to reach the ocean bed. When writing up the records of that day, Nansen wrote, "3,500 fathoms... and deeper than that." That is exactly Paul's thought about the Love of God. It is the full measure of man's necessity—and greater than that! How much more none can ever know. Words just break down when contemplating a Love like that! When our sounding-lines have reached their utmost depth in the hearts and lives of men, all we can say is—in Nansen's words—"3,500 fathoms, and more than that"!

Our final point is in verse 20—"above all we can ask or think..." Here the Apostle's words seem to fail him completely, as writing in the most highly inflected language of the ancient world, he tries to commit to the parchment the things which his illumined eyes could see. He piles up word on word, idea upon idea in his enthused attempt to utter what he knows. Now his theme is Power—after Wisdom and Love comes Power. It is a power that is "able to DO—able to do above what we ask—abundantly above what we ask—exceeding abundantly above what we ask—and then as though realising that the tongue may be less accomplished than the brain, he adds as a last attempt to state the impossible, "able to do exceeding abundantly above what we can... think." And with that our attempts at understanding reach their boundaries, and we can only say "all that we can ask or think—and more than that"! And having reached that point, heart and mind and soul can only bow in reverent silence before the wealth of Grace in Christ Jesus our Lord, before the infinite resources of Manifold wisdom, before the illimitable heights and depths of Love Divine, and before the all-prevailing power of him who is the glorious Author of it all.

Children with "wonder" minds can always see much more in life than those who are coldly calculating in their approach to things. Children of God with "wonder" minds can always see in these glowing words and thoughts of Paul more than those who are coldly statistical in their definitions of truth. These glowing words were a transcript from Paul's own experience. It was both fact and action in his own life and character before it found its way to his manuscript, and because he lived intensely with his Lord, his pen could write with an intense intimacy about those things he received from his Lord, and which he strove so enthusiastically to write for his friends.

"If you become his man," said one old saint to an early British king, "you will come upon wonder upon wonder in his call—and every wonder true."



# BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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

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

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## NOTICES

### Dr Adam Rutherford

The sudden death of Dr. Rutherford, Egyptologist and founder of the Institute of Pyramidology, and a long-time friend of the "Bible Study Monthly", will elicit many enquiries from his friends as to the future of the work he conducted. The following statement from his son, James Rutherford, is published for the benefit of such.

"It will come as a surprise to many to learn of the passing of Dr. Adam Rutherford, of Harpenden, England, on 8th December, 1974. A healthy and active man at 80, death seemed a long way off. Knocked down by a car near his home, the injuries were not fatal but pneumonia set in and this was the cause of death.

"Dr. Rutherford was a life-long student of the Bible and the Great Pyramid and for the last 33 years had devoted all his time to the Master's service. Additional to his considerable knowledge of Biblical truth he was also an outstanding expert on Bible chronology and the Great Pyramid. Human understanding of the deep things of God never stands still; Dr. Rutherford was acutely aware of this situation and if he became conscious of a mistake in interpretation either from the Bible or the "Bible in stone", he was always eager to correct the mistake.

"Books written by Dr. Rutherford prior to 1955 are now out of print; much of the relevant material is incorporated in revised form in his "Bible Chronology" and Vols. 1-5 of "Pyramidology". All these are available from the Institute of Pyramidology in Harpenden. The Institute, founded by Dr. Rutherford in 1940 for the purpose of disseminating authoritative information on the Great Pyramid, will continue its work and all projects planned for 1975-76 will go ahead as fast as humanly possible."

### B.S.M. Renewals

Readers whose serial numbers (appearing against their names on the envelope) are in the 3,000 and 7,000 ranges will find the annual pink renewal form inside this copy, unless we have heard from them recently and so are assured of their continuing interest. Please do return this slip, or an equivalent notification, promptly, so that we are left in no doubt as to your wishes. We are anxious not to discontinue sending to anyone who is genuinely interested quite irrespective of whether you can offer a contribution or not, but with constantly rising costs of production it is important that we do not send where the "Monthly" is not really wanted. (Readers having other serial numbers should ignore this notice; their turn will come later in the year.)

### Book Review

"The Bible Tells it Like it Is" H. Dorothy Norwood. Vantage Press Inc., 516 West 34th Street, New York, N.Y. 10001, U.S.A. 144 pp cloth. £2-20 post free. (U.S.A. \$4-95).

This is a comprehensive exposition of Biblical truth from a standpoint too often neglected nowadays—the Divine promise to Abraham that in his seed should all families of the earth be blessed. This implies a planned sequence of developments in world history, overruled by God, all tending toward and leading up to that "far-off Divine event to which all creation moves", the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth under the benign rule of Christ. The resurrection of the dead and the opportunity for everlasting life that is to be accorded all who have not hitherto found Christ is stressed, as is the significance of present-day conditions in the world in relation to the coming Messianic Kingdom. The evils—and the fears—of the present time are discussed in the light of Biblical prophecy and the result is a substantial and satisfying hope for the future of mankind. No one who is distressed by the omens of the future or feels there is more yet to be said about the Divine purpose in these things would fail to find some interest in this book.

The book can be ordered through British booksellers by giving details, including publisher's name and address.

### The Memorial

For those who commemorate our Lord's death at the appropriate time the date this year will be the evening of Tuesday, 25th March.

### Coming Conventions

WARRINGTON. Friends at Warrington announce an Easter convention for three days March 29-31 in the Masonic Hall, Winmarleigh Street, Warrington. Details and programmes from F. B. Quennell, 21 Summerville Gardens, Grappenhall, Warrington, WA4 2EG Lancs.

PORTRUSH. The usual three-day convention is planned for May 24-26. Details and programmes from T. R. Lang, 31 Hawthorn Terrace, Londonderry, N. Ireland.

BLABY. The Midlands friends are arranging for the usual Spring convention at Blaby for the two days Sat-Sun May 17-18. Details from A. Charcharos, 55 Greenacres Drive, Lutterworth, Leics.

WINDSOR. The normal June convention will be held this year at Chesham, Bucks, on Sat-Sun June 7-8. Details and programmes from H. Charlton, 43 Halkingcroft, Langley, Slough, Bucks.

For "Gone from us" see page 48.

## SIMON PETER — FISHER OF MEN

### 2. Introduction to the world to come

Simon pulled on his oar silently. His fellow-disciples were too busily engaged themselves on the same task to take much notice of his unusual quietness. It was only when the southerly squall struck them and rendered progress a matter of difficulty that they looked to him, as usual, for guidance. But this time he showed no sign of counselling an alteration of course so that they might use the wind to help them steer a course for the nearest shore. He went on pulling vigorously, without speaking. He evidently meant to obey the Lord's instruction to make for the shelving beach of Gennesaret on the western shore of the lake in reliance upon Jesus' word that, after his object in remaining behind on the eastern shore near Bethsaida was accomplished, He would join them. Neither wind nor storm was going to deflect Simon from that purpose; he laboured doggedly at his oar, leaving his comrades to do the same without question.

He had good reason for silence. He was thinking, deeply and seriously. Thinking did not come easily to Simon. He was a man of action—hasty, impulsive action for the most part, ill-considered action that often landed him in trouble. He was not given to quiet reflection. But this time he had much to think about. He had just witnessed a miracle surpassing anything he had yet seen save the raising from the dead of the widow's son at Nain. Together with his fellows Andrew, John and James, and the others, he had for something like twelve months been following Jesus through the villages and towns of Galilee, spending much time around the Lake on which they were at this moment embarked, and he had seen the sick healed, the lepers cleansed, the demon-possessed made free, the blind given sight, in all these things the effect of healing power flowing out from Jesus to restore some one or other afflicted sufferer to health. He had seen the widow's son rise from his bier and live again; he had seen the daughter of Jairus heed Jesus' call to return from the land of the shades. But now he had witnessed something belonging to a very different sphere; he had watched Jesus create food apparently out of nothing. Five thousand people there had been, there on the grassy plain between Bethsaida and the sea; the day was far spent, they had listened to Jesus for hours past, hunger was asserting itself, and there was nothing to give them, nothing but five small loaves and two fishes. But with those

in his hands Jesus had stood there handing loaf after loaf and fish after fish to each of his disciples until all that five thousand had received a sufficiency. What wonderful power from Heaven is this, Simon asked himself as he ploughed his oar through the water. And if Jesus was indeed the king of Israel, the One that should come—and Simon had no doubts at all on that score—what marvellous events must await them in that future day when Jesus should assert his authority and commence his reign? With powers like that there was no limit to what could be achieved. And what of his followers? They were surely invincible; with his power exerted on their behalf there was no enemy, of man or of Nature, that could stand against them . . . his reverie was abruptly broken as a gust of wind stronger than ever momentarily halted the boat's labouring progress.

Simon cast a professional glance at the heaving sea. The storm was getting fiercer, and they were not making much headway. They had left the eastern shore at "even"—6.0 p.m.—and now it was nearly the fourth watch—3.0 a.m. Eight or nine hours in "toiling and rowing" and they had only made a little over three miles—(twenty-five or thirty stadia; Jno. 6.19). Another four miles to go; as he looked at the tumultuous billows and felt the raging wind Simon began to wonder whether they were going to make it. He had flattered himself that he knew all the tricks and foibles of this unpredictable lake, on the waters of which he had gained his living for so many years, but never had he experienced a tempest like this. For the first time that night his heart began to fail him. Had Jesus been there with them things would have been all right; somehow or other, Simon knew, He would have dealt with the situation. But Jesus was not with them; the result of his miraculous feeding of the five thousand had been that the people wanted to take him, against his will, to make him a king (Jno. 6.15) and that He would not have. So He had gone into solitude in the mountains, to pray and reflect, telling his disciples He would meet them again on the other side of the lake. Now they were in this predicament, in terror for their lives, and Jesus knew nothing of it and was too far away to help anyway . . .

A terrified cry from one of the others, and Peter spun round. Following the other's pointing hand, he looked across the foam-crested waves

and his heart gave a sudden lurch. Out there, a few yards from the boat, was a shadowy figure, the form of a man, walking on the water. "It is a spirit" someone cried out; "we are all lost men". The rowing stopped; they all gazed with apprehension at the apparition, moving so easily and effortlessly upon the troubled waters. And as they gazed, there came a voice, a familiar voice, low and clear, yet plainly to be heard above the howling of the gale; "*Be of good cheer, it is I. Be not afraid*".

Reaction was swift. "It is the Lord" cried Simon. Everything was going to be all right; Jesus was with them again. But almost immediately a tiny seed of doubt implanted itself in his heart. Could Jesus really walk on the water? Could this be a demon impersonating the Master and luring them on to destruction. Impulsive as ever, he put the matter to the test. "*Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water*". Came the invitation "*Come*". Without more ado Simon leaped over the side of the boat into the sea: in the exaltation of that moment his faith was complete. To his joy he found that he too could walk on the water and boldly he set out to cross the few yards that separated him from his Lord. But ere he reached him a great swelling wave, higher than the rest, rose before him and blotted out the waiting Figure from his sight. Now he was aware only of lofty waves and racing water, the dark sky above and unutterable depths below, and the horror of his situation dawned upon him. At that his faith failed and he found himself submerged, swimming desperately to keep himself afloat. In sharp anguish he cried out "Lord, save me".

A well-known hand reached out and caught him, raising him out of the water; a well-known voice in his ears "*O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?*" So Simon came hand-in-hand with Jesus to the safety of the boat. And the storm ceased, and there was a great calm.

It is a wonderful story, and full of significance to the Christian. There are times in every life when the storm-waves mount high to the heavens with their overpowering threats and the gale-winds seem as though they would sweep away all in which we trust. Something like Luke's and Paul's experience on the voyage to Rome when the ship ran into a great storm becomes our position also: "*when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay upon us, all hope that we should then be saved was taken away*" (Acts 27.20). But Paul and Luke were saved, and Simon Peter was saved, and so are we, if we hold on tightly to the hand of Jesus. "*They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abideth for ever.*"

Sometimes it is not so much that our faith fails as that the pressure of well-nigh intolerable circumstances almost overcomes our powers of endurance and we tend to cry out as did the Psalmist "*Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Is his mercy clean gone for ever?*" It is then that we need to remember that Christ is near us, just on the other side of the big wave, and his hand can reach right through that wave to hold ours and guide us through the storm into the calm that will follow.

This incident was an essential element in the training of Simon. It was not enough that he should realise Jesus' mastery over the elements of Nature; he had already seen something of that on the earlier occasion when, crossing the lake, they had been hit by a wind-squall whilst Jesus was asleep in the boat; on that occasion He had rebuked the wind and the sea and a great calm resulted (Matt. 8.24-27 Mark 4.37-41 Luke 8.23-25). The disciples had been greatly impressed, but this time there was something more, the lesson of the Lord's care for his own and the certainty that He is always at hand to save. He "will not suffer you to be tested beyond what you are able to bear, but with every test will direct the issue, that you might be able to endure". That was a greater thing and a more important thing than the stilling of a stormy wind and a tempestuous sea.

It could only have been a few weeks after this incident that Simon made the historic declaration which changed his name and sealed his position as leader of the little band of disciples. They were at Caesarea Philippi, in the extreme north of the land and about as far away from Jerusalem as it was possible to get, but Jesus knew that within a few weeks He must go to Jerusalem and speak his message there, and it was necessary that his disciples be made aware, more than they were at present aware, of the serious implications of their calling, of the opposition and persecution and suffering that was going to be entailed. It had been comparatively easy going so far; plenty of miracles with all the public acclaim which that evoked, and a generally favourable reception of those words of life which always accompanied the miracles. But things were going to change soon, and a deeper, more serious, faith was needed to withstand the trials which lay ahead. So up there in the quiet and privacy of the mountains Jesus put two momentous questions, "*Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?*" He asked, and waited quietly for his disciples' reaction.

They returned a variety of answers; John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, one or another of the ancient prophets, risen from the dead to teach this generation. Jesus attached little importance to the answers. The question was only intended to lead

their minds to the second and more important one. "But who say ye that I am?" After two years' association with him had they yet grasped the truth of his person, that He was indeed the Sent of God, the one for whom Israel had waited for many centuries past? Had they realised that the day of sending prophets was past, that God was now moving into action to accomplish the redemption of mankind from sin and death, that the one whom they loved and served was more, far more, than a resurrected holy man from the past, that He was in fact the Son of God come to lead the world back to God? If these men were to constitute the spearhead of Jesus' work in the world after He himself had returned to his Father, it was high time that they began to understand these things.

Simon, at least, did understand. His impetuous, questing mind, aided, we cannot doubt, by a sudden illumination of the Holy Spirit, saw all this in a flash. All the pieces of the puzzle fell into place. His Leader's identity, his origin, his mission to Israel, his relation to the golden prophecies of olden time, came together in his mind and pointed to the answer. "Thou art the Messiah, the Son of the Living God." For the rest of his days that one irrefutable fact remained unshaken in Simon's mind: through all the vicissitudes of a long life spent in the Master's service, adorned by triumphs and blemished by failures, he never lost sight of the revelation which came to him that day. And Jesus, looking upon him, knew that his man was ready.

It was at this point that Simon received of the Lord his new name, Peter. There was a significance in the name. Simon's native name, given at his birth, signified the hearing one, one who listens and accepts what is told him. That was true enough of Simon's early discipleship; this forthright declaration at this crucial moment demonstrates how well he had heard. During all that time his character had been crystallising in the direction of the service which now was to be his life's work, and Jesus knew that character to be rock hard and firmly set. So He named him Peter, the rock—*petros* means a piece of rock or a boulder. "Thou art a rock" He said "and upon this rock I will found my ecclesia". Whether Jesus used that word *ecclesia* to denote the little company of believers who were to look to Peter for leadership during the next decade or so, or the larger Church of this present Age which owes so much to Peter's yeoman service during another thirty years of life, is not very important, for both are true. He probably meant the former; at any rate from this time and forward Peter was the acknowledged leader of the disciples and the one who assumed the initiative after the Resurrection

and by common consent was looked up to for guidance and counsel in those difficult yet halcyon days of the first generation Apostolic Church.

According to John's Gospel, Jesus did use this expression, prophetically, when He met Peter for the first time two years earlier. In that account He is recorded as using the Aramaic term for a piece of rock, *kephas*, instead of the Greek *Petros*. Paul uses the Aramaic word when referring to his brother-Apostle in Corinthians and Galatians. Be this as it may, it seems definite that it was on the later occasion that the name was formally and definitely bestowed and put into use. Mark, who is the most careful of the Evangelists in matters such as this, refers to the Apostle always as Simon prior to the incident and Peter afterwards, with but one exception. At any rate, from this time onwards, both to the Apostolic Church, the Early Church and the Church of all ages to the present, the impetuous Apostle is universally known and remembered by the name of Peter.

Six days later Peter, with James and John, received new and startling confirmation of their Lord's Messiahship. Jesus had taken them "up into an high mountain"; most probably it was Mount Hermon, the highest mountain in Israel and not far from Cæsarea Philippi. There, in quietude and privacy, away from the ever-insistent crowds, they witnessed an amazing scene. Jesus was "transfigured before them, and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And there appeared unto them Moses and Elijah talking with him" (Matt. 17.2-3). Stricken with awe, and somewhat terrified by the radiance of the vision, Peter nevertheless realised instantly that this was the fulfilment of Jesus' words to his disciples a few days previously to the effect that some of their number would not see death before they had seen the Son of Man coming in his kingdom. There is not much doubt that he jumped to the conclusion that Jesus was here and now about to assert his Divine authority, take his rightful power, assume the position of king over Israel and inaugurate the long-promised Messianic reign. The presence of Moses, Israel's Lawgiver and greatest man, and Elijah of whom it had been predicted that he would return at the Day of the Lord, was further evidence. A Messianic kingdom without the presence of Moses and Elijah to lead the people to God as they had done in their respective lifetimes was inconceivable. So Peter gave voice to the obvious suggestion which must have been in the hearts of all three disciples as they beheld. "Let us make three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah". Almost without doubt he was already seeing himself as hastening down the mountain-side to call the

people to come into the presence of their King and hearing the shouts of acclamation as the reign of Messiah began. But just as in the days of Moses there had to be a "tent of meeting", a tabernacle, where Moses met with the Presence of God to receive commands and talk with God on matters to do with the welfare of Israel (Exod. 33.7-10 & 34.29-35), so it must be now. Peter remembered that Moses too had appeared radiant after being in the presence of God, so that he had to assume a veil to cover that glory except when he went in to talk with God. Now there must be three similar tabernacles for these three supernaturally radiant ones, before the people could be admitted to hear their voices and acclaim their king. Something like this, in a confused sort of way, must have possessed Peter's mind. The Divine glory of Jesus, the resurrection glory of Moses and Elijah, must be veiled from mere human sight and the disciples themselves must be the ones to go between these three and the people, even as in those far-off days of the Exodus Moses had been the go-between for God and Israel. So Peter's thoughts ran riot in his exaltation at the great thing which was happening.

The radiant glory encompassed the disciples and they fell on their faces in reverence. The voice of God sounded in their ears: "*This is my beloved Son; hear ye him*". There was a silence... They looked up. The glorious vision was gone. There was no Moses, no Elijah, only Jesus as they had always known him. No kingdom, no reigning in power, no public acclaim, just three puzzled men following their Master down the mountainside and hearing his injunction to tell the vision to no man

"until the Son of Man be risen again from the dead". And with that all their hopes of imminent kingly glory withered and died.

And yet, of course, Peter and his companions had seen the Son of Man coming in his kingdom. They had witnessed a manifestation of that otherworldly power which is always there, behind the scenes, and will be outwardly revealed to all men in the day of the world's deliverance from sin and all evil. Moses and Elijah, with other ancient stalwarts of faith, will be there to administer earthly affairs in that blessed day. They really had experienced a preview of what Mark, in his version of the incident, describes as the kingdom of God come with power.

Peter never forgot that experience. It finally established his faith and coloured his thoughts and words for all time to come. Thirty-five years later, nearing the end of a stressful life in the service of Christ, he recalled the wonder of that day. "*We have not followed cunningly devised fables... but were eye-witnesses of his (majesty). For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount*". (2 Pet. 1.16-18). There were yet to be times in his life when he faltered and vacillated, the weakness of the flesh temporarily overcoming the assurance of the spirit, but basically his devotion to Christ was sound, and his faith proved true at the last.

*To be continued.*

## VOICES

There are little sights and sounds with which we are all familiar, that have a healing effect upon the mind that is overstrung with work and worry. The ripple of the silvery stream beneath the shady trees; the hum of the bees and the chirping of the grasshopper in the clover; the golden corn waving in the soft breezes; the flitting butterfly amid the fragrant flowers; the glittering insects in the grass basking in the warmth of the sun; the rustle of the rabbits in the undergrowth; the cheerful singing of the birds; the fleecy clouds floating in the blue skies; the melodious skylark soaring exultingly above all. Such influences are too subtle for human explanation. Little voices they are, proclaiming the grand harmony, the peace universal in nature, and they act as a restorative mentally and physically.

But there are other little sights and sounds of

a spiritual kind that tend to heal the heart that is overwrought with failure and sorrow. These are little voices proclaiming a loving God who is watching and caring; a great High Priest who is sympathetic, understanding and ready to help. What sights and sounds are these? The kindly word gently spoken in a tone of cheer; the sudden sparkle of a gracious smile; the unexpected gleam of a sympathetic tear; the little extra pressure of the hand; the secret act of self-sacrifice, unseen, unheard; the silent look that can find no words yet shows it has heard and understood. These are powerful little voices. They require no scholarship, no talent, no skill beyond the scholarship, talent and skill that the spirit of God bequeaths to every loving and earnest heart.

*(Forest Gate Bible Monthly)*

## JOSIAH'S PASSOVER

*The story of a  
great cleansing*

It was in the eighteenth year of the reign of good King Josiah that the great Passover was kept—the most memorable Passover that Israel had known since the day of his entering into the land. *"Surely there was not holden such a Passover"* wrote the historian *"from the days of the judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah"* (2 Kings 23. 22). It was a famous Passover, one to be remembered and preserved in tradition and exhortation throughout their generations. There had been some seven hundred Passovers celebrated since the invading hosts had crossed Jordan and built the stones of Gilgal, but this one was the greatest. What was there about it that made it so noteworthy?

Perhaps it was the freshness and enthusiasm of the whole thing. The story in 2 Chron. 35 reads like that of a revival in nineteenth century England. Faith in Israel had fallen to a very low ebb. The days of Hezekiah had long since passed—he had been dead for about seventy-five years. Judah had suffered under the sway of two idolatrous kings, Manasseh the son of Hezekiah and Amon the son of Manasseh. Under those two men the knowledge and worship of God had languished and died. The idolatrous religion of the surrounding nations had been set up in its place and the people had, in the main, readily accepted the change. Manasseh had erected the symbols of Baal worship all over the land and images even in the Temple itself; he it was who first gave to the Valley of Hinnom its evil reputation, and caused his son to pass through the fire to Moloch. When Josiah came to the throne, as a young lad, the land and the people were steeped in wickedness and the word of the Lord was silent; there was no open vision.

Now it was when King Josiah was twenty-six years of age that he became seized with the desire to rebuild and repair the Temple of the Lord, which had evidently suffered seriously from neglect and consequent decay. Exactly ninety years previously that Temple had been the scene of a mighty deliverance in Israel. Sennacherib the Assyrian had lain encamped with his army, outside the walls of Jerusalem, demanding unconditional surrender. Isaiah the statesman-prophet had gone into the Temple and laid the insulting letter before the Lord, pledging the faith of King and people that God would deliver . . . and the angel of the Lord had gone forth that night, and

slain in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred and eighty-five thousand men; and Sennacherib returned with shame of face to his own land, there to meet death by the assassin's dagger. Thus was Jerusalem delivered. But all that was ninety years ago, and the people who had rejoiced in that great thing were now asleep in the grave, and their sons and their grandsons no longer believed that such things could be, and they bowed down before Baal and Ashtoreth and Moloch and delighted themselves in the abominations of the heathen—until Hilkiah found the Book of the Law among the Temple treasures.

It was finding that book of the Law that brought about the great reformation and the great Passover. Josiah had ordered the restoration of the Temple. It was whilst bringing out of the treasury the silver that was stored up therein, wherewith to meet the cost of the work, that Hilkiah the High Priest discovered a greater treasure still, the Book of the Law of Moses. He gave it to Shaphan the scribe to take it to the king.

Hilkiah was the High Priest but he had not known that this treasure was in his keeping. To what depths must the priesthood and the Temple service have sunk! Quite evidently the old injunction that the Law was to be recited in the ears of the people and taught to the children had not been honoured for a long while past. The consternation that was evoked when the contents of the Book were made known to Josiah a little later reveals that the Law of Moses was in general unknown to Judah at this time. It had been forgotten, and with it the ceremonies and ritual of the Day of Atonement, the Passover, and the feast days must have fallen into disuse. Probably Hilkiah knew that such a book had once existed; maybe he had heard his grandfather and predecessor in the priestly office speak of some such thing; and there may have been a vague tradition that a copy had once reposed somewhere in the Temple archives. But he had never seen it and was probably much more concerned with the "modern" religious thought of his own day. There seems to be something of awe in his tones as he says to Shaphan, surely in hushed words "I have found the Book of the Law in the House of the Lord". And Shaphan took it to the king.

Shaphan was much more indifferent. He merely remarked to Josiah "Hilkiah the priest hath given me a book". It meant nothing to him; just an old

book found in the recesses of the Temple, and probably hopelessly out-of-date. It was perhaps with a feeling of boredom that he began to read it before the king. But the effect upon Josiah was immediate and decisive. He realised at once that his ambitious plans for the rebuilding and rededication of the Temple counted for nothing in God's sight without a deeper and more important thing, the existence of which had not until now even occurred to him. The Temple was but the outer shell; without the worship and service of a consecrated people, conscious of its own weakness and shortcoming, but confident in the saving power of God, the beauty of the restored Temple would be as ashes and its sacrifices an abomination in the sight of God. In the midst of his schemes for the restoration of the Divine Sanctuary in the sight of all Israel, Josiah heard the terms of the Divine Law, and he rent his clothes.

Just so, it may be, do we, in the midst of all our planning and scheming, activity and service for our Master and our brethren, all our preaching and witness to the world, come up suddenly against the essence of the Divine Will for us, and realise that all these outward things are of no account in his pure sight unless we have first made our hearts right with him. The will of God for us is, first of all, our own sanctification, and it is after we have started on that consecrated walk that He leads us to opportunities of outward service for him. It is the consecration that hallows the service, and not the service that vitalises the consecration. "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices?" asked Samuel of Saul "as in obeying the voice of the Lord?" The question comes down the ages and rings in our ears, with its answer "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice". Happy are we if, like good king Josiah, we can realise the situation directly the word of the Lord falls on our ears, and act, swiftly and decisively.

Josiah did not content himself with rending his clothes. Repentance is a necessary preliminary to justification and no progress can be made until that first step has been taken, but it is not a condition in which to linger. "Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation" says Paul in 2 Cor. 7. 10, and unless there is that tangible fruit of repentance, and a speedy fruit at that, the repentance is not very genuine. So Josiah called his ministers of state and his court attendants, and sent them speedily to enquire of the Lord's will for him at the hand of one who could rightfully claim to speak on his behalf. They seemed to know where to go: they made their way to Huldah the prophetess, who, for all that the information we have is very scanty, seems to have been of some

repute and held in some respect. Her words leave us in no doubt as to the forthrightness of her own allegiance to the God of Israel. Her reply was framed in terms of the strongest condemnation. Albeit there was a word of approval for the king's own personal condition of heart before God, the old lady made it plain that Israel as a nation must suffer the inevitable consequence of its sinful way. Judgment must needs come upon them before times could be better. "Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands, therefore my wrath shall be poured out upon this place and shall not be quenched." (2 Chron. 34.25).

Here is a principle that applies in our own day also. Again have men—the whole world of so-called "civilised men" this time—forsaken God their Creator and Sustainer, and rendered homage to gods of their own creating, to works of their own hands. In the midst of the distress and trouble which that course of action has brought upon them we proclaim the coming of a new and better order, the Millennial Kingdom, in which evil and lawlessness will be put down with firm hand and all men walk in the light of the glory of God and in the peace of his laws. But before this roseate picture can become a reality there must first be judgment upon the world for its wrongdoing. The Lord Jesus is to be "revealed from heaven, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those that know not God and obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 1. 8) before He comes with clouds, glorious in the retinue of his saints, and all the people of the earth join in that great mourning which is at once the evidence of their realisation of his Advent and the sign of their repentance. God waits to bind up the broken-hearted and give liberty to the captives, but nothing now can avert that Divine judgment under which the last vestiges of the rulership of "this present evil world" will pass away, never to return. And in our witnessing and preaching we should remember that. Not only must we, as Paul on Mars Hill, declare that God commandeth all men everywhere to repent, and like Peter at Jerusalem, speak of the coming pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh, but we must also, like that faithful old prophetess in the dim long ago, pronounce the inevitability of Divine judgment on this world, to burn out its evil as by fire, to consume the defiling images and symbols and sweep clean the corruption off the land. It is only when God has thus devoured all the earth with the fire of his jealousy that He will be able to turn to the people a pure language that they may all call upon his name to serve him with one consent (Zeph. 3.9).

The king's decisiveness did not fail him. Unwelcome as the news of the coming desolations of Israel must have been to his ears, he nevertheless took the only course that could be right with God. He summoned the elders and the people, gathered them together, with the priests, in the Temple, and there, in the presence of the God of Israel, he caused to be "*read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of the Lord*". There was to be no further excuse for ignorance. All Israel was to hear the Law read, and the authority of no less a person than the king himself lay behind the injunction to heed the words. And then the king drove home to all the seriousness with which he regarded the position. He "*stood in his place, and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant which are written in this book*" (2 Chron. 34:21). That was a mighty thing to do! Josiah stood before his subjects, openly confessing himself to be a breaker of the Mosaic Covenant and worthy only of its curses because of his shortcoming, and then solemnly and formally made a covenant between his God and himself that he would in future keep the words of the Law as a true son of Israel. He publicly repudiated his own past sin, his nation's sin, and espoused afresh the holy calling of the chosen nation. It was a great thing to do, and it was the only thing. Thus was he able to call all Israel to pledge themselves to follow his example; so he "*caused all Israel to stand to it*" and the people entered once more into the covenant made with their fathers.

It was in that strength that Josiah proceeded to the logical end of his reform. He went straight from the making of the covenant to a great sweeping away of the idols and the images from the land. The thoroughness and speed with which he conducted that campaign of destruction is shown more clearly in the parallel account in 2 Kings 23. Up and down the land he went, breaking down images, grinding them to pieces and scattering their dust to the winds, defiling the sacred places of the idolatrous religions, turning out their priests, demolishing their buildings, desecrating their sacred symbols and smashing their works of art, until nothing was left of paganism in all the land from Bethel to Beer-Sheba, and the land was cleansed.

And it was only after all that, after the king had shown the sincerity of his repentance by his determination to be clean in God's sight, that he came to the Passover!

The greatest of all Israel's Passovers was that held by King Josiah after his reformation work

was done, and it was the greatest, not because it was organised and directed by a king, but because it was inspired by a man who had become clean in the sight of God. Just as the ancient Hebrew women used to take their lamps and sweep out every corner and cranny of their houses, the night before the Passover, that not the slightest trace of leaven might remain in their homes, so did King Josiah with resolution and ruthlessness seek to sweep out every trace of personal and national uncleanness in the sight of God, that his passover might be truly acceptable to the Most High.

There is a challenge for us! We approach another Memorial season, another day of coming together in a ceremony which goes to the very roots of all that we hold most dear. "Till He come!"—we repeat the words and cling to our faith that the time will not be much longer delayed and the angel of deliverance come to us and to all the world. It is thus that we gain much of the strength to sustain us for another year of pilgrimage. "*So let a man examine himself!*" come the solemn words of Paul to us, "*and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup*". As did Josiah, so let us, approaching this season, stand to our covenant with our God, and renew it in the sight of our brethren, go forth to cleanse out of our hearts all that stands between us and God, all that divides us from our brethren, with ruthlessness and determination rooting out everything that savours of the world, the flesh and the devil. And being thus cleansed, thus zealous for the righteousness of God, thus filled with the Spirit, we can come with our brethren to partake of the feast and feel its life-giving influence entering into and permeating every fibre of our being. This wine is life, said our Lord to his disciples—*My life, given to you. This bread is My flesh, given for you.* Can these things do aught but revivify us to greater works than ever before and a closer following than ever before, *if we are clean?* One there was at the Last Supper who was not clean, and he had no part or lot at the fellowship of that table. But to those who did share in the broken bread and poured out wine, *because they were clean*, there came a union in fellowship which lasted as long as life itself, and inspired them to go forth as one family to turn the world upside down for Christ and his Kingdom. And they did turn the world upside down!

May we, then, at this season, remember King Josiah and his Passover, and how he prepared himself for that Passover by first becoming clean in the sight of God and removing out of his kingdom those things that did offend and cause iniquity. Let us prepare in like manner, cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.

## ? THE QUESTION BOX ?

**Q.** *Dan. 12.4. In "the Time of the End, many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased". Does this refer to the knowledge of God and his ways or to general knowledge of human and terrestrial matters?*

**A.** It has been customary by commentators to apply these words in a general way to the unprecedented increase of travel facilities and of knowledge in every department of human affairs, characteristic of the "Time of the End". It was this text which led Sir Isaac Newton in the 17th century to predict that men would one day be able to travel at the "amazing speed" of sixty miles an hour. (Horses were the fastest means of locomotion in his day!) For this the French philosopher Voltaire poured scorn upon him and said he must be getting into his dotage. Whilst there is no doubt that such an increase of travel and knowledge has come to pass and is a sign of the "Time of the End", it is possible that the revealing angel was also talking about knowledge of Divine things. The expression "run to and fro", in addition to its literal meaning, was also used metaphorically to define running through a book, to examine a book thoroughly. In this sense the Lord spoke to Habakkuk—at much the same time as to Daniel—telling him to "write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it" (Hab. 2.2), i.e.; that he may understand it thoroughly. In this sense the angel's words to Daniel could well mean that a feature of the Time of the End would be the giving of increased attention to the Divine revelation in the Bible and a clearer understanding of the Divine purpose. This has certainly been true of the past two centuries even though a lesser number of people are sufficiently interested to give themselves to its study. For those who do, there is abundant recompense in a sane and balanced view of what God is now doing and will do in the face of rapidly disintegrating world conditions.

**Q.** *Why is it so often said that St. Paul had weak eyes when the Scriptures have no statement to this effect?*

**A.** This is often suggested as an explanation of the Apostle's "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor. 12.7).

His own words are "to keep me from being too elated by the abundance of revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from being too elated" (R.S.V.). There have been many surmises as to the nature of this "thorn". The idea that it might be a disease of the eyes arises from allusions in Gal. 6.11 and 4.5. In the one case Paul says "see with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand" (R.S.V.), the suggestion being that he meant unusually large characters due to bad eyesight. In fact the Greek runs "Ye see how many things to you in letters I wrote (with) my hand" and this need only mean that instead of employing a secretary as was his wont, he wrote this himself. In the other case he speaks of a trial of his in the flesh which the Galatians did not allow to affect their reception of him—in fact, he says, they would have plucked out their own eyes and given them to him if that had been possible. From this it has been surmised that the Apostle suffered from some repugnant optical defect and some have thought the dazzling brilliance of the risen Lord on the Damascus road was the pre-disposing cause. This however is only another surmise. Paul calls this "thorn" a "messenger of Satan" and one would hardly expect the Lord appearing to Saul as He did, to call him to a lifetime of service, to make that very experience a means of inflicting a lifelong handicap, nor for Paul thereafter to call it a "messenger of Satan". The fact that Paul at his trial before the Sanhedrin (Acts 23) appeared to have difficulty in recognising the High Priest Ananias, a man he must have known perfectly well in the past, has also been cited in support.

About the only other reasonable suggestion that has been made regarding this "thorn in the flesh" is that it was a recurrent profound depression caused by Paul's memory of the time before his conversion when he so bitterly persecuted the Christians. But there is nothing in the New Testament to buttress this suggestion. In the absence of more positive evidence it might well be that the Apostle did suffer from some ocular defect which was a constant source of annoyance to him, which he did ask the Lord to remove, and concerning which he was told "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2. Cor. 12.9).

## THE STORY OF THE DELUGE

### 8. The Mountains of Ararat

*"And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat." (Gen. 8.4.)*

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

That five months' aimless drifting must have been a new trial of faith to Noah and his family. As they looked out, day after day, across the limitless sea, they must have wondered how and in what way God would bring them safely to land. They probably had no means of determining the depth of the water, and as week succeeded week and no land appeared on the horizon, no mountain peaks emerging from the surface of the sea, they must have had need of all their faith and trust. The daily routine of attending the wants and needs of their animal cargo would have occupied much of their time, but it must have seemed a long five months.

Local legend to this day supplies many alleged incidents of the voyage. It is said by the Yezidis of Northern Iraq that the Ark, while drifting, bumped on the top of Mount Sinjar in the desert to the west of the Tigris, and sprang a leak. The vessel would have foundered if the serpent (who was to have been excluded from the Ark but who got in by means of a trick) had not crawled through the hole, coiled his body into a ball on each side, and pulled himself tight like a rivet, thus making the hole watertight. He remained

thus for the rest of the voyage, and so saved the ship.

It is only fair to add that the Armenians dispute the claim that this incident happened in the Yezidis' land on Mount Sinjar. They assert that it occurred on the top of Mount Sipan in their own country, near Mount Ararat, and that Noah, feeling the bump, ejaculated "**Sipan Allah**" meaning "Praise God", which, they say, accounts for the present name of the mountain.

A further period of seven months and ten days elapsed before the family left the Ark. During the whole of that time they lived inside the now stationary vessel. If the Flood had actually spread over the land from the Indian Ocean in the south, then the slow draining away back into the ocean through the narrow exit from the Persian Gulf would take a long time. Even at the present day the same land is periodically visited by river floods which cover practically the whole of the country to a depth of several feet, and several weeks elapse before the floodwaters find their way into the Gulf and the land is open to view again. The Bible story is therefore perfectly credible and just what should be expected in the circumstances.

The modern Mount Ararat is at the north-eastern corner of Lake Van, in Eastern Turkey, but it is most unlikely that this is the mountain referred to in the Genesis story. "Ararat" is the Hebrew equivalent for the country known to the Assyrians in the 9th and 7th centuries BC as Urartu. It is so mentioned three times in the O.T., 2 Kin. 19. 37, Isa. 37. 38, and Jer. 51. 27. It was not the name of a mountain but of a country, originally quite a small territory in the vicinity of Rowanduz, east of Mosul, and not until much later did it become a powerful kingdom extending its sway to the area where the celebrated mountain stands. The land of Ararat embraced the whole of the mountainous country on the north and east of the Iraq plain so that so far as the Genesis account is concerned any likely mountain in that area would meet the case. The tradition associating "Mount Ararat", (16,956 feet), with the Ark is of comparatively recent date, first promulgated by the Armenian Christian Church in about the eleventh century but not taken seriously by anyone outside Turkish Armenia until the early eighteenth century; this will be treated in greater detail in a later chapter.

Prior to this time, and back at least to the early centuries of the Christian era, the mountain on which the Ark was believed to have stranded, on the testimony of many writers from Epiphanius in the 4th Century to William Whiston in the 17th Century, was Al Judi, (6,900 feet), a few miles east of the Turkish town of Cizre (formerly Jesiret Ibn Omar) on the River Tigris some distance north of Mosul. This mountain is on the northern border of the Iraq plain and much more likely than "Ararat". To this day the Eastern churches and most peoples of the Middle East look on Al Judi as the true landing place of the Ark.

Writers and historians at the beginning of the Christian era, such as Josephus, and back to Berossus the Babylonian historian of the 3rd Century BC, say that the Ark grounded on a mountain in the Gordyene range, which bounds the plain for two hundred miles or so across its northern border, Al Judi being at its western end, without naming the mountain.

Prior to Berossus we have the Assyrian Flood tablets, written in the 8th and 7th centuries B.C. These are the ones which name Mount Nisir as the mountain which arrested and held the vessel. This mountain is mentioned in records of the warlike exploits of the Assyrian kings of about the 8th Century B.C., from which it is known that it lay to the east of Nineveh in the mountainous country which now divides Iraq from Persia. Up to some ten years ago it was identified with Algard, (12,248 feet), the highest mountain of the range, eighty miles east of Mosul (Nineveh), but later research has given more definite grounds for associating it with a lesser but outstanding peak a hundred miles farther south called Pir-Omar-Gudrun, (8,650 feet). This, has been identified with the "Mount of the East" of the Assyrians and Babylonians, revered as the place from which their ancestors had come after the Flood, the Nisir of the Flood legend.

The writer of these notes thinks, however, that there are grounds for considering an even earlier candidate. The old Babylonian Flood tablets and the Sumerian accounts, going back to the 17th century B.C. also name Nisir but also state that the mountain was in the east and that it rose out of the Flood-sea like an island. The general description better fits the plain of lower Babylonia with isolated mountains on its eastern border than it does the rather confused mountainous region of Assyria where Pir-Omar-Gudrun is situated. There are some reasons for thinking that the mountain of the Ark, and the "mount of the East" of the Sumerians and the early Semites, was a relatively modest but striking

mountain now known as Kuh-i-Anaran, just inside the Persian frontier a hundred and forty miles east of Babylon, 5,350 feet high and meeting the admittedly scanty indications in Genesis and the tablets very reasonably.

The first point of enquiry in this connection is the meaning of the word "Ararat" in Gen. 8.4. It is almost universally taken to refer to the land of that name in Assyrian times, but there is a difficulty. As the name of a country the term "Ararat" only appeared about the 9th century B.C. whereas Moses edited Genesis from pre-existing records in the 15th century B.C., and could not himself have used the name of a country which did not at that time exist. It is possible, of course, that the ancient Hebrew text did have a earlier name for the territory indicated which was changed by later copyists in the 9th or later centuries to the name current in their day, but not very likely. The earlier geographical names in Gen. 2 remain as they were in 2300 B.C. and when, in Abraham's day, the narrative in Gen. 14 used ancient place names the then current equivalent was added by way of explanation. If, in fact, "Ararat" did appear in Moses' edition of Genesis it must have denoted other than the much later country of that name. Gesenius says that the Hebrew word comes from a Sanscrit root, *aryawarta*, meaning "holy ground". Prof. Young gives the meaning of Ararat as "holy land". It is not difficult to surmise that the first few generations of men after the Flood viewed the landing-place of the Ark as a sacred district in view of the great event with which it was associated, and this is confirmed by the fact that the mountain, wherever it was, became venerated by those and future generations as the dwelling place of the gods and the holiest place on earth.

This sacred mountain was known as the "Mount of the East". The Sumerian east was our north-east; this has been demonstrated by inscribed tablets defining the points of the compass as viewed by the Sumerians. The point of reference was obviously Babylon, the site of the earliest settlements and the Tower of Babel, and both Kuh-i-Anaran and Pir-Omar-Gudrun are roughly north-east from Babylon.

Genesis supplies another clue which is not apparent in the A.V. In the expression "mountains of Ararat" in ch. 8.4 the word "mountains" is not a true plural; it is the Hebrew dual, applied only to two of a pair. The literal meaning is "double-mountain" or "twin-mountain". Strangely enough, the "mount of the East" was also viewed by the Babylonians as having twin peaks. A Babylonian psalm of praise speaks of the "*mountain of Bel in the east, whose double head*

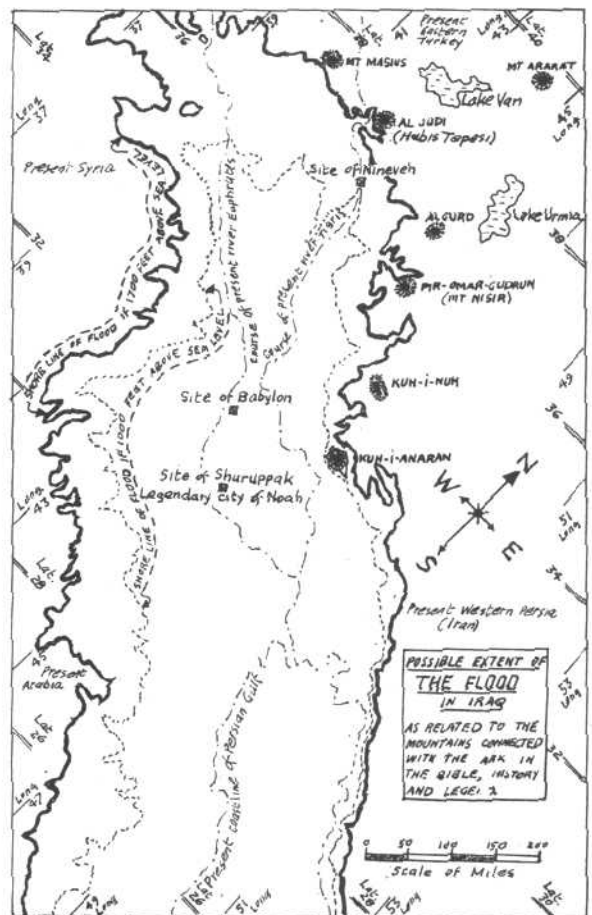
reaches into the skies; which is like to a mighty buffalo at rest, whose double horn sparkles as a sunbeam, as a star". Benjamin of Tudela (12th century A.D.) speaking of his visit to Al Judi, says that "Omar ben al Khataab took the Ark from the two mountains" which seems to perpetuate what is apparently a long-standing tradition of a double peaked mountain on which the Ark rested.

Of all the mountains under consideration Anaran is the only one which has two peaks, two miles apart, rising some two thousand feet above the main mass which is a little over three thousand feet high. Standing a few miles away from the twelve mile length of the mountain the impression as viewed from the plain below could well meet the Babylonian poetic likeness to a mighty buffalo at rest, recumbent, with his two horns standing upright.

There are several other indications that Kuh-i-Anaran was very possibly the actual mountain upon which the Ark landed but these belong to the realm of archaeological deduction and are best considered in another place. Standing as it does, an isolated mass on the very edge of the lower Babylonian plain, it is physically and geographically in the most likely position.

There are thus these four candidates for the honour of having been host to Noah's vessel when the Flood began to subside, and these claims, with the testimony of ancient and modern historians and explorers, will be considered more fully in later chapters. There are other claimants—Mount Demavend, in Persia, south of the Caspian Sea, and Mount Argeus, in western Turkey, are sponsored by early A.D. writers, but need not be taken seriously. Mount Masius, near Nisibin in Southern Turkey, was favoured by some mediæval writers but they were probably thinking of Al Judi near by. There is a mountain in Western Persia called Kuh-i-Nuh, which is said to be the Persian for "mountain of Noah", but no legends regarding this peak seem to have survived and it may be that the name is relatively modern and conferred by local inhabitants. In any case this mountain is too hemmed in by adjacent ranges to be a serious contestant. The true mountain must have been one of the many which extend for seven hundred miles in a great curve bordering the northern and eastern sides of the Iraq plain.

The accompanying map, for those who appreciate such things, illustrates the relation of all these mountains to one another and shows how the floodwaters could have submerged the whole of Eastern Arabia and Iraq up to their flanks—except in the case of Ararat, which is separated from the plain by two hundred miles of moun-



tainous terrain where the level is nowhere less than 5,000 feet. The "shore line" of the Flood is shown on the assumption that the water level stood at 1,700 feet above sea level; at this level it would have reached each of the other three "possibles" and incidentally converted Anaran into an island just as is stated in the Old Babylonian versions. Had the level attained only 1,000 feet Anaran is the only mountain on which the Ark could have stranded and had it been any lower the vessel could not have reached any mountain at all. The map may therefore give a tolerably reasonable impression of the true extent of the Flood.

Somewhere on the lower slopes of one of the mountains skirting the plain, therefore, the Ark rested, immovable. It was still surrounded by water, since, drawing twenty-one feet in which to float, it must wait for the level to fall that much before land appeared around it. It could not have stranded very high up, for within a little while the dove was to return with an olive

leaf in its mouth, and olives do not grow at elevations above 4,000 to 5,000 feet and this particular olive tree must have been unaffected by the Flood; no leaf could survive ten months immersion in water. But for the present there was *nothing to see and nothing to do*. Noah, looking out of the Ark, surveyed an unbroken sea; from his position some twenty-five feet above the surface of the water the horizon would be only six miles away and not until the level had fallen considerably, leaving the Ark where it was, could his vision have extended any farther.

So he waited for seventy-four days, more than two months, conducting the daily routine of caring for his burden of animal and bird life, noting perhaps that the water level was slowly but steadily falling, until at the end of that time, says chap. 8.3, "*the tops of the mountains were seen*". This could mean that the Ark was grounded at a level higher than that of the surrounding mountains, although this would imply a colossal and unlikely depth for the flood waters. The word for "mountains" here has a wide latitude though; it is used in the O.T. on occasion for quite modest peaks and hills, as in the case of the Mount of Olives, which is only two hundred feet high above Jerusalem. On the other hand it is very possible that it was only now that the mists and fogs resulting from the abnormal climatic conditions induced by the Deluge, creating an unprecedented evaporation from the flooded land in that tropical climate, began to clear so that distant mountains formerly shrouded in heavy mist now began to appear, and that this is the meaning of the assertion.

It is evident that there was still no appreciable land visible, for Noah waited another forty days before making his next move. This was to despatch a raven to explore the vicinity. (This forty days of ch. 8.6 must not be confused with the forty days' rain of ch. 7.12) as is sometimes done. There is no definite article, "the", in this verse as would then properly be the case; this forty days to the sending of the raven must count from the time when the tops of the mountains were seen.) The Hebrew expression regarding the raven indicates that it flew over the flooded earth continually, returning to the Ark regularly for rest and food, during the remaining period of waiting.

Seven days later (this has to be inferred from verse 10) the patriarch sent forth a dove in similar fashion. It is evident that land was not yet visible except perhaps in the immediate vicinity of the stranded Ark. Obviously Noah could not consider releasing his charges when the only solid ground available was a perhaps somewhat precipitous and

rocky mountain-side. He must be sure that a suitable expanse of cultivable flat ground was available somewhere near by. By this time the level of the waters would have fallen to about the half-way mark; even if the Flood had attained a full depth of 1,700 feet, as estimated on the map, Noah from his position eight hundred feet above water level would be able to see a distance of 35 miles to the horizon and still had to say, as he does in verse 9, that the waters were on the face of the whole earth. So he waited another seven days and sent out the dove again; this time she returned with the famous olive leaf in her mouth. So Noah knew that somewhere within flying distance there was ground capable of cultivation and fruit trees perhaps already bearing fruit. It was now August and the time of ripened olives, grapes and figs. He waited another seven days and sent out the dove on its third mission; this time she did not return at all.

Strangely, Noah waited another month. Had this story been fiction or a late composition based on legend or folk-lore this surely would have been the point at which he came out of the Ark. That is how it is in the Babylonian accounts. Little touches like this confirm that this story in Genesis is the work of an eye-witness, someone who was there at the time. At the end of that month, he looked again (vs. 13) and, "*behold, the face of the ground was dry*." Even this was not enough; he waited another two months, and only then, says the narrative (vs. 14) "*was the earth dried*". Not until then did he receive the Divine command to leave the Ark.

There must be a difference between the implications of these two expressions, divided as they are by the final two months. In vs. 13, as in vs. 8, "ground" is *adamah*, which means primarily the cultivable surface of the land, fit for agriculture or pasturage. "Earth" in vs. 14, as in vs. 7, is *erets*, which has the general significance of the entire countryside, mountains and valleys, deserts and forests, as distinct from the sea. One can picture Noah in vs. 13, looking out from his vantage point on the mountainside and perceiving that the receding waters had now left a wide stretch of land—perhaps quite a few miles of it—relatively free of water, but away in the distance he could perceive the wider world still flooded. Only after the two months indicated in vs. 14 did he perceive that the distant plains were completely free of water and that he could safely emerge—and then the Lord gave the word.

They had been in the Ark for one year and seventeen days. It must have been with very mixed feelings that they set foot upon *terra firma*.

*To be continued.*

*Supplementary note on the foregoing*

The last two instalments have dealt with the physical effects of the Deluge particularly as they affected Iraq, the scene of the story. From the geological point of view it is agreed that if the pre-disposing cause of the catastrophe was, as suggested, a series of gigantic tidal waves from the Antarctic, much the same effect must have

been felt in other low-lying parts of the Southern hemisphere. Particularly would the Indus and Ganges valleys in India, the western Sahara in Africa, the Amazon valley in South America, and parts of Australasia, been similarly affected. From the Bible viewpoint the Deluge concerned only one territory but in fact its effects were probably widely felt over the world.

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## THOU ART THE CHRIST

An Easter  
reflection

There have been certain great crises in human history when a man, a man of God, has suddenly seen a great light and the world has become new to him. He has perceived, as in a lightning flash, a feature of the Divine purpose which hitherto had been closed to him, and his own place in that feature, a place which he was willing and anxious to take. And each such crisis started a new era.

The first such occasion was in the days of Noah. Here was a righteous man, loyal to his God, born and brought up in an unrighteous and sinful society of which it was said "*the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*". The existence of God was denied and the laws of God ignored. Noah was a preacher of righteousness but his preaching was unheeded; he declared that judgment must come upon sin but nobody believed him. For six hundred long years he waited for God to declare himself but the heavens were as brass and no voice came, and all things continued as from the beginning of creation. But throughout those six hundred years the forces of Nature, unknown to Noah, were moving into position to effect Divine judgment, until, one day, God spoke! God spoke to Noah, and in a flash the old patriarch perceived the fair glory of the new world that was to follow the judgment, and his own place as the instrument of God in the peopling of that world. From that moment his faith never faltered, even though neither he nor his had ever conceived or could comprehend the nature of the catastrophe that was to bring that old sinful world to an end and usher in the new in which, at the outset at any rate, there would dwell righteousness. He played the part he was called upon to play and so came out into a world made new.

A thousand years passed and another man came before God in mute supplication for light and guidance. Abram, the Hebrew, born and brought up in the Sumerian city of Ur of the Chaldees, longed in his heart for something more

satisfying to the soul than the moon-worship of his ancestors. He knew the Sumerian gods, An the god of heaven, and Enlil the god of the earth, and Enki the god of the sea, and knew them for the creation of men's hands. His own fathers and family worshipped Nannar the moon-god and the city in which he lived was sacred to the moon. Every day his eyes fell upon the lofty temple-tower which dominated the city and he looked on as the citizens crowded to witness the ceremonies performed in honour of Nannar. He knew that God was not in this, and that Nannar was no god, but,—where and who was God? How could he come to find and know him, and in that discover some real purpose in life? Long and earnestly must he have pondered over these things, until, one day, God spoke to him. "*Get thee out of thy country, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.*" And in a moment Abram knew that this was the God he must serve to his dying day, and in sterling faith which never failed him he came out into a new land which was hereafter to be the scene of God's purposes for him and his.

Another long span of time and then—a shepherd, leading his flock through the crags and gullies of a mountainous wilderness, came upon a strange sight, a bush that burned with fire yet was not consumed. That shepherd had long been waiting for a sign from Heaven to indicate to him, and empower him for, his life's work. As a younger man he had been high in honour in the court of Pharaoh of Egypt; he was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and familiar with their customs and their worship and their military power—it may even have been that he had led some of their armies in the field and gained great victories. But if so, it was all as dust and ashes in his mouth the while his own people were slaves and crying out to God for deliverance, and God answered not. When at last he did strike a blow himself to manifest his determination to help his

people they understood not and he was forced to flee for his life. Now for these forty years he had led the life of a shepherd in a remote Bedouin community far from the haunts of men with no sign that God remembered him or had any great purpose for him—until that day when he saw the burning bush and drew near to gaze and heard the Voice from Heaven *"I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob..... Come now, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt."* And a great light burst in upon Moses' soul, and he knew that he was to be the means by which God would create for himself a new nation that one day would lead the world in the ways of righteousness. From that day Moses was a new man and in the inspiration of that magic moment at the Bush he went forward without faltering until he had brought the nation to the borders of its Promised Land.

So it was with Peter. Born and brought up within the strict confines of Judaism, taught to look for and expect the coming of that mystic Messianic figure who would restore Israel's greatness and make her pre-eminent among the nations, he grew up to manhood's estate and embraced the fisherman's calling knowing not when the promise would be fulfilled and little dreaming of the part he himself would be called upon to play. He observed the weekly ritual of synagogue worship and the occasional great ceremonial observances and feasts of Passover, Ingathering and Tabernacles as did all his fellows, as had their fathers and as, he expected, would their sons. He wanted to take his place as a son of Israel in the Messianic Day but there was no outward sign and it did not seem as though it would come in his own lifetime. A young prophet, a man of about his own age, had appeared preaching things of the Kingdom of God and he felt strangely drawn to him. After a while he left his fishing and joined himself to the stranger and, with others of like mind, counted himself a disciple. He did not know to what his discipleship was going to lead but he did feel that if he followed this stranger to the end of his days his life would have held some meaning. So he went with Jesus over the towns and villages of Galilee and Judea, probably seeing no more in him than a prophet like the prophets of olden time who also had called the nation back to God—until one day Jesus turned and asked his little band of followers whom men thought him to be. They gave a variety of answers; some thought him to be John the Baptist risen from the dead, some, one of the old prophets, some, a new prophet

arisen just as Moses had said one would arise. Then Jesus put his second and more direct question; *"but whom say ye that I am"* and at that a great illumination of the Holy Spirit burst in upon Peter and in wonderment and conviction he cried out *"Thou art the Messiah, the Son of the Living God."* And from that moment his life was changed. He saw a new Man, one unlike all other men, a new Man in Whose person all the golden promises of God and all the roseate visions of the prophets of old were to be fulfilled.

The Christ which Peter saw in that flash of Spirit-given insight was not the Man of Sorrows, come to suffer and die on a cross for the sins of humankind. Peter knew nothing of sin save something that was regularly expunged at the time of the annual Atonement day ritual. The Christ which Peter saw was the Christ of the future, the Christ of glory, come in the power of his Kingdom to overthrow all evil and introduce everlasting righteousness, that all people, tongues and languages should serve and obey him to all eternity in willing and loyal adoration. The inspiration of Peter's life was the glory of the future, beside which the tribulations of the present were as nothing. In the rapt condition of his Spirit-guided mind at that moment and for ever after he anticipated the later words of Paul *"Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look, not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal: but the things which are not seen are eternal."*

There is an increasing tendency nowadays to overstress the theme of our Lord's death on the Cross with its emphasis on sin, blood and death. That is all very necessary as the basis of man's reconciliation with God, but over-emphasis can be to the detriment of proper consideration of his future work for mankind in eliminating the effects of sin in their hearts and rendering them fitted for eternity. This is the aspect of righteousness, glory and life. A balanced view of the Christian faith must include both of these aspects of our Lord's work for mankind but in the popular view the more immediate appeal of history past, the earthly life of our Lord culminating at the Cross, has loomed larger before the mental consciousness than the more insubstantial vision of his future glorious reign over the earth for world conversion. A one-time well-known minister once said that a good many Christians attach more importance to the manner of our Lord's going out of earthly life than to his purpose in coming in to it. A marked feature of general Christian thought to-day is the decreasing

importance placed upon basic doctrine and an increasing emphasis upon what might, with all due reverence, be called the emotional appeal of the fact of Jesus' death upon the Cross. "Jesus died for me"; "Get right with God"; "Every day with Jesus"; these and many such familiar expressions are expressions of vital spiritual truths but their constant repetition tends to induce a shallowness of thought which finds its satisfaction in the assurance of salvation through the Cross to the exclusion of deeper themes. What is sometimes called "acceptance of Christ's finished work at Calvary" leads to the belief that there is nothing more than recognition of the Lord's death involved in the attainment of salvation. There was once a brother who had made a special study of the Tabernacle in the Wilderness ceremonial who habitually set his thoughts against that background. Talking of this very matter, he used to picture such Christians as entering the Court of the Tabernacle and becoming so enraptured with the sight of the first object they encountered, the "Brasen Altar", that they spent the rest of their lives marching round that altar singing "Jesus died for me". They never went on to the greater and deeper things of the Christian life pictured by the symbolic contents of the Sanctuary itself.

Vital as was the death of our Lord for the salvation of mankind and vital as is our faith in the efficacy of that willing offering, we must not ignore the importance of the other aspect of our relation to God. We are not only a ransomed and reconciled people; we are also a people for a purpose, a people called to declare God's salvation to the ends of the earth. And to that end we need knowledge and power. To have faith in Jesus and the efficacy of his death is one thing; to have knowledge of Christ and the power of his resurrected life is another. Both are vitally necessary if we are to be truly fitted for his future purpose. And this means at this time a full consecration of life and talents and possessions to God and his service. It means becoming co-labourers with him both in our own growth in heart and character to be made like him and in the outward work of witnessing to his Truth and heralding his coming. We are to be transformed, by the renewing of our minds, into his likeness, and so, to use a Scriptural expression, "made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light". And here we have to recognise the essential part played by the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus told his disciples that after his departure the Holy Spirit would illuminate and empower them in both their inward life and outward works. They were henceforth to live, not in the memory of past events culminating at the Cross, but in the

power of the future commencing at the Resurrection. In a very real sense the old life was to pass away and all things become new. The emphasis was to be lifted from the Jesus who died for their sins and placed upon the Christ who rose again for their justification. Which raises the point whether we ourselves, conscious of the Scriptural insistence that Christ came into the world to save sinners, do not ourselves expend too much thought and spiritual energy on the dark past from which He has saved us and not enough on the bright future to which He is leading us. Some Christians do seem to spend so much time bemoaning their faults and shortcomings, and recalling in great detail the depths of ungodliness from which the Saviour has rescued them, that they have no time left to consider and exult in the glorious destiny which the same Saviour came to reveal to them and for which by the power of the Spirit they are now being prepared.

Is it perhaps possible that our Lord Christ does not really view our sins as seriously as we do ourselves? Do not misunderstand this, we are not talking about habitual reprobates who are willingly and knowingly given over to all kinds of immorality and evil, nor yet about wilful opponents like the Pharisees of old who knew that they were choosing darkness rather than light. There is much that is evil, and men know that it is evil, which our Lord unhesitatingly and severely condemns, and in the strongest language. But when one comes to consider the man, who, even if he is not a professed Christian, does in his heart acknowledge and endeavour to practice the principles of righteousness, the case stands on a different level. Sin, intrinsically, is deliberate defiance of the fundamental laws of God. These laws may also be broken in ignorance or through weakness—an example of the latter is what is sometimes called "Adamic weakness", failure to reach the Divine standard by reason of the effect of inherited imperfections due to the Fall. The Apostle Paul in Romans 14 makes it plain that what can be sin to one man because he acts against his conscience is not sin to another who acts with a clear conscience. The Apostle John tells us that he that is born of God sinneth not, which cannot be literally true if the faults and failings inevitable to our membership of Adam's race are taken into account. It may therefore be a truism to say that Christ is not so much interested in our sin as He is in our sincerity. He cannot do much with a righteous person who is insincere. He can do a lot with a sinner who is sincere. And the story of the Prodigal Son, if no other, tells us that where there is repentance all that lies behind is wiped out, as if it had never

been.

Whilst therefore on the one hand we know that Christ died for the sin of the world—and whether we do or do not think we understand the philosophy of the Ransom we must and do accept the revealed declaration that his death was necessary to that end—and we accept and have faith in that redemptive act, this is not all. After his death comes his resurrection. After his coming to die for man's sin He comes to live for man's reconciliation to God and man's righteousness. One is in the past but the other is in the future. We accept Christ not only as our redeemer from death, but also as the channel of life and union with God. One is limited in time to a short span of three years but the other takes in all eternity. When the Apostle says "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more" it is as though he is telling us, whilst never forgetting the past, to leave it where it is in time and look forward to eternity.

And what does eternity involve? What is to be our position and duty and what are the qualifications we must attain before we can be admitted into that exalted fellowship? Will a simple belief in the atoning sacrifice of Christ be sufficient without any supporting structure of character, rocklike in its loyalty to God as was that of Peter? Will a sound intellectual knowledge of the philosophy of God's plans and proficiency in the understanding of the doctrines of the Christian faith be accepted as the criteria for final acceptance? Or is it something more fundamental to the purpose for which God has called us and pre-ordained before the creation of this world, something which had to do with heart rather than head, with character rather than achievement? Dr. Paterson Smyth, in his "*Gospel of the Hereafter*," says that on our entry into Heaven Jesus will not ask us whether we have believed the right doctrines; he will ask us what we have become. And all our searching of the Scriptures does not give us any ground for believing that our future work in that world is the running of a super theological college aimed at the turning out of trained minds, but rather the conduct of a mighty evangelical campaign which is going to yield loyal hearts and healed bodies. God's whole purpose in creating and giving life to living beings is that they may be fitted for, and ultimately fill, destined places in his Plan and his creation—a wondrous diversity of places needing a wondrous variety of such beings—just as we the Church will have already been fitted for ours. So our work for mankind throughout the Messianic era now dawning—and perhaps in other spheres as yet undreamed of in the eternity that is to follow—

will be a ministry of service playing its part in the effecting of that great design.

So the Christ upon whom we look is the Christ of the future—Christ the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. We who are his disciples and dedicated to his service are all one in Christ Jesus, members of his Body. We are not partakers of the Jesus who died on the Cross; all that He did then He did of himself and no created being could share in that. But we are partakers with him in his resurrection; we are raised with him to newness of life. We are part of that mystic Temple of which He is the chief corner-stone. We are part of the holy city of which He is the central Sanctuary and the everlasting Light. We are associated with him, not in the giving himself a Ransom in the days that are past, but in the work of reconciliation in days that are future. He, alone, died for men then. We, with him, will live for men now.

But not for mankind only. In the name of Jesus shall every knee bow and tongue confess, not only on earth but also in heaven. Christ ascended not only into the heavens which man can see but also high above all heavens, into the infinity which man cannot see. He who is the manifestation of the invisible God to all creation, even to creations not yet born, the One who reveals God to all the creatures to whom God gives life, will take his Church with him into the eternal years in the execution of that function. Do we realise what that means? Because God is essentially Creator, and God is eternal, there can never be an end to creation. Throughout the never-ending ages of glory to come, reaching into the infinite future, new lives will be coming into being, manifested in forms agreeable to the variety which characterises all God's work, living in worlds and environments adapted to those forms, and they will all need to be taught the ways of God and the righteous principles which must govern their continued existence. Somewhere within this great work we each shall find our place.

That was Peter's position when he uttered his historic declaration. At that moment he glimpsed eternity. He probably recognised Christ's Messianic mission before he knew much about his Lord's coming sacrifice for sin. He probably hardly realised the necessity of a redemption from sin. To the end of his days Peter stressed the resurrection of Christ as the driving power behind his life and work rather than the death on the Cross. He did not develop that theme into doctrine as did Paul; in simple faith he accepted the fact that we are "redeemed by the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish",

basing his thoughts on the Passover symbol rather than the Day of Atonement offerings. But having established the fact, he rests his basic faith there and gives all his attention to that which comes after the resurrection.

So then with us. On Good Friday we remember our Lord's death. On Easter Day we celebrate his resurrection. The purpose of our Lord's death has been accomplished and the mission of his coming to earth as man has been fulfilled. The

purpose of his resurrection and the mission of his Second Coming lies before us, the work of the ages for which we even now are being prepared. Let us forget the things which are behind and reach forward to those which are before, for this is our calling and our destiny. Last week we were with the slain Lamb; this week we are with the risen Christ, and now we are with him and associated in his work for all time to come and into eternity.

## THE ROD OF GOD'S ANGER

*A Study in  
prophecy*

### Part 2.

Last month's instalment dwelt upon the history of the Assyrian king Sennacherib's campaigns in and around Judah during the period 711-701 BC and its relation to the prophetic foreviews of Daniel and other prophets. In the light of what was therein said the subject now for examination is that part of Daniel's 11th chapter which describes the exploits of the "king of the north" who at the Time of the End will embark upon a career of world conquest, ravaging the nations, and meet his doom by Divine intervention when he attacks the restored and converted people of God settled in the Holy Land, the nucleus of the Messianic kingdom upon earth. The parallelism between the actions and fate of the Assyrian king and those of his greater counterpart at the end of the Age is best shown by a process of verse by verse examination of the relevant passage, Dan. 11.36-45.

\* \* \* \*

Vs. 36-37. *"And the king shall do according to his will; he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods—he shall give no heed to the God of his fathers, or to the one beloved by women; he shall not give heed to any other god; for he shall magnify himself above all."*

Sennacherib was victorious wherever he went and no nation was able to withstand him; with his continuing victories his arrogance grew apace. He counted himself superior to all gods, as witness his words in 2 Chron. 32 "know ye not what I and my fathers have done unto all the people of other lands? Were the gods of the nations of those lands any ways able to deliver their lands out of mine hand . . . No god of any nation or kingdom was able to deliver his people out of mine hand . . . how much less shall your God deliver you out of mine hand?" The "God of his fathers" is Asshur, the national supreme god of Assyria (Asshur was their deified ancestor, a son

of the patriarch Shem). The "one beloved of women" is a term, according to Gesenius, applicable to the goddess Ishtar, Queen of heaven and revered by all Semitic peoples. Asshur and Ishtar were the two leading deities of the Assyrians until the time of Sennacherib but he neglected their worship in favour of a lesser god, Nisroch.

If the analogy holds good, the "northern power" at the end of this Age is one which repudiates and defies every type of religious faith and worship, and, to use the NEB rendering, utters "monstrous blasphemies" against God Most High. The reference to Ishtar might well constitute a hint that the very considerable section of the world Church which reveres the Virgin Mary as worthy of worship is also included in this rejection. The "king of the north" is thus shown to be completely atheistic and to have banished God and all expressions of religion from his policy and practice.

Vss. 38-39 *"He shall honour the god of fortresses instead of these; a god whom his fathers did not know he shall honour with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts. He shall deal with the strongest fortresses by the help of a foreign god: those who acknowledge him he shall magnify with honour. He shall make them rulers over many and shall divide the land for a price."*

Sennacherib had adopted, as his favourite deity, Nisroch, a god depicted on the tablets with the head of a vulture—a fitting choice for this man. According to Isa. 37.38 it was while worshipping in the temple of this god that he met his end. Nisroch was virtually unknown to his predecessors; Sennacherib elevated him to the front rank. To this god the Assyrian dedicated the fruits of his many conquests. By virtue of the destruction of Sidon all world trade between the west, south and east was diverted to pass through

Nineveh and came under Assyrian control. The 37th chapter of Ezekiel gives a vivid picture of the trading wealth which passed from Phoenicia to Assyria at this time, although that chapter refers to the similar calamity which fell upon the sister city of Tyre a century later at the hands of the Babylonians; the Phoenicians had recovered their lost trade control in the meantime following the fall of Assyria. By means of his military conquests Sennacherib controlled, politically and commercially, all the ancient Bible lands, with the exception of Egypt, but extending into South Arabia and far into the interior of Siberia. Having conquered, he left the local national kings and rulers in control, subject to him, on payment of heavy annual tribute in treasure and kind, thus "dividing the land for a price".

Similarly the "king of the north" of Daniel's vision can be expected to attain considerable commercial supremacy in the world, in the name of a hitherto new and unwelcome ideology which can well merit the description of a "foreign god", a god of fortresses, a military power. There will seem no power that can withstand this relentless conqueror steadily submitting one nation after another to his will.

Vss. 40-41. *"At the time of the end the king of the south shall attack him; but the king of the north shall rush upon him like a whirlwind, with chariots and horsemen, and with many ships, and he shall come into the countries and shall overflow and pass through. He shall come into the glorious land. And tens of thousands shall fall, but these shall be delivered out of his hand, Edom and Moab and the main part of the Ammonites."*

In Sennacherib's day the "king of the south" was Egypt, the other and much older empire. Egypt was being steadily circumscribed and restricted by the rising power of Assyria. There had already been clashes; now the Egyptians marched north to give battle whilst Sennacherib was still in Syria. The Assyrian advanced at a furious pace; his armies swarmed over Syria, Phoenicia, the land of the Philistines, Samaria and Judah, and met the Egyptian forces at Eltekeh south-west of Jerusalem. The Egyptians were defeated and withdrew. A feature of this campaign was that the kings of Edom, Moab and Ammon came to Sennacherib with protestations of friendship and in consequence he left these three countries alone. They did not suffer the horrors of war. But in Judah, "the glorious land", he did take more than two hundred thousand captives, and sent them to Nineveh with much spoil. Although the Scripture history says nothing about his use of ships, it is known that shortly

afterwards Sennacherib employed a great fleet of war galleys in his wars with Elam. His grandfather Shalmaneser originated Assyrian maritime power by using sixty ships manned by eight thousand rowers in his attack upon Tyre; it is perfectly feasible to conclude that Sennacherib's advance through Syria and Philistia towards Egypt was accompanied by a war fleet sailing along the Palestine coast to assist in the attack, and that Daniel's vision at this point was a reflection of that fact.

In like manner does the end-of-the-age "king of the north" advance upon the Holy Land where God's people of faith await his coming. His quarrel at this moment is not primarily with them but with the latter-day "king of the south" who is his great adversary. He has provided himself with "many ships", a new departure for this king of the north who has previously relied upon land warfare. The Semitic Arabs of the adjacent lands—pictured in Daniel by Moab, Edom, Ammon—are on terms of amity with him and escape his wrath, but the people of God do suffer his vengeance in proportion as they are still allied with the "king of the south". Not until that link is broken does God deliver. So just as Sennacherib at the corresponding moment took captives and a great spoil from Judah, so does the latter-day king of the north exact his toll from restored Israel while they still look for salvation to the "kingdoms of this world". This is shown more clearly in succeeding verses.

Vss. 42-43 *"He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. He shall become ruler of the treasures of gold and of silver, and all the precious things of Egypt; but the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his heel."*

Here the dark shadow of his approaching doom begins to fall upon Sennacherib. He seems to be at the point of success; he now besieges and captures the Philistine fortress of Lachish, the last effective barrier to his advance into Egypt proper. He has left behind him an elaborate sculpture commemorating the fall of Lachish in which he is depicted reviewing the treasures he has captured. But Egypt, now thoroughly alarmed, had called up all her available allies to meet the threat of the terrible Assyrian. The Ethiopians, the Lubim, the Nubians, the Phutites, all the powerful peoples of Africa came out of Egypt under the leadership of Tirhakah the Ethiopian monarch, to give battle. The result appears indecisive; Sennacherib claimed a great victory but Egyptian lore asserts that Egypt was saved by the interposition of Egypt's gods who intervened to destroy his army. Certain it is that he did not set foot in

Egypt proper although he did destroy Egyptian influence in Judah and Syria. And the statement that the Libyans (properly Phutites) and Ethiopians shall be "at his heel" (not "steps" as A.V.) seems almost to indicate that at this point he was compelled to desist and turn back. Almost immediately came the miraculous deliverance at Jerusalem when the besieging army was destroyed by the angel of the Lord and the Assyrian "returned with shame of face to his own land".

Now all this, translated to the events of the end of the age, seems to picture an unexpected slowing up or check to the world-wide conquests of the king of the north for a reason not immediately apparent. The king of the south is down but not out; he is still capable of offering battle but all the advantage and initiative is with the king of the north. There would seem to be no reason why he does not follow up his acquisition of the treasures of the king of the south by advancing completely into his territory and taking full possession. But he does not do so. Instead he pauses in his onward career to settle once and for all this vexed problem of the people of God, ensconced in their own land, who now, at last, when the inability of the king of the south to help them has been abundantly demonstrated, publicly avow their faith in God, that He will deliver. The arm of flesh has failed them, the carnal weapons in which they had put their trust are cast aside, and they wait in calm confidence to see what the Lord will do. And here, with two great powers facing each other and the people of God trapped between them, comes the climax to this momentous drama.

Vss. 44-45 *"But tidings from the east and from the north shall alarm him, and he shall go forth with great fury to exterminate and utterly destroy many. And he shall pitch his palatial tents between the sea and the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, with none to help him".*

It was at this point, whilst the Assyrian armies were besieging Jerusalem and Hezekiah was praying to God for deliverance, that news came to Sennacherib from Nineveh that rebellion had broken out in his subject lands of Babylonia and Elam in the east and Armenia in the north. It was imperative that he return to deal with the rebels. The immediate result was to step up his attempt to capture Jerusalem; the extent of his fury is indicated in the Old Testament by the combined promises and threats directed against the besieged people of Jerusalem, threats to which they disdained to reply. He was at this time superintending the removal of the treasures from the captured city of Lachish and the sculpture above referred to shows him seated in front of his royal

pavilion whilst thus engaged. It was the custom for kings in those days when on active service with their troops to have such a pavilion-tent for personal use and this sculpture of such at Lachish is a striking commentary on this verse, for Lachish lies "between the sea" (the Mediterranean) "and the glorious holy mountain" (Mount Zion—Jerusalem). Sennacherib in his inscriptions had already boasted that he would "pitch my silken tent not only in the high places of the north" (Syria, where he did do so) "but in Jerusalem itself, and profane its palace gardens" (which in the event he certainly did not do. This incidentally is alluded to in 2 Kings 19.23.)

Here he came to his end. In the night the Angel of the Lord passed over the Assyrian host and slew of them a hundred and eighty-five thousand men. The Assyrian, the rod of God's anger, the scourge of Israel, was suddenly and irrevocably broken by God whom he had defied, and made his way back to Nineveh never to return. At that point he passes out of the Scripture story; in reality he lived a further nineteen years before being assassinated by his sons, but that is no part of the prophetic picture. With the loss of his army, and his precipitate flight from Jerusalem, he came to his end with none to help him.

So it will be at this end of the Age. One can picture the dread invader establishing his headquarters on the very borders of the Holy Land and exulting at the prospect of imminent and easy victory, and then the coming of tidings from the east and north which convey a new danger. The tidings which would be most likely to constitute a threat to this hitherto invincible world ruler would be that of the active intervention of Heaven. The Assyrians looked to a mountain in the far north-east as the abode of the gods and the centre of Divine rulership. "The Mountain of the East" they called it, and sometimes "the heights of the North" (this is alluded to in Isa. 14.13). From there had come their ancestors after the Great Flood. One of the phenomena of the closing events of this Age must be a dawning realisation on the part of the evil forces of this world that the powers of Heaven are joining issue with them and that the fight will be to a finish. The vision of Rev. 19 where the Rider on the White Horse from Heaven is seen facing the powers of evil and completely overthrowing them is a parallel picture describing the same event. If this be a valid interpretation, then this intimation that Heaven's powers from the "east and north", the centre of Divine rule, are on the way to give battle to all world evil, is followed almost immediately by the spectacular and miraculous deliverance of the trusting people of God in the

Holy Land and the establishment of the Messianic kingdom upon earth. Logically enough the following chapter, Daniel 12, declares that at this point Michael, the traditional archangel-protector of Israel, "stands up", and the reign of blessing begins. This chain of obscure allusions in these few verses of Daniel's 11th chapter, related

to the known details of Sennacherib's campaign at the time of Israel's earlier but similar trial of faith, is valuable guidance to an understanding of the detailed sequence of happenings which will characterise the final few years of "this present evil world".

*To be concluded.*

## A LIVING SACRIFICE

*A Consideration of  
the Consecrated Life*

Many are the Scriptures which speak of God's prerogative to call and choose whom He wills for this or that part of his eternal purpose. Even Christ "glorified not himself to be made an High Priest" (Heb. 5.5) but responded to his Father's invitation and call. Thus, there is a limit to what man, by the free swing of his own will, can aspire to accomplish in the plans of God. No man can find himself a "place" or thrust himself unbidden into the ranks of those whom God chooses for special specific places in the outworking of his purposes (Mark. 10.40).

In the higher Christian life every member of the body of Christ must be "called according to his purpose". The present requirement in the consecrated response is that of self-sacrifice and self-denial—the voluntary yielding and surrender of something which no feature of either Divine or human law can compel, but which can be yielded only at the invitation of One who can solicit a degree of surrender and propose a degree of reward not incorporated in the general laws of his dominion. It was thus in God's dealings with his well-beloved Son. He who had been with God from times eternal was not compelled to leave that glorious estate to come to earth and die for man. He was a willing volunteer. He accepted with ready heart the commission God set before him, and bowed to death so that his Father's purposes might be accomplished. Because he did willingly humble himself unto death, God hath highly exalted him above every name or authority, now and for all time.

The same treatment is held out by promise to those who willingly follow in his steps, and lay themselves down before God in whole-hearted surrender. "If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me" was Jesus' invitation to his little band of followers. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God..." is the way the Apostle continues and presses home the same invitation, "Let him deny himself". Let him deny his self-hood—his self-choice, his self-

desire, his self-effort—clasp himself to a cross, willingly and voluntarily. A cross is the symbol of death. This is a call and invitation greater far and more exacting than the do-good-to-my-neighbour standard which will be operative and imperative in the age to come.

A singular thing about the New Testament writers is that they do not once describe this deeper response to God as "consecration". In fact, the word occurs in our Authorised Version but twice, and both cases are in connection with our Lord. One of these is in Heb. 7.28, where we read that the word of the Oath made the Son a Priest, "who is consecrated for evermore". This word, however, would be better translated (as in the margin) "perfected". It reveals the fact that the Exalted Son had been fitted and prepared for his Priestly work according to the ideal which God had in his own omniscient mind; and the "perfecting" had accomplished its designed end, for the Son was "perfected" for ever. The other occurrence is in Heb. 10, 20 "... a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us..." This word means "to make anew—to renew". An old "way" into the presence of God had been found faulty, because of the frailty of man. Through Jesus' sacrificial death that way to God was renewed on a better, surer basis.

There is no other actual occurrence of the word "consecration", but there are many instances where the actual idea embodied in the Old Testament sense of the word occur. Rom. 12.1 is a case in point. The sacrifice that does not terminate in a few moments of time, but which yields itself up just as fully, yet in constantly repeated acts of surrender and self-denial, over a life-time's span, is the thought connected with the Old Testament act of consecration. The same thing is set out in Peter's words (1 Pet. 1.15-22). He exhorts his brethren to purify their souls, even more than they had done, and enjoy their freedom from their old "vain conversation" (or manner of life) obtained for them by the precious blood of Christ, and in doing so, become more holy, even as He that called them was holy.

In order to understand the life of consecration it is necessary to go back to Old Testament days. Then, with the circumstances governing both the word and the attitude it stands for before our minds, it will be possible to trace these passages from Old Testament to New Testament times, and to realise what they mean in the higher Christian life.

The origin of the idea is found in Lev. 8, though prior to this particular day of ceremonies God had given to Moses, on the summit of Sinai, the outlines and details of all this ceremonial. *The idea of consecration originates with God himself. God set the standard of life, which He was pleased to call "Consecration"—and He outlined the installation ceremony to express the idea He wanted to teach. "...thou shalt gird... Aaron and his sons, and thou shalt consecrate Aaron and his sons" (Ex. 25.9). Then (verses 19-37) the instruction is given to Moses how to proceed with the consecration ceremony. Then in Lev. 8, we have the record of this consecration ceremony, based on the instruction given to Moses. Reading the account carefully, it will be seen that the consecration ceremony was one ceremony among others which led to a certain definite conclusion at the end of the day. "As He hath done this day, so the Lord hath commanded to do, to make an atonement for you" (Lev. 8.24). On account of being thus brought into relationship with God, Aaron and his sons must abide at the door of the Tabernacle for seven days, to keep the charge of the Lord. The tabernacle had just been erected, and everything set in its place. This was done on their New Year's day, exactly one year after leaving Egypt (Exod. 40.1-17). No sacrifices of the required kind had therefore been previously offered, for there had been no Priest to make them.*

The story of the washing and robing of Aaron and his sons, of their anointing with oil, of the slaying of a bullock for a sin-offering, of one ram for a burnt-offering and another for the consecration offering, is set out at length, culminating with the reminder by Moses that all that had taken place was to make "an atonement" for them. The ceremony of consecration thus brought them into relationship with God. That investiture is proof that God accounted them as separated from Israel, and enjoying a special relationship with himself. *But, though thus separated, they were not sufficiently at "one" with the Holy One of Israel to enter into his purposes. They were not yet fitted and prepared to represent him, nor co-operate with him before their fellow-men. He required proof of their fidelity to him, and of their obedience to the "charge of the Lord"*

which he was laying upon them. Hence their participation in all these ceremonies constituted a test of obedience. They would then be accounted to have reached the "end" God had in view. They would be "at-one" with him. In New Testament language they would be (Heb. 5.9) "made perfect", having reached the end or consummation of the sanctifying experience, the standard (on the typical plane) which God set before them, to express and exemplify his own Spirit to Israel, and to the fundamental principles of holiness and sin.

*The form of the ceremonies revealed the primary object of their call. First, Moses was to bring a bullock to be slain in the manner prescribed for a sin-offering. Aaron and his sons were to lay their hands on its head. Then Moses was to slay it. The act of Aaron and his sons represented their identification with the bullock. This principle of identification by laying on of hands was practised in all cases where a man presented his offering to the Lord, and its language was intended to say "This represents me". When Aaron and his sons laid their hands upon the bullock's head it was as though they said "This represents us—what happens to this, is accounted as happening to us". In this sacrifice, slain by the Law-Giver, Moses, the Holy One of Israel showed most unmistakably what the Divine Law required of those who had previously been called and appointed to the Priesthood in Israel. It was a pictorial representation that God—after accepting them into the Priesthood—required of them the full and total surrender of their lives, not singly, but as a whole, as a united company of priests without distinction as to which was most important or least important.*

Next followed the burnt-offering. Again Aaron and his sons placed their hands on the victim's head. Every vestige was burnt in the fire on the Court Altar, This taught them that everything must be surrendered to God—without reservation. Then came the ceremony which represented consecration. Again Aaron and his sons placed their hands upon the victim's head. Then after Moses had killed it, he took some of its blood, and with it touched the tip of Aaron's right ear, the thumb of his right hand, and the great toe of his right foot, and exactly the same to each of Aaron's sons. The remainder of the blood he sprinkled round the altar. He took certain parts of the animal, and all its fat, one unleavened cake, a cake of oiled bread, and one wafer, and placed all these together into Aaron's hands, who waved them before the Lord. Taking them from Aaron, Moses placed the whole pile upon each of Aaron's sons' hands in turn, who likewise waved them

before the Lord. That accomplished, Moses burnt all these things together upon the altar-fire, a sacrifice of consecration, a sacrifice of sweet savour. Thus the essential meaning of consecration is brought out. It means a "filling of the hands".

Now, let these ceremonial details be considered relatively to each other. First, the ram was set before the Lord and "devoted" to him. The object of its life and existence was thus, once for all, determined. The ram may not henceforth be set free to mingle with its fellows, nor to feed its fill in the meadows, nor to become the sire of frolicsome lambs. It was separated from its kind to be "devoted" to the furtherance of God's designs. Here we find correspondence with the commonly accepted definition of consecration, i.e. it was devoted to a holy purpose. Aaron and his sons placed their hands on its head, thus associating themselves with its object and destiny in life. This act placed them before God in the same light.

The ram represented themselves, or rather, they were represented in the ram. Its death represented their death sacrificially—yet under such conditions that it could be represented as a "living sacrifice" held up and waved to and fro before the Lord for a requisite time. Something was accounted dead, yet in some sense they who were accounted dead in the limbs and inward parts of the victim were also accounted alive in the persons of the Priests, and able to present their members to God, by waving them to and fro. They were the custodians of their sacrifice, which filled their hands to the full. Of the sacrificed victim a portion was returned to them, so that by it, they might "wave" it in the presence of their God. This was representative of an acceptable sacrificial service before God, until the time came for their mutually-concerned sacrifice to be burned.

This is the germ, and at the same time, the basis of all truth underlying consecration. Its primary thought is "the hands filled full"—the hands filled full by God with the very thing sacrificed to him! The application of the blood to ear-tip, thumb and great toe, indicates the members particularly involved in the sacrificed and subsequent stewardship. The ear represents hearing, the thumb, service, the toe, the "walk" and deportment through life. Thus Aaron and his sons were devoted to hearing the instruction of God, to engaging in the service of God, to walking in the way of God. Consecration, then, means the yielding up to God the devoted life in tiny

dribbles; day by day and hour by hour, through a right understanding of his will, and a right exercise of service, through a right walk in life. Thus that stewardship which He returns to his anointed ones as a sacred charge, when they first surrender themselves to his will, is yielded up bit by bit.

But to have all this unique experience true in their lives, they must first have been called of God; and having been called they must have been anointed with holy oil, and thus separated from their brethren; thus separated unto God. They are therefore represented as dual identities—one represented in the sacrificial animal, the other represented in the anointed white-robed priest.

Herein are the germs of fundamental principles true only of those who are "New Creatures in Christ Jesus". None else stand before God as having made sacrifice of themselves, and yet as being alive. None else have received from God their "two hands" full as a sacred charge to be returned and yielded up to him bit by bit in kindly act and loving deed, in sanctified hearing, in holy service, and in a consecrated walk through life. None else are yet being thoroughly attuned with God, with his loving spirit, with his wide gracious purposes, and with his unsullied holiness. None else are yet being made perfect by sufferings. None else are yet being developed so as to attain the end which God has in view.

How beautifully Paul catches up all these ancient things in his mighty appeal to the brethren to live the consecrated life. "*I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice (as dead, yet alive) holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed (made over to God's design) by the renewing of your mind (the blood-tipped hearing) that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God (that ye may be attuned to him in perfect measure, and not only know but be ready to express the spirit of his great eternal designs).*"

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### Gone from us

Bro. A. Rutherford (*Harpenden*)  
 Sis. B. Shearn (*Tunbridge Wells*)  
 Bro. S. H. French (*London*)  
 Sis. G. A. Ellenger (*Ipswich*)  
 Bro. C. Halton (*Wallason*)  
 Sis. E. Kerans (*Hove*)

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



# BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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

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

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## Thought for the Month

*"Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life"* (Prov. 13.12 RSV).

There is an inbuilt desire in man for the realisation of the Golden Age of peace and happiness which tradition says once was, revelation says shall be, but quite clearly is not now and has not been as far back as man-made history can perceive. There is an appeal in the primitive idyll preserved in the folk-lore of so many nations, the far-off time when men lived in peace and amity one with another, the beasts were tame, the crops never failed, and the sun shone always, which gives rise to the fervent but only half-believing hope that those golden days might return to men. But because men do not live in peace and amity, —far from it—the beasts are by no means tame, crops do fail, and the weather is often atrocious, hope can find no secure foundation and the heart is made sick. So many men would like a better world; some of them would do a great deal and sacrifice a great deal to make it possible, but they do not know the way. Greed, selfishness, violence, injustice, have held sway in the hearts and the councils and the institutions of men for so long that it is difficult to conceive how there could be any other basis for human society. So the men who would hail and support a better order of things if they knew how it could be brought about are like the distraught people if Isaiah's day in similar circumstances; *"they will look to the earth, but behold distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish, and they will be thrust into thick darkness"*.

The earliest story in Bible history enshrines a hope which, though deferred, need not make the heart sick for it will assuredly one day become a desire fulfilled. Unfortunately most men will

not read and consider far enough to perceive the nature of that hope and the evidences which make it real. The first man enjoyed the beautiful garden but because of disloyalty to God he was turned out into the cold, hard world where everything was against him, and the heavenly guardians were stationed to bar him thereafter from the tree of life. That is where a great deal of human thinking finishes; man is condemned to live his life through in this very generally unpleasant and certainly unsatisfactory world and there is nothing he can do to alter it or avert his fate.

But, of course, the story does not end there. The Divine promise was that the woman's seed would one day destroy the serpent. One of her posterity would eventually abolish evil and bring man back into the garden. The heavenly guardians would be commanded to remove the barriers and open the way to the tree of life. The whole of the Bible traces the evolution of that promise into reality and the end of the Book pictures man, cleansed, undefiled, fitted for his inheritance, entering into the Holy City where stands the Tree of Life which so many of them thought they would never see. Desire is fulfilled; men find their eternal sustenance and satisfaction in the Tree of Life.

Proof? It is all around us. Long ages ago the Bible outlined in detail what would happen to this world of ours if men continued in the way they had chosen. To-day we see it happening; the world is heading for disruption. Just so surely will the further Bible prediction come true; an Age of benevolent yet firm instruction in the rightness of God's ways and the inevitable human reaction as seen again by Isaiah *"This is our God; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation"*.

## SIMON PETER — FISHER OF MEN

### 3. The Temple tribute

Peter was unusually silent. Making his way, with Jesus and the other disciples, to the house in Capernaum where they were to spend the night, he was walking a little apart from the rest, apparently lost in his own thoughts. The others had taken no notice, but Jesus had, and He glanced once or twice at the rugged fisherman; in his glance there was understanding. Peter had been like this since the two Pharisees had accosted him as the little party entered the town; he had stayed behind to exchange a few words with them. Now he was wondering whether he had spoken wisely in reply to their question, and whether Jesus would approve what he had said. Once again, as so often, he berated himself for the fatal impetuosity which had led him to speak hastily and without proper thought of the implications. All he had wanted to do was get rid of those interfering Pharisees and hope nothing more would come of the matter. But now, he was not so sure.

It had been such a simple question—but loaded; he could see that now. “Does not your Master pay the Temple tribute-money?” There were two kinds of tax imposed upon Jews at the time; the civil tax due to Rome—the “things that are Cæsar’s”, collected by tax-gatherers appointed by Rome, and the annual levy incumbent upon all Jews everywhere, at home or abroad, for the upkeep of the Temple, collected by agents appointed by the High Priest and his fellows. This latter was known as the “*didrachma*”, the half shekel or “shekel of the sanctuary”, worth two *denarii* (the “penny” of the N.T.). In past times the offering had been voluntary, but some time before our Lord’s day, following a celebrated dispute over the matter in the Sanhedrin between Pharisees and Sadducees, in which the Pharisees were victorious, the tax was made compulsory, and every Jew was harried by the collectors until he had paid over his half-shekel. Doubtless the constant movement of Jesus from place to place left room for doubt as to whether in his case the tax had been paid, hence the raising of the question at this juncture.

Peter had said “yes” without thinking very much about it. He had probably paid his own contribution in times past when demanded and thought of it no more. But he had been in secular work then as a fisherman and always had the money to pay. Now he was a full-time itinerant evangelist and had no money. He had been thus with Jesus for a little under twelve months so the

question had not fallen due for consideration before. And now he was beginning to doubt whether he had done right in committing the Master to this payment when he knew all the time that, despite the Pharisees’ dictum, the tax was in principle a voluntary one and it could be that Jesus might have an objection to subsidising this current Temple administration which He had already condemned in no uncertain terms. Also, where was the money to come from? The Temple tax represented two days’ wages of a working-man in full employment; by 1975 standards that could represent twelve or more English pounds, but Jesus and his disciples were penniless preachers and there was no “social security” in those days. No wonder Peter was silent.

Jesus looked across at him again. There was understanding in that glance; there was sympathy, and there was a certain humorous content too. He knew just what Peter was thinking about, and the nature of his dilemma. Presently He would help him out of his difficulty, but before doing so He would use the incident for Peter’s instruction—and, too, for that of all the disciples. He stopped Peter as the others were entering the house. “*What do you think, Simon? From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tribute? From their sons or from others?*” Peter roused himself from his thoughts; he knew that something important was coming but he had no idea what it was. The question, however, was an easy one to answer. He was thoroughly familiar with the policy of the Roman power which taxed subject nations and let off their own nobility and free-born citizens lightly or completely. “*From the others, of course*” he responded. Came the answer from Jesus “*Then the sons are free*”. Free-born citizens of the Empire do not pay tax. In just the same way every Israelite was a son of God, a freeman of the commonwealth of Israel, and his offerings to God were traditionally to be “of his own voluntary will”. In so saying our Lord condemned the Pharisaic action which compelled all Jews to pay the tax, and laid down the maxim afterwards elaborated by St. Paul when he discussed the same subject with the Corinthians; “*each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver*” (2 Cor. 9.7). Here, as when on a previous occasion He had talked to the woman of Samaria at Jacob’s well (Jno. 4), He was leading his disciples, and others, to the realisation that God will not accept reluctant service, that He wills that they that worship him do so in spirit

and in truth.

So much for the lesson. The practical problem still remained; the collectors were waiting for their money. That introduced another consideration, also of importance. The Temple tax was an institution; compulsory or not, it was looked upon by most men as a necessary and desirable means of ensuring the orderly continuance of the ceremonies and services at Jerusalem which made Judaism what it was. In all probability the collectors themselves were perfectly sincere about it, just as sincere as the many Church workers in our day who set about soliciting donations from all and sundry for one or another of the many needs and good causes associated with present-day institutional Christianity. Would they, true adherents of orthodox Judaism as they were, even begin to understand this revolutionary new principle being expounded by the Man of Nazareth? Much more likely is it that they, and the people with them, would interpret our Lord's words as an excuse to avoid payment. Jesus knew that. And He was ready to meet them half-way, until such time as they could fully understand. *"Then the sons are free"* He had said, but continued *"however, not to give offence to them, go to the sea and cast a hook, and take the first fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth, you will find a stater: take that and give it to them for me and for yourself"* (Matt. 17. 26, 27). "Not to scandalise them" is the literal meaning of the Greek. It would be so easy to cause misunderstanding, and the point was not one in which a vital principle was involved. There was every reason to contribute an offering to the upkeep of the Temple—our Lord commended the poor widow who cast in "two mites", all the living she had—and therefore what the Pharisees demanded as a right He would willingly extend to them as a free gift. Again had Jesus anticipated Paul, who likewise said *"nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. If your brother is being injured by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love"* (Rom. 14. 14-15). That was lesson number two for Peter.

There still remained the question of finding the money. Without much doubt it could have been provided; although poor, the little band certainly needed, and possessed, a slender store wherewith to meet their simple but essential needs and we know that this was supplied by the poor to whom Jesus ministered and his followers among the people, including one or two somewhat better-off women, who *"provided for them out of their means"* (Luke 8.3). But Jesus would not use their offerings, contributed oft-times out of very scanty resources for the sustenance of him and his disciples, for this purpose. He gave Peter instead an

instruction which seems to border on the miraculous, and the question arises: why adopt so unusual a way of meeting the need? Was it to teach Peter lesson number three, that his Master could very appropriately call upon the wealth of his Father in heaven who owns all the gold and silver, and all the treasures of earth, to meet an impost which should never be allowed to fall upon the sacrifices of the poor from which their daily needs were supplied? The Father in heaven needed not this kind of offering from the Son on earth and so He provided the money himself from his own store; the fish swimming in the sea brought it to Peter that he might pay it over as Jesus had directed. The *"stater"* was a silver coin worth two *didrachma* and so met the tax for the Lord and for Peter also.

The simple, matter-of-fact manner in which this part of the story is related makes it appear as though Peter saw nothing to wonder at in the instruction. He was getting accustomed now to the marvellous powers of Jesus, much more so than many moderns who decry the incident as incredible. Not that it is so incredible in the light of the present day. If men in a ship's cabin can, with the aid of a box of electronic gear, watch every movement of their fellows in a submarine on the sea bed a mile below them, and talk to them, or, even more marvellously, from a control room on earth see and talk to astronauts walking on the moon a quarter of a million miles away, there is nothing unreasonable in visualising Jesus as watching the movements of one fish in the water probably no more than half-a-mile from where He was standing, or of so controlling its movements that Peter should catch it so soon as he had cast his line. Divine power is fundamentally infinitely greater than any of the powers of man.

It is an established fact that to this day there is a species of fish, called the *musht*, in the Sea of Galilee which is known to carry small objects such as pebbles or coins in its mouth, being especially attracted to anything bright or shining as a coin. Known also as "St. Peter's fish", the *musht* is reared in quantity nowadays in Israel for commercial food production. Peter probably already knew of it and its habits; in simple trust he walked down to the lakeside in full assurance that Jesus would bring this particular one, bearing its coin, to him.

It could not have been many weeks later that Peter was given his famous lesson on forgiveness, highlighting so important an aspect of the Divine character and the Divine plan. One of the more regrettable features of traditional Christian theology is the emphasis placed upon punishment for sin, as though God is seeking for an excuse to hurl his thunderbolts of judgment upon the

wicked, whereas in fact the reverse is true; He is always seeking ways and means to save the evil doer from his evil way and bring him back into a state of reconciliation. Jesus had been talking about this for a while past, and the disciples must have found his words strangely at variance with their Judaistic training in which the law of justice demanded an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, and the enemies of God and of Israel were most certainly to be visited with condign punishment and everlasting destruction without appeal. Now Jesus was telling them about the shepherd who left his ninety-nine safely housed sheep to go out on the mountains to seek the single one which was lost, not desisting until he had found it. "For" He said "*the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost... it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish*" (Matt. 18. 11-14). At a much earlier time Jesus had told Nicodemus the enquiring Pharisee "*God sent the Son into the world not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him*" (Jno. 3.17). All this was alien thought to orthodox God-fearing Jews like Peter, brought up to look for swift and merciless judgment upon the godless without thought as to the possibility, even at the eleventh hour, of their repentance and conversion. Jonah had been angry with God because He had lifted judgment upon the Ninevites consequent upon their conversion (Jonah 3.10 & 4.1), and he was not the only one. Not long after this very time, and despite the principles our Lord had sought to inculcate, James and John wanted to call down fire from heaven to destroy the unfriendly Samaritans who had spurned the Lord, and had to be reprov'd (Luke 9.51-55). There is no doubt therefore the lesson was sorely needed. But it had to be brought closer home. From his own position as the One who had come to earth to seek and save the lost ones Jesus turned to the disciples' own relation to one another in the same matter of forgiveness for wrong done. "If your brother sins against you..." do all that is in your power to win him back. The old Mosaic Law did not talk like that; it defined penalties to be paid and vengeance to be exacted for wrong done. But now—"if he listens to you, you have gained your brother". The principle upon which God is working with all men, one that will be openly manifest in the coming Messianic Age when all men of all generations will have the opportunity to "listen to" God and so be "gained" for all eternity, is to be exemplified in the daily lives of God's children now in all their relationships with their fellows. The keynote is to be forgiveness leading to repentance and reconciliation

Peter had listened attentively up to this point

but the old Judaism died hard and he wanted to know where stood the limit. There surely must be an end to this process of forgiveness and reconciliation. "*How often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? As many as seven times?*" This last he suggested, perhaps hopefully, that he might have a chance of executing judgment eventually. He might have been thinking of the vision of Amos the prophet of Tekoa, to whom the Lord revealed that He was bringing judgment upon eight peoples after their seventh transgression in each case and would condone their wrongdoing no longer. But again Jesus led him away from the standards of the past age and showed him the ideals of one that is to come. "*Seven times? Nay; seventy times seven!*". In other words, there was to be no limit to Peter's forgiveness if by such means he could eventually save his brother.

And that, of course, is what God is doing with man. There is no limit to the Divine endeavour through Christ, to save every man from the evil of his way and bring him into the Father's family. Only if and when, in his wisdom, He knows that the case is hopeless, will He turn sorrowfully away and leave the determined evil-doer to the consequences of his choice.

And now, for another six months, there is no mention of Peter. He was with Jesus all through that six months, doubtless breaking in from time to time with his impetuous questions and receiving in return new lessons upon which he would cogitate and grow each time a little more into conformity with the mould his Master had planned for him. Through Samaria again to Jerusalem, little dreaming that he was leaving Galilee and Capernaum for the last time until after the death of Jesus, roaming through Judea and the region beyond Jordan, the while the weeks passed, bringing them nearer to the tragic events of that last Passover in Jerusalem. One cameo remains before that. The rich young ruler had accosted Jesus, asking what good thing he must do to attain eternal life, and Jesus had told him to sell all that he possessed, to give to the poor, and become a disciple like the others. The young ruler had gone away, sad and regretful, for he had great possessions, and no one now knows whether he ever did come back. And Jesus took advantage of the incident to warn his disciples how the rich, because of their riches, find it hard to enter into the kingdom of God; the disciples wondered aloud how it could be that if the rich, with all their advantages, could not obtain entry, any at all would be saved. At which Peter, quick as ever, glimpsed a connection between their own renunciation of worldly advantage now and their hoped-for regnal power in the days of the Kingdom; seeking, as ever, precise definition, he came out

with "Lo, we have left everything and followed you. What then shall we have?" (Matt. 19.27). No better rendering of Jesus' reply exists than that offered in the Authorised Version: "*Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of his glory ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*". The giving of new life; that is the meaning of the Greek word. The time of the giving of new life is when the Son of Man is to sit on the throne of his glory, and that is the Messianic Age of his reign over the world. To the disciples in their then immature stage of understanding that meant the exaltation of Israel over the rest of the nations and the exaltation of the disciples as rulers over Israel. Later on in life they came to a better and clearer understanding of the Divine purposes and realised that their rulership as members of Christ's church was not merely over Israel but over all mankind; that their position as rulers was not for personal aggrandisement and glory as with the

kings they knew, but for the service and instruction of the ruled, that they might be persuaded away from the practices of selfishness and injustice and violence which is so characteristic of this world, and led to accept the life of selflessness and justice and peace which is the hallmark of the Age to come. Above all things they were to be bringers of new life, life that comes from God to each and every one of humankind whose heart in that glad day will be given to him, and because it comes from God, will be life that is eternal, never-ending.

So Peter was left with the golden vision of what one day would surely be, if his faith held fast. It was a vision he was going sorely to need at a time that now was close at hand, for the shadows were gathering around Jesus, and the next that is related of Peter is the tragic incident of his temporary loss of faith when he denied his Master. But, happily, that was only an incident; it was not the end of the story.

*To be continued.*

## DON'T BE AFRAID TO DREAM

"Don't expect too much out of life, then you won't be disappointed!" Ever meet people like this? The human race suffers from many, many kinds of fears. Fear of criticism, fear of sickness, fear of death. But perhaps one of the most common fears that we all face is: Fear of Failure. Have you ever said, "I'd like to do this or that, but I'm afraid I'll fail?" But what if you do fail? Mistakes are never permanent unless you want them to be.

If we were to evaluate our Christian lives, what would we find? Many people would say, "To live a Christ-like life is not only difficult, it's impossible." This is true to some extent. For without the power of the indwelling Christ in your heart, you can never, never even dream to live the Christian life successfully! As long as we are living the Christian life by the Spirit of God, we are assured success, as long as we cooperate with his Divine power.

However, let us not forget the other sides of success. What do you think of yourself? Psychologists call this "self image". And it's one of the most important things we hold in our power. You and I live, talk, and react as we see ourselves. Jesus said once, "As a man thinks in his heart, so

is he." In other words, if you have no thought of success in whatever you dream or wish, you can forget it. God does not waste miracles. We must take the first step in whatever we plan to do. And this is easily obtained if we keep in mind that Christ came not only to save us in the future, but to give us more abundant lives—to lift us above boredom and living the same day over, and over again. God does not merely want us to settle for existence only. He wants us to enjoy life to its fullest.

Many of us like to laugh or even ridicule Peter for his fears while walking on the water. But don't think he was afraid on that occasion. At least he got out of the boat and started to walk towards the Lord. What did the others do? Certainly people like Peter have their moments of fear, but that's a lot better than living an entire lifetime of fear never pushing ourselves into something new. Let us dream on and strive for newer heights. Remember, God is for us, that is good; God is with us, that is better; God is in us—that is best, for all things shall be fulfilled before our eyes.

*Berean News, Cicero, U.S.A.*

There is no witness of the Christian Church like its own unity. Jesus, knowing this, and realising how divided his followers were, prayed earnestly

to his Father "*That they may be one; as thou father art in me, and I in thee, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.*" (John 17. 21.)

## PHILEMON — THE CHANGE FROM WITHIN

With all the many differences in law, manners and customs, nevertheless the Romans, Greeks and Jews had one thing in common—a dependence on slave economy. However much the twentieth century mind may admire any or all of these civilisations that fact must be admitted.

The difference between the Jews and everybody else on this question was that under their law no slave could be held longer than six years (in the Year of Jubilee all slaves had to be freed) and there were regulations laid down for their protection. A young female slave, for example, on reaching a marriageable age had either to be married to her master or his son, and in the eventuality of neither wanting her she had to be freed.

The Greeks treated their slaves, on the whole, better than the Romans though this is not saying a great deal. If a Greek slave was required to give evidence in a law court as a witness he could expect to be tortured, but on the other hand his master could not put him or her to death without the consent of the Court. If any slave was in danger of having their virtue assaulted they could take refuge in a temple, and claim the right to be sold to a different master. Children born to slave women became slaves themselves.

With the Romans, however, the slave was not a person, he was a 'thing' and absolutely in the power of his master. This is not to say that every Roman slave owner was a callous brute; many of them treated their slaves well, but being convinced of the rightness of the course they were pursuing would probably have been horrified at the suggestion that slavery was wrong.

There had been attempts to bring about a change in conditions. The Romans and the Greeks at the time Paul was writing his epistles were conscious of the pressure put on the system, less than a hundred years before, by the Thracian ex-gladadiator Spartacus. The Romans particularly had cause to remember this revolt against slavery in 73-71 B.C. It had cost too many lives, and imbedded too many dangerous ideas about liberty. According to what is known of the leader of the slaves he was a humane man, and remembering that, though intended for the gladiatorial arena, unless he distinguished himself in his first fight and was subsequently freed, it meant winning every contest for three years when the doubtful mercy of two years' slavery ending in freedom would be accorded him (at least that was the custom with prisoners of war and the Thracian had been a soldier). One can understand how a short cut to liberty would appeal to Spartacus.

Onesimus was another proposition altogether. His name, by a stroke of irony, meant 'profitable', but this apparently was the opposite of what he was in reality. After being more trouble than he was worth to his master he finally ran away, helping himself to some of Philemon's money in the process. Philemon may very probably have been glad to see the back of him, and there is no account given of any attempt on his part to follow and recapture the young man. Perhaps this was an indication of the change in Philemon's inner feelings for even the kindest pagan slave owner would have set out in indignant pursuit.

It has been agreed that Paul wrote this letter from prison. It has not been agreed where Paul was in prison. Some would argue for Ephesus and point out that it was not so far from Colossæ where Philemon lived, whereas Rome, the traditionally held viewpoint, several hundred miles away, would be too far to be the objective of an escaped slave.

The answer or answers to that argument would be—

- (a) No runaway slave would take refuge in any town where there was the remotest chance of his master finding him, or of being recognised.
- (b) Rome was a large enough city for any runaway to hide quite successfully for a long period of time, and the underworld of the capital would always welcome one more fugitive.
- (c) That was Onesimus's purpose in helping himself to Philemon's money.

We do not know how Onesimus and Paul met. Onesimus may indeed have seen Paul at Philemon's house, for the apostle seemed to be on friendly terms with him and his family.

*"To Philemon, our dearly beloved, and fellow labourer, and to our beloved Apphia and Archippus our fellow soldier..."*

and Archippus has also been included in the farewell messages in the letter to the Colossians.

Onesimus may have been denounced as a runaway slave. Epaphras, whose position approximated to that of minister to the Church at Colossæ, who was with Paul at that time may have recognised him and persuaded him to put his case to the apostle. It might be asked if anyone desperate enough to run away—and a thief into the bargain—would throw away his chance of freedom so easily. The penalties for runaway slaves were severe; the law would have upheld

Philemon if he had put him to death. It is unlikely that any other fugitive slaves would have given Onesimus away, for they stood together. As one writer observed, their code was "love each other, love lies, love licentiousness" and so on. A possible explanation may have been that Onesimus learnt the apostle was in Rome—we know Paul had been allowed to rent a house there and to receive anyone who wanted to see him—and that the memory of the teaching he had half-forgotten stirred up feelings of remorse. Perhaps Onesimus's conscience, which hitherto had not had much opportunity of making itself heard, went into action. Perhaps he may have had a superstitious fear of the apostle which, bearing in mind Paul's fiery preaching, is very possible.

Whatever reason finally prompted Onesimus to throw himself on the mercy of Paul, there is no cause to disbelieve that he presented the apostle with a very delicate problem. To give shelter to a runaway slave was the equivalent of being a receiver of stolen goods. Paul was quite capable of dealing with such a situation, however, and such was the influence he could exert over practically everybody that, probably overwhelmed with gratitude and relief from a remorseless conscience, Onesimus, for the first time perhaps, began to justify his name—

*"Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me."*

There is no reason to suppose that Paul approved of slavery, though he never preached directly against it for fear of its upsetting the real purpose of his life—the spreading of the Christian belief. His attitude seems to have been that if a man is free in Christ, the slavery he is enduring is a passing thing, besides which, believing in the imminent return of Christ there would have seemed little purpose in his eyes in campaigning for the freedom of slaves. Nevertheless Paul, whilst stressing the need for servants to be obedient to their masters, also emphasised the need for masters to treat their servants/slaves properly. The status of a slave was less than nothing. There were slaves who bought their freedom, and some who received it as a reward, but the standard of behaviour was understandably low. What incentive had men and women to try to lead moral lives if they were the property of their masters and death was the only means by which they could obtain freedom. It is almost impossible for us to realise what the advent of Christianity meant to the slave community, or what a tremendous assertion Colossians 3.10-11 is—

*"And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision,*

*Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all, and in all."*

In other words, Christ is the master of all men.

The problem Paul faced was neither philosophical nor theological, but intensely practical. The apostle does not seem to have been a sentimental man, yet one can assume that there were some good qualities in Onesimus, and that he had been converted by Paul's teaching, otherwise why should he stay there in the prison, and so we read—

*"Whom I would have retained with me".*

It would appear that Paul had developed an affection for Onesimus, referring to him as "his son". As in other troublesome circumstances, and as it was impossible at that moment for obvious reasons to visit Colossæ, Paul has to rely on his ability as a letter writer.

His letter to Philemon is unique among his writings. It is the shortest, and it is certainly the most cordial. No fiery teaching, no scathing denunciation; sweetness and light abound from the first verse. The Churches at Corinth and Galatia would scarcely recognise Paul as the writer, which proves that Paul could be all things to all men.

We do not know if Philemon was rich; the fact that Onesimus was his slave is not conclusive; even persons of modest incomes owned a slave or two, but the Church at Colossæ met in his house so we can perhaps assume that he was reasonably prosperous. Paul does not rush into battle on Onesimus's behalf. The first nine verses are given to personal greetings, and one can gauge Paul's diplomacy by—

- (a) he does not refer to himself as an apostle
- (b) He refers to Apphia, Philemon's wife/sister/daughter as "beloved" which was extraordinary in itself, unless Apphia was cast in the mould of Lydia.

There are diplomatic references to Philemon's faith, and the love which Paul is sure he has for his fellow Christians and for Paul also. This love, the apostle continues, has made him confident enough to ask a favour of a brother in Christ. He could use his authority and command Philemon, but he would rather ask him, as an old man, and a prisoner of Jesus Christ.

This is appealing enough to bring tears to the eyes of a graven image and by this time Philemon would be in the right mood to grant anybody's request. Paul then lays the case before Philemon. He is making this request on behalf of his son, Onesimus. There is sympathy in the recognition of the slave's uselessness in past days, but things are very different now. Paul manages to infuse the right note of regret in the information that he is sending Onesimus back to Colossæ. If he could have kept Onesimus with him he knows he

would have continued to care for Paul as Philemon would have done had he been in his place. He knows, however, that Philemon will receive "his son" as if he had been Paul himself. As if this is not enough to cut short any protest Philemon may have made Paul points out how well things have turned out—

*"For perhaps he therefore departed for a season that thou shouldest receive him for ever. Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord? If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself."*

It probably occurred to the apostle at this point that some reference to the stolen money might be appreciated, and so, taking the pen from whoever was writing at his dictation, he adds the following—

*"If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account."*

Paul makes it clear, immediately afterwards, that he has written this with his own hand, so will repay anything owing, but hastens to add that he would not dream of saying how much Philemon owes him, Paul, even his very soul. If any other than Paul had written this letter it might be said to be a gentle attempt at intimidation!

Paul then proceeds to assure Philemon that he knows he will do even more than he has asked, and ends by suggesting that perhaps Philemon will prepare a room for him as he hopes that through the prayers of the Church he may come to them at Colossæ. He includes Epaphras in the list of farewells which is understandable since he was a minister of the Colossian Church. There may, however, be a subtle undertone. It is perhaps a way of intimating that there is a witness to his request for forgiveness on behalf of Onesimus. It would hardly do for Epaphras to return home to find Onesimus dead or sent to the mines!

Nevertheless Paul was depending upon the

soundness of Philemon's belief in Christ. It would have been no problem for him to behave in a benevolent way as long as his rights and privileges were not attacked. If it was a shallow faith Onesimus would have cause to regret returning, but Paul, who knew from his own experience how belief in Christ can alter a man's attitude, must have been sure of the genuineness of Philemon's faith. It was not the kind of letter to send to a pagan slave owner, although its very audacity might have carried the day.

There are reasons for thinking that Paul did not go far wrong in assessing the character of Philemon. It may be stretching the long arm of coincidence, but unless Onesimus was an inheritance, or the child of a slave girl, why did Philemon not take advantage of the law that compelled slave dealers to take back slaves sold under false pretences (and any slave dealer in his right mind would hesitate to dwell on Onesimus's unprofitableness) or pay compensation? Perhaps he had tried to give his slave every chance. But the strongest reason for believing that Philemon did as he was asked is that the letter is in existence, that we have it in the New Testament today. No-one seems to doubt its genuineness, and there is no reason why anyone should forge such a personal letter. Slavery was not wiped out of existence by Paul's words; perhaps Philemon did not free his other slaves. It took centuries of the influence of the Christian spirit, an essentially practical thing, to wipe out such an iniquitous economic system, which the undoubtedly sincere Spartacus thought he could batter down by sheer force.

Over forty years later at the time Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, was being taken to Rome to die a martyr's death in the arena, there was a Bishop of Ephesus called Onesimus. It would be interesting to think it was the same man—it would be a satisfactory ending, and in any case in a world which the Christians were turning upside down, there would be nothing incongruous in such a solution.

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*"Love thinketh no evil."* (1 Cor. 13.5).

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

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

## ONE SHALL BE TAKEN AND THE OTHER LEFT

An Examination of a Significant Scripture

*"In that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken and the other left... and they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together" (Luke 17. 34-37).*

Many whose knowledge of the Divine character and Plan has by no means equalled their zeal for God and righteousness have dwelt fervently upon the implication of those words. Suddenly, without warning, the elect will be snatched away to heaven from amidst the unrighteous, and the celestial doors will be closed for ever! Too late then for repentance; nothing left but outer darkness, weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, for those who have spurned the day of grace and have found themselves "left". The logical implication of this belief has been well worked out; tracts are still to be met with describing the chaos which will ensue at that dramatic moment when every Christian engine-driver is whisked in a flash from the footplate of his express; every Christian sea-captain from the bridge of his ocean-liner; every Christian car-owner from the wheel of his car—most of these themes were worked out before the days of air travel and this type of tract is not always up to date, but doubtless the same principle would be held to apply to Christian pilots of passenger airplanes. It is not a conception that offers any honour or glory to God, but then so many of the crude ideas of the nineteenth century relating to the Second Advent are like that, and we who hold—or ought to hold—a far more enlightened and rational view of the manner of and method of our Lord's coming must needs take care that we do not retrogress to anything like that view ourselves. We do well to remember our Lord's words of reproof "Ye know not what spirit ye are of; the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives but to save them".

It is clear that this is one of the happenings associated with the Second Advent. These words of Jesus appear in the catalogue of signs and evidences and events given by him in answer to the disciples' questions "When shall these things be, and what shall be the signal of thy presence, and of the culmination of the Age?" As such we find the words in Luke 17. 34-37 and Matt. 24. 28, 40-41. They do not appear in quite the same connection in the two accounts and have to be disentangled from other sayings, but it is com-

paratively easy to discern the connection in which the words were used and to pass on from that to a consideration of their import.

The Second Advent includes a number of different phases and aspects, each displaying characteristics of its own, but all, when fitted into proper sequence, having place in the *Parousia* or presence of the Son of Man. The *Parousia* is the period which endures from the moment of his coming into our world of time and space to gather his own, to the end of the Millennium when all things in heaven and earth have become subject unto him, and He delivers up the restored Kingdom to God the Father, that God may be all in all (1 Cor. 15. 28). These passages in Matthew and Luke about the one being taken and the other being left are associated with that phase of the Second Coming which is likened to the days of Noah. We need therefore to note the analogy very carefully; the similitude was not chosen by our Lord lightly but because it is capable of giving us valuable teaching.

*"As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man"* said Jesus (Luke 17. 26). Likewise, also, He went on, as it was in the days of Lot. The likeness is in the suddenness and unexpectedness of the catastrophe *after* due warning had been given and generally unheeded and *after* — this is important—the few who *did* heed had taken advantage of the offer of salvation provided and had been saved. Noah and his family entered the Ark before the catastrophe and were saved. The rest of the world were left behind and perished. Lot and his daughters fled to the mountains before disaster overtook the Cities of the Plain and were saved. Their unbelieving fellow citizens were left behind, and perished. *"Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed"* (Luke 17. 30). The word for "revealed" means an open and evident manifestation. That word gives us an indication of the time lapse in this matter. The "days of Noah" figure indicates a period in the Lord's presence when He is already within the time and space framework of the material creation, already in the spiritual "heavens" of this earth, waiting to execute judgment but staying his hand the while his faithful ones are heeding the call to get ready for entrance into the Ark, or to flee to the mountains, to use either the Deluge or the Sodom picture as the case may be, and the preaching of imminent judgment is going out to the world, but there is no outward

evidence that can appeal to human senses to support that preaching. Nothing to see; nothing to hear; only faith to believe. When the catastrophe does happen, when the Deluge does come to sweep them all away, the Son of Man is openly revealed in his *apokalupsis*—plainly evident, but this is after the “taken” ones have been taken; from the very nature of the case it must be that the time when some are taken and others left is before the final catastrophe—they are taken away from the judgment.

Now the “taking” must of itself be unnoticeable to the world. The sudden disappearance from the earth of all true Christians, even though they be a “little flock”, in the manner beloved of the evangelistic tracts previously referred to would most assuredly attract notice and elicit comment. After all, it would only require three or four Christian engine-drivers to disappear simultaneously from their footplates, leaving no trace, in England, and the same in America, and the same in Australia, to set the newspaper reporters busy. Someone would be bound to produce one of the prophetic tracts and the whole matter would at least become a nine days wonder. That would be outward evidence, and the whole principle of the first phase of the Second Advent, the “days of Noah” period, is that there is no outward evidence capable of appealing to the natural man; none whatever. The “taking” must be of such a nature that it conforms fully with the ordinary course of events in the world and presents no outward phenomena which is at all unusual.

At this point it ought perhaps to be suggested for consideration that the interpretation sometimes put upon this passage, that those “taken” are “drawn out” from their former Christian association to an earthly fellowship where they may enjoy a more accurate understanding of the Divine Plan preparatory to their ultimate change to heavenly conditions, and those “left” are the ones who decline so to “come out”, does not really fill the requirements. Noah and his sons were not invited to settle in a peaceful farmstead in some secluded part of the earth while the rest of their fellows were left to languish in the wicked world; neither was Lot with his daughters called to a Bible study in some quiet house in Sodom while the sons of Belial were left to roam the streets in peace. In both cases the called and responsive ones were taken right out of their respective worlds to a place of safety and in both cases God then proceeded to destroy those worlds. And in both cases, too, the few whose faith had saved them became the means of starting their respective worlds anew with fresh life — even though the story of Lot’s daughters does not square with modern ethical standards the fact

remains that righteous Lot, like righteous Noah, became the father of a new community of human beings who re-peopled the territory whose former inhabitants had died under Divine judgment. The reality is true to the picture; the “taken” ones come forth when the judgment is over to be the instruments used in bringing new life to the world.

Now that privilege is enjoyed only by those who become “joint-heirs with Christ”, associated with him for the conversion and hence giving of life to the world. The “taking” can be nothing else than the “change” of individual believers from mortality to immortality, the death of the human body and resurrection to spiritual conditions. If this is to be a process attracting no special notice in the world of men, as it must be if the “days of Noah” aspect of the Second Coming is to be preserved, it follows that the “taking” will occur, just as death comes, “naturally”, to all men in all the forms and for all the reasons that death does come.

That agrees well with the Scriptural teaching, embodied in parables such as the goodman of the house, the faithful and evil servants (Matt. 24) the talents (Matt. 25) the man taking a far journey (Mark 13) as well as the epistles to the Corinthians and Thessalonians, that our Lord returns silently, like a thief, first of all to gather his Church—of whom the dead in Christ are to rise first and then the living are to follow—and *afterwards* to be revealed to the world *with* his Church for the world’s salvation. At some time during this “days of Noah” phase, there is a period, how long or how short we do not know, during which the “sleeping ones” are raised to be with him, and his remaining faithful disciples go to join them instantly at death. “*We shall not all sleep*” he told the Corinthians “*but we shall all be changed... for the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*” All that is the first work of the Second Advent; it has to be completed before the catastrophe can come; and until the catastrophe has come there is no outward evidence of the Lord’s presence that can be appreciated by the world.

The disciples did not understand very perfectly. “*One shall be taken, and the other left!*” “Where, Lord?” they asked. Where were the faithful to be taken? They expected to stay right where they were, throughout the judgment. The wicked would perish, the scribes and the Pharisees and the priests, but they themselves would remain, and after the holocaust they would sit on twelve thrones reigning as kings over a restored and righteous earth. This talk of being taken away to some unknown region frightened them. “Where shall we be taken, Lord?”

One can imagine the ready sympathy of Jesus with them in their perplexity. How could they be expected to understand? *"I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now."* How could he explain to them that the Kingdom of their dreams and hopes was going to be vaster and grander by far than anything they had ever imagined. But He must give them the best possible answer; and He did give them the best possible answer, one which satisfied their question. *"And he said unto them 'Whosoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together'."*

There is not much doubt that it was a contemporary proverb He had quoted to them. The structure of the phrase, the nature of its subject, and its total irrelevance to the matter under discussion ought to satisfy us that such was the case. He quoted a common proverb as answer in the way that we often do exactly the same thing in modern daily life. *"Where the carcase is, there will the vultures be gathered together."* It was probably a proverb they had often heard and often used.

The birds referred to were vultures, carrion birds, flocking always to any place where a piece of dead flesh offered a meal, and not leaving until every vestige of death was gone and the ground was sweet and clean again. People do not think of that; they shrug their shoulders and say "Ugh; vultures; beastly creatures, feeding on decay and death; how can such a symbol ever picture anything that is of God and life?" But God made vultures! Suppose God had not made vultures. What would become of the dead bodies then? They would lie in the hot sun and breed disease and pestilence, and still more death, and so continuing death. In England a generation ago the man who collected the house refuse was known as the "dustman" and disesteemed as a socially undesirable although necessary member of society. To-day he rides on a smart electrically propelled vehicle, wears a uniform as often as not, and insists upon being called a "cleansing operative". The vultures of Judea were cleansing operatives; in them death was swallowed up in life, and their gathering together was an indication to the observer that, for that occasion and in that place at least, they were abolishing death and bringing life to light.

Did Jesus mean to convey all that? He certainly meant the disciples to know that just as the vultures would be found gathered together around that which was the object of their desire, gathered from all quarters to the feast, so would the faithful "taken" ones find themselves gathered together in just that place, in just that company, and for just that purpose, which was their dearest desire. Where or how, what matter? They would be satisfied when they awakened in his likeness. That

must have been the primary answer to their question. *"Where, Lord?"* "Just where you want to be, gathered together around the work which is the purpose and aim of your lives, your calling, your destiny."

Perhaps, in after days, pondering over these things, a deeper thought may have come to them. For vultures are not the only created beings who are said to eat flesh. *"Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day"* (John 6. 54-55). *"The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."* (John 6. 51). That was not living flesh; until the Saviour had shed his blood upon the Cross, and given his life a Ransom for all, there was no flesh of which any could partake. It is out of that partaking that new life comes for all mankind. Those who now partake of his flesh become his ministers to bear his life to the citizens of a new and cleansed world in which death finds no place. It is not an analogy that we ought to press too far; but we should realise as we think upon these things that Jesus himself did not shrink from the horror and indignity and shamefulness of the death that He died in order to provide that flesh which is given for the life of the world. *"A body hast thou prepared me"* He said to his Father; that body had to be utterly consumed before life could begin to flow to a dying world. In the Tabernacle types the outward manner of that consuming was the burning, outside the Camp, of the hoofs and hide and suchlike parts of the bullock of sacrifice, a stench in the nostrils and a defiling thing to those who beheld, but to God, as represented in the offering of the vital organs on the altar in the Court, an offering of a sweet savour, acceptable to him. Perhaps, then, as understanding deepened in later days, the disciples did realise that as the vultures were ordained by God to rid the earth of death and death-dealing influences, so they, gathered together with one accord like those vultures, would be used of God to rid the world of men of death and death-dealing influences. That is the destiny of the "taken" ones when in the Lord's due time their whole company is complete beyond the Veil.

In Matthew's account the remark about the vultures appears to be misplaced. It comes at verse 28 immediately after Jesus' statement that his *parousia* is to be as the lightning, or bright radiance coming from the east, and it is difficult to see what connection the two expressions can have with each other. Jesus could certainly have used the words twice in his talk, but the fact that in Luke's account they are given as the answer to a question which is itself recorded perhaps

justifies us in thinking that Luke has the more accurate record here, and that verse 28 in Matt. 24 should come after verse 41, and thus put the two accounts in harmony.

Quietly, then, unobtrusively, the world in general knowing nothing about it, the returned Lord gathers his faithful ones, taking them to himself—as they finish their earthly course. Just what are the conditions of that gathering to him “in the air” we do not know, for it relates to spiritual things of which we cannot be made cognisant whilst in the flesh, but it may very well

be a condition similar to that in which our Lord remained during the time between his resurrection and ascension. What we do know, and the knowledge should give us ground for intense joy, is that those thus “taken” are gathered together and remain gathered together for the purpose of cleansing the world of all evil and of all death and of all that is associated with death. It is for that the world is waiting; for that the whole creation is “*groaning and travailing in pain together*,” waiting, although they realise it not, “*for the manifestation of the sons of God*”.

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## THE FELLOWSHIP OF HIS SUFFERINGS

A Devotional Study

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

Jesus was born into the hard Roman world and often the peasant folk had a lean time making ends meet. From his earliest years our Lord must have been familiar with the grief of his fellowmen. His ministry of healing would bring him into greater touch with the weakness and frailties of humanity, and the Gospel records reflect his mingling with and sympathy for the sorrowful and outcast members of society. He was contradicted, ostracised and hunted. The agony of the garden, the hypocrisy and humiliation of the trial, the fatigue and rough handling on the way to Calvary, were all part of a bitter cup which He drank to the dregs. Not only did He suffer physical pain and mental anguish for himself, but his pure and sympathetic heart grieved for the

suffering and sin of the whole world.

The witness which the disciples gave after Pentecost rapidly brought persecution from the religious leaders who had been responsible for the death of Jesus. The power of the Gospel message caused many Jews to repent and believe in the Lord. The priests and lawyers soon realised that instead of crushing the new sect by putting its leader to death, it had suddenly obtained new life and influence. Not only were the members of the early Church willing to suffer for their Master but they did it with joy as reflected in Luke’s words “*They departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name*” (Acts 5. 41). This spirit of joy, derived from sharing their Lord’s sufferings, continued with the Christian church as it spread to Gentile lands, as shown by the experience of Paul and Silas in the gaol at Philippi, where they sang praises to God during the night. Paul knew the cost of the witness of the early Church before he became a Christian, but the visions he had received from his crucified Saviour were too strong a call and he followed the path of martyrdom. Eventually he turned his back on the comfort and serenity of his home town of Tarsus and set out along the great highways which led to Rome, stopping only to tell the tidings of great joy which must be told to all people.

The joy of the early disciples was a feature of the Christian life which neither the Jews nor the Gentiles could understand. They cheerfully faced torture and death for Christ’s sake, and nothing would make them forsake their trust in him. They knew that their Master was with them during the actual experiences, they knew that He

sympathised with their afflictions because He had trodden the same thorny path, and they were able to say with Paul "*our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding weight of glory*" (2 Cor. 4. 17).

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

The experiences through which our Lord passed as Saviour prepared him for his work as mediator, reconciling men to God. The writer to the Hebrews describes him as "*learning obedience through what he suffered*" and being made "*perfect through suffering*." (Heb. 5. 8; 2. 10, R.S.V. Jesus was perfect in that He was sinless and obedient before He came to earth, but until He came to live among men He had no personal contact with the conditions in which men lived. He had not felt the consequences of sin. "*For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses,*

*but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sinning*" (Heb. 4. 15, R.S.V.). Those who follow Jesus, share his suffering, and by so doing become like him in his compassion and patience for a sinful world. It will mean betrayal, scourging and contradiction, but it will prepare them for a place beside him in his work as earth's future King. Any denial or retreat from this aspect of our fellowship with Christ must necessarily find us unready for his priestly work in healing and rehabilitating a broken and sinful human race (2 Tim. 2. 11, 12).

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

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

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

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

(Brian Aldis, 1942)

## THE STORY OF THE DELUGE

### 9. The case for Mount Judi

Claims for the continued existence of the Ark on one or another of the possible mountains have abounded in the Middle East for at least two thousand years past and probably for considerably longer than that. The story was always the same; pilgrims ascended the mountain to view the famous vessel and came back with pieces of the bitumen with which it had been covered, for use as magic charms protecting against diseases and disasters. (Since the tradition moved to Mount Ararat in Turkey during the late Middle Ages this refinement has been dropped; the difficulties of the ascent have precluded pilgrimages and the enquirer has to be content with a view of what is asserted to be the Ark through a telescope in the cathedral at Echmiadzan thirty miles away—but of that more anon.) But the consistency of the tradition points to a basis of truth hidden in the mists of archaic history. One thing is certain; wherever the Ark did come to rest, it must have survived for many years after being vacated by its occupants. Too big to move, it was perhaps slowly dismantled by successive generations of men as and when use was found for the materials of which it was composed. That at any rate is one hypothesis; another and probably more likely one is that the first settlements of the Ark's survivors were an appreciable distance away from the mountains, in the plain where food could be grown quickly, so that the Ark was left to its own devices. In such case, bitumen covered, it could endure in the dry climate of Iraq for a long time, perhaps centuries, and the tradition of pilgrimages by later generations to the "Mount of the East" and its remarkable vessel could be solidly founded on fact.

The first written record to have survived is that of Berossus the Babylonian priest-historian about 280 BC, in his history of Babylonia. Recounting the story of the Flood as it is given on the Assyrian and Sumerian tablets, he says "...the vessel being thus stranded in Armenia, some part of it remains in the Gordyene mountains in Armenia, and the people scrape off the bitumen, and carry it away, and make use of it by way of a disease repellent and amulet." Berossus wrote in Greek, hence his use of the terms Armenia and Gordyene, Greek equivalents for the Assyrian Urartu and Kardu. According to Strabo, the First Century Greek geographer, and other writers of the period, Gordyene was the name of the range of mountains bounding the plain of Iraq on the north, now known as the Hakkiari. Hence Berossus could

have intended any mountain between Al Judi on the Tigris to "Mount Nisir" at the eastern end; since he took his information from the ancient tablets he probably meant the latter.

The next definite reference is in the "Book of Jubilees", written by some pious Jewish priest about 150 BC. In this book the Ark is said to have "rested upon the top of Lubar, one of the mountains of Ararat". According to Jub. 10. 19 the land of Ararat lay to the east of Babylon, which would point to somewhere on the Persian frontier. Josephus quotes the historian Nicolaus of Damascus as saying "There is a great mountain in Armenia beyond Minni, called Al Baris, upon which it is reported that many who fled at the time of the Deluge were saved, and that one who was carried in an ark came on shore upon the top of it, and that the remains of the timber were a great while preserved". (Ant. 1.3.6). Nicolaus wrote in Greek; "Jubilees" was widely extant in Greek at the time, and "Baris" is Greek for a certain type of ship or boat. This points to the "mountain of the ship" or ark. Minni was the area around Nisibin; either Al Judi, or more likely, Pir-Omar-Gudrun, the Nisir of Assyrian legend and the Armenian mountain of Berossus, is indicated.

Josephus himself, writing in the 1st century A.D., states (Ant. 20.2.2.) that in his own time, in the country of Carrhae, (district of Nisibin), "there are also in it the remains of that ark, wherein it is related that Noah escaped the deluge, and where they are still shown to such as are desirous to see them." Again, (Ant. 1.3.5) relating the history of early times, he says "After this the Ark rested on the top of a certain mountain in Armenia... the ark being saved in that place, its remains are shown there by the inhabitants to this day". In Ant. 20.3.3 he explains that Nisibin and its vicinity was part of Armenia; this would include Mount Al Judi. These statements are corroborated by other Jewish sources. The Targums of Onkelos and of Jonathan (Aramaic paraphrases of the Old Testament first written down about the 1st century A.D.) both render Gen. 8. 4 "the mountains of Kardu" (Gordyene) instead of Ararat.

All this demonstrates that by the time of Christ, among the Jews at any rate, the older idea of the Ark resting at the 'Mount of the East' in eastern Kurdistan was giving place to a belief that it stranded on Al Judi and was still there for anyone to see. One wonders if the fact that Al Judi was in the middle of the land of Gozan in which many

of the Ten Tribe captives were settled by the Assyrians had anything to do with it (2 Kin. 17.6; 18.11; 19.12). Mount Nisir was at the other end of the Kardu mountains two hundred miles away, and it was the sacred mountain of their hated conquerors. It would be only natural for the captive Israelites to change the location of the great event to a site nearer home which would then become their own sacred mountain. The tradition that the Ark was still in existence and could be visited would be likewise easily transferred from the older sites and this would account for the statements of Josephus and others to that effect. That tradition endured for several centuries more; this is rather strange when one considers that Al Judi is by no means difficult of access—only 5,000 feet above the plain; the story should be very easily capable of verification, unlike Ararat in Turkey which is 17,000 feet high and much more difficult.

Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis (A.D. 310-403), noted theologian, put on record the assertion that *"the relics of Noah's Ark are shown in the country of Gordyene even at this day"*. Rather more definite is the claim that the Eastern Roman emperor Heraclius (A.D. 575-641) did actually ascend Al Judi in A.D. 620 and view the remains of the Ark. The Arab historian Elmacinus in his *"History of the Saracens"* says of Heraclius that he *"ascended up into the mountain Al Judi and there saw the place of Noah's Ark"* which admits of a little doubt as to whether the venerable vessel was actually there. Then Isidore of Seville (A.D. 560-636) says *"Pieces of the timber of the Ark are still shown on Mount Ararat"*. Isidore wrote five centuries before the claims of modern Mount Ararat began to be advanced and in any case the Armenian church have always stoutly denied that anyone ever has or ever could ascend their mountain, by Divine interdict; in Isidore's day "Ararat" referred to the territory along the Taurus and Gordyene ranges, as witness St. Jerome's commentary on Genesis, A.D. 383 *"Ararat is the plain of the middle Araxes which lies at the foot of the mountain Taurus"*. This river Araxes (modern Khabour) flows from Mount Masius to join the Euphrates, and Masius marks the connecting point between the Taurus range in the west and the Gordyene in the east, as defined by the Greek geographer Strabo in the 1st century (Strabo's *"Geography"*, 20.12.8).

An interesting remark in the *"World History"* of Jordanus of Ravenna (A.D. 500-570) describing Al Judi, tells of Noah building a house on the slope of the mountain upon leaving the Ark, *"and there too is said to be that original vine which Noah planted and whereby he got drunk"*. The reputed vineyard is still there near Al Judi; see

Wigram's account hereafter in this chapter.

Ibn Haukal (10th century) Arab geographer and traveller, in his *"Book of Ways and Provinces"*, says *"Judi is a mountain near Nisibin. It is said that the ark of Noah (to whom be peace) rested on this mountain. At its foot is a town called Temanin, and they say that the companions of Noah descended here from the Ark and built this town"*. Another Arab traveller and historian, Masudi of Baghdad (10th century) famous for his care and accuracy, confirms the words of Haukal and names the same town. Temanin, (sometimes spelt Thamanin) is the Arabic word for eighty, the number saved in the Ark according to Moslem tradition, and is the original Arabic name of the town now known as Cizre, a few miles on the western side of Al Judi. (Cizre was formerly Geziret-ibn-Omar, and in classical times Bezabde.)

After about A.D. 500 the Nestorian Christian church became very strong in this part of Asia, and strongly supported belief in Al Judi as the mountain of the Ark. Less than two centuries later came the rise of Mahomet the prophet of Islam and before long the Moslem faith was predominant in the district. The legend of Mount Judi was taken over by the Mohammedans as it stood; in the Koran account of the Flood it is said (Koran chap. 11) *"The water abated, and the decree was fulfilled, and the Ark rested on the mountain Al-Judi"*. At some time in the 6th Century a monastery, known as the *"Monastery of the Ark,"* was built on the lower slopes of the mountain; this remained until A.D. 776 when it was destroyed by lightning. At a somewhat later date the mountain also boasted a Jewish synagogue and a Moslem mosque, this latter being called the *"Mosque of the Ark"*; it would seem that the three faiths vied with each other in doing honour to the patriarch Noah and his ancient vessel. All these buildings have long since disappeared, but the tradition remains.

Evidence of this continuing belief next appears in the work of Benjamin of Tudela, a Spanish Jew who travelled extensively in the east during the Twelfth Century and was in the vicinity of Al Judi about A.D. 1160. Benjamin wrote a voluminous account of his travels. (English translation, *"The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela"*, M. N. Adler, 1907) saying of the district in question *"...Thence (from Nisibin) it is two days to Geziret Ibn Omar (now the town of Cizre) which is surrounded by the River Hiddekel (Tigris) at the foot of the mountains of Ararat. It is a distance of four miles to the place where Noah's Ark rested, but Omar ben al Khutaab took the Ark from the two mountains and made it into a mosque for the Mohammedans. Near the Ark is the Synagogue of Ezra to this day, and on the*

ninth of Ab the Jews come hither from the city to pray. In the city of Geziret Omar are four thousand Jews.... Thence it is two days to Mosul..." It looks as though the Moslem Caliph made short work of the famous relic to the benefit of his building schemes—unless, of course, the locals offered this story to the inquiring Benjamin to account for their inability to show him the Ark on site. It will be noted from this extract that in Benjamin's day, the Twelfth Century, the term "mountains of Ararat" still denoted the district in which Mount Judi is situated, and not the present Mount Ararat in eastern Turkey. (This was still the case so late as the 18th century, as witness Prof. William Whiston's "New Theory of the Earth", 5th edition 1736, in which he says "The Ark rested on one of the Gordyeen mountains, which separate Armenia from Mesopotamia and Assyria. This is the commonly received opinion, from which at present I see no reason to recede.")

Benjamin of Tudela was followed about twenty years later by another Jewish traveller, Rabbi Pethakiah, who also visited Al Judi and endorsed the tradition. He added a detail to the effect that upon stranding, the Ark became fixed between the peaks of the mountain and could not get free.

So, for more than two thousand years at least, the firm conviction of the Jews, the Christians, and the Moslems of the Eastern world, with the sole exception of the Armenian church in Eastern Turkey, is that the Ark came to rest on this mountain, almost on the frontier between Turkey and Iraq just where the River Tigris crosses from the one country to the other. That makes this tradition more than a thousand years older than the more well-known one of Mount Ararat. Had the peoples of Kurdistan been as publicity minded as have been the Christians of Armenia it might be that the later mountain would never have entered the competition.

Evidence that Mount Judi is to this day looked on by the people of the land as the true resting place of the Ark is afforded by a British Anglican clergyman, Rev. W. A. Wigram, who spent many years in Kurdistan as official Anglican representative during the early part of the present century. In his book "The Cradle of Mankind" he says:—

"Of all survivals from early ages in this land, none is more remarkable than the "Sacrifice of Noah". It must be understood that no people here, save the Armenians, look on the great cone which we call Ararat, but which is locally known as Aghri Dagh, as the spot where the Ark rested. The Biblical term is "mountains of Ararat" or Urartu, and the term includes the whole of the Hakkiari range. A relatively insignificant ridge, known as Judi Dagh, is regarded as the authentic spot by all the folk in this land: and it must be

owned that the identification has something to say for itself. It is one of the first ranges that rise over the level of the great plain; and if all Mesopotamia (which to its inhabitants was the world) were submerged by some great cataclysm, it is just the spot where a drifting vessel might strand.

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

"Christians of all nations and confessions, Mussulmans of both Shiah and Sunni type, Sabians, Jews, and even the furtive timid Yezidis are there, each group bringing a sheep or kid for sacrifice, and for one day there is a "truce of God", even in turbulent Kurdistan, and the smoke of a hundred offerings goes up once more on the ancient altar. Lower down on the hillside, and hard by the Nestorian village of Hasana, men still point out Noah's tomb and Noah's vineyard, though this last, strange to say, produces no wine now". The locals still claim that the Ark was built at the village of Ain Sifni, seventy miles from Al Judi, and point to the meaning of the name of the village—The Well of the Ship—as evidence. Many such legends exist all over Kurdistan and Armenia.

But the old traditions die hard. In 1949 some Turkish journalists headed an expedition to Mount Judi to search for the remains of the Ark. Undeterred by the fact that Dr. Aaron Smith's American expedition was at the same time searching Mount Ararat two hundred miles away with the same object, and another Turkish expedition on Mount Argeus in Anatolia ditto, they came back to say they had found the Ark, five hundred feet long by fifty high by eighty wide, together with Noah's tomb, a village whose name means "Noah's Ark" in Kurdish, and some remains of sea creatures left behind after the Flood. At least these details are what the British and French Press made of the explorers' report. Later on the story was modified to claim only that evidence of the remains of the Ark had been found; the details of its construction had been taken from "old records". So, we are still left guessing!

The enthusiasts on Mount Argeus also claimed to have found the Ark, half buried but well preserved with something resembling tar. Despite the

momentous nature of their discovery, nothing more has been heard of it.

Dr. Smith was the unlucky one. He found nothing, and decided the Ark must have been buried by earthquakes, volcanic lava, or ice; of his efforts, more later.

So, excluding for the moment Mount Ararat itself, there remains a wide quarter circle of mountains extending from the vicinity of Nisibin and Cizre in southern Turkey, surrounding the plain of Iraq nearly down to the Persian Gulf, over which there has floated persistently through the centuries stories of the presence of the Ark and pilgrimages to inspect its remains. No one can be sure that it does not still exist for no one really knows where it ought to be. One archaeologist (Parrot) has remarked that as time went on there was a tendency to put the mountain of the Ark ever farther to the north where the highest mountains exist, and so the same traditions are repeated from mountain to mountain. This is how it seems to be. From Kuh-i-Anaran in Sumerian times to Nisir (Pir-Omar-Gudrun) in Assyrian times, to Judi in early Christian centuries, to Ararat in more recent times, the story has moved northwards. The truth of the matter probably lies in the far south where nobody has thought of looking.

It may be that the accompanying map illustrates better than words how the reputed resting-place of the Ark has travelled from south to north through the ages. The earliest cuneiform tablets (17th cent. B.C.) give the name "Nisir" to the land rather than the mountain and say that the mountain rose like an island out of the sea. The only mountain which is sufficiently isolated from others to stand out like an island is Kuh-i-Anaran in the far south and this may well have been the original Nisir. By the 9th century B.C., with Assyria the dominant power, the name, and the legend, appears attached to a mountain much nearer Nineveh, Pir-Omar-Gudrun. By about the 2nd cent. B.C. when Assyria was no more, it had been moved again to Al Judi, a centre of predominantly Israelite influence, and here, fostered by Jew, Christian and Moslem alike, it remained unchallenged for more than a thousand years. Finally, from the early Middle Ages, the Armenian church began to advance the claims of its own mountain, Massis, has become superseded in the minds of Europeans by the more familiar term "Ararat" although in fact that has never been the real name of the mountain. From the eighteenth century the two have maintained their respective claims—Judi for Asiatic Christians, Jews and Moslems, Ararat for Armenians and European Christians. There, at present, the matter rests.

Is it incredible to think that after five thousand years the Ark has survived somewhere? Unlikely, but possible! So recently as 1955 the ceremonial wooden ship of Pharaoh Khufu was discovered buried in the sand alongside the Great Pyramid in a good state of preservation; that ship is 4,500 years old, only 800 less than the Ark. Wooden chariot wheels perfectly preserved, just as old, were found by Woolley in the soil of Iraq forty years ago. If left undisturbed in a dry climate such as that of southern Iraq the Ark could conceivably have remained. But it would be like looking for the proverbial needle in the haystack. Unless, of course, contrary to all the geologic



Note: Data on above map relating to Mount Ararat will be alluded to in the next chapter of this series. and archaeological and documentary evidence of past times, it really is buried in a glacier near the top of Mount Ararat and the glacier has most obligingly but unaccountably stood still for five thousand years so that its treasure may be revealed to one of the many expeditions which have scaled that mountain during the past hundred years. The explorations which have been conducted on that mountain warrant an account of what has and has not been achieved, and so the story of Mount Ararat must come next.

*To be continued.*

## THE ROD OF GOD'S ANGER

A Study in  
prophecy

### Part 3.

*Having already dealt with the use of Sennacherib the Assyrian, the "rod of God's anger", as a background model of the events prophesied of Israel's invader and that invader's clash with Michael in Daniel 11, it now only remains to notice the backgrounds of Micah 5 and Zechariah 14, both of whom colour their descriptions of the last great conflict with allusions going back to incidents of Sennacherib's campaign in Judah in the days of Hezekiah.*

The fifth chapter of the Prophet Micah is notable for the striking fashion in which it alludes to, and shows the relation between, the First and Second Advents. Most of Micah's prophecy consists of short cameo visions each more or less self-contained and for the most part foreseeing some one or another aspect of the Messianic Age and Israel's relation thereto. In this instance the vision commences at verse 2—which in the Hebrew Bible is the actual commencement of the chapter—and finishes at verse 9. Verse 10 embarks upon a different subject. It is within the confines of vs. 2-9 that this rather noteworthy reference to "the Assyrian" in connection with the assumption of regnal power by Christ at the end of the present world-age is found.

The vision opens with an address to the little town of Bethlehem, out of which is to come the Messiah who is to rule Israel at the Time of the End. The RSV presents it "*You, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from old, from ancient days*". This is clearly a prophecy of the First Advent of Christ, born, as is so well known, at Bethlehem. That He was not mere man, of the stock of Adam, is stressed by the statement that his origin is from of old, from ancient days. As John says in his gospel "He was in the beginning with God". As Son of David, He comes from Bethlehem, but as Son of God his "origin is from of old". But the rulership does not commence at once. Vs 3 describes an interregnum, a period during which God will "*give them up until she who is in travail has brought forth*". Only then will the "*rest of his brethren return to the people of Israel*". That, surely, is the travail of Israel, the national suffering and scattering, consequent upon unbelief and apostasy, which commenced in the time of Micah when the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities began, and continued throughout history, "the Times of the Gentiles", until those beginnings of national restoration which are

evident to-day as one sign of the closing of this present Age. Then comes the true Messianic rule; "*He shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now shall he be great to the ends of the earth*" (vs. 4). This simile of the shepherd feeding the flock is used many times in Scripture to denote the beneficent work of Christ in the world in the day of his kingdom. "He will feed his flock like a shepherd" (Isa. 40:11); "I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them" (Jer. 23:4); "I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God" (Ezek. 34:15). These and many other allusions liken the work of the Messianic kingdom to that of a shepherd caring for his flock.

Naturally enough, then, verse 5 introduces the assurance that when that day dawns there will be deliverance from the last great oppressor of Israel, the power which opposes the incoming Messianic kingdom, and it is this power which in vs. 5 is denoted "the Assyrian", — the counterpart of Sennacherib in the days of Hezekiah. "*This shall be peace, when the Assyrian comes into our land and treads in our palaces, that we will raise against him seven shepherds and eight princes of men... they shall deliver us from the Assyrian when he comes into our land and treads within our border*" (vs. 5-6). The background remains the same; just as Sennacherib invaded Judah in the days of Hezekiah and was repulsed by Divine intervention, so now, at the end of this age, the greater "Assyrian" is to be likewise repulsed and Israel delivered. There is, however, an additional detail; the deliverance is to be at the instance or by the power of "seven shepherds" and "eight princes of men", obviously agents of God in the actual deliverance. What is the meaning of this somewhat obscure phrase?

The symbol of the shepherd is easy enough to interpret. Christ himself is the great Millennial shepherd who will nourish and protect, not only Israel, but all mankind, in that blessed day. With Christ will be associated his Church, the company of the faithful of this present Christian Age, taken to be with him and resurrected to heavenly conditions at the time of his Second Advent. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father"; "they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years" (Matt. 13:43; Rev. 20:4). These, obviously are the "seven shepherds"—seven is the symbolic number of

completeness; the number of the Church is complete—and these, associated with Christ their Head, will be operating from heaven in this work of bringing the power of evil to a close and administering the Millennial kingdom of righteousness. It remains, though, that Israel upon earth, converted and waiting on God in faith, stands in need of direct and close-at-hand guidance and leadership in what might be termed the practical down-to-earth details of their attitude and conduct in the face of the threat which overshadows them. This is where the “eight princes of men” have their place.

The word here used occurs five times only in the O.T. and has the significance of a prince or ruler who has been consecrated to his position by anointing and hence is bound to God's service. Eight as a number is a symbol of renewed life, of resurrection. Our Lord rose from the dead on the day after the sabbath, on the eighth day. In the Levitical rituals the cleansed leper, entering upon a time of renewed life, had to bring his thanksgiving offering for the cleansing ceremonial on the eighth day. The eighth day thus becomes a symbol associated with Millennial conditions. The eight princes denote a company of men associated with resurrection and renewed life, although their duties and achievement have to do with an Israel which as yet is still of this world-age and is still under assault by the powers of evil.

Such a company is that indicated, albeit somewhat obscurely, in the Scriptures, as the band of Israel's heroes of old time who will appear on earth at the end of the Age to guide latter-day Israel through the supreme crisis. Known in Christian circles variously as “Old Testament Saints” or “Ancient Worthies”, the Biblical designation is “Judges” (as in Isa. 1.26) the term that is used for the national rulers of Israel in the days before the monarchy. Sterling men of faith of old time, from Abraham to John the Baptist, these “princes” will present themselves to Israel at her time of greatest need, to take up their duties as governors in Israel (Zech. 12.5), working in close harmony with the Lord from heaven in assured faith that He will deliver. In a very real sense these seven shepherds and eight princes are pre-figured by Isaiah the prophet of God and Hezekiah the king of Judah offering themselves as joint channels of the Lord's message to the people at that similar though lesser crisis so long ago. In a manner not clearly to be defined but none the less certain these men will spearhead Israel's resistance to the enemy. Verse 6 indicates that the invaders will themselves become subject to the nation they had attacked and sought to enslave. What that implies

is better defined in vss. 7-8. Israel shall be on the one hand in the midst of the nations like dew from the Lord and showers upon the grass; this indicates the beneficent work of Christ, through Israel, bringing blessings of peace, security, new life and happiness to all mankind. On the other hand Israel is to be in the midst of the nations like a lion among the beasts of the forest and a young lion among the sheep; this indicates the unrelenting enmity of the new world order, in the forefront of which Israel is stationed, to all forms of evil and injustice and oppression. This is the time of which Isaiah spoke when he said “they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Isa. 11.9).

So much for the preview of Micah. Now it is necessary to turn to a later prophet, Zechariah, who also saw in vision the events that must close this Age, and, like his predecessors, saw them in pictures that were shaped and coloured in part by the deeds of Sennacherib.

Zechariah was a most versatile prophet. He drew background material for his prophecies from a wide range of historical subjects and in many ways his is the most colourful of all the Old Testament pen-pictures describing Israel's apostasies, rejection and restoration. Consequently he uses the Sennacherib theme to illustrate only one short section of his visions, that comprised by chap. 14. 1-3. But because these three verses form the climax to his entire prophecy the usage he makes of the theme is doubly impressive. Like Micah and Daniel, he sees the powers of this world advancing upon the restored and purified Israel nation ensconced in their holy city and trusting in faith that God will deliver. He sees what appears to be the inevitable victory of the invader and then at the eleventh hour God goes forth, as He did in the days of Sennacherib, in the irresistible power of Heaven's might, and utterly discomfits the arrogant enemy.

The thirteenth chapter leads up to this crisis by tracing Israel's continued rejection of Christ from his First to his Second Advents and the separation of that people into believing and unbelieving entities, culminating in the eventual establishment in the Holy Land of a community which in the main has developed true and steadfast faith in God and in his intention to deliver when the crisis comes, although in the outcome not all of them retain that faith. It is at this time that the invader advances and the people await his coming; it is here that the likeness to Sennacherib's Judean campaign subsists — *(For full exposition of these chapters see “Zechariah—prophet of the Restoration” BSM 1970 all issues.*

Ed.) "I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, but the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations as when he fought in the day of battle" (ch. 14.2-3). The outcome is that Israel takes great spoil from the defeated enemy and divides it just as was done in the days of King Jehoshaphat and the Moabite invasion.

"*The city shall be taken*". The word means to gather or encompass, as when one takes birds or fishes in a net. Hos. 4.3 is an example of this usage of the word, and here in this same verse the same word is used for "gather" when the Lord says he will "gather" all nations against Jerusalem. It does not mean that the city is captured but that it is surrounded without the enemy being able to penetrate its defences. This is precisely what happened in the days of Hezekiah. Sennacherib uses the same term in his own account of the siege: "*Hezekiah himself, like a bird in a cage, I shut up within Jerusalem his royal city*". What he failed to record was that he never opened the cage. Likewise in this foreview of the end of the Age, the people of the Lord are hemmed in by their foes but they are not taken captive; the defences hold firm.

"...*the houses rifled, and the women ravished*". This is an evident allusion to Sennacherib's invasion. Prior to the dramatic defeat of his besieging armies surrounding Jerusalem, he had demanded, and received, heavy tribute from Hezekiah. Says the great king in his narrative of the campaign "I besieged Hezekiah of Judah who had not submitted to my yoke, and I captured forty-six of his strong cities... I took captive 200,150 people, small and great, male and female, and horses, mules, asses, camels, oxen and innumerable sheep as spoil... I took vengeance upon any man who came forth from the city. All who came outside the great gate of the city were captured and led off... his trusty warriors whom he had brought into Jerusalem to protect it, deserted him... he made submission with thirty talents of gold, eight hundred talents of silver, precious stones of all kinds, pearls, thrones adorned with ivory, sandalwood, ebony, the contents of his treasure house, his daughters, the women of his palace and his male and female slaves." All this did the Assyrian take and send to Nineveh, the treasure for the adornment of his city and the women for the rest of their lives to be at the mercy of their captors. One can hardly expect mules and camels, ivory thrones, and the like, to be objects of quest in the greater fulfilment at the end of the Age. The rifling of the

houses and so on seen by Zechariah was expressed in terms reminiscent of Sennacherib but in fact pointed forward to a much more "modern" despoiling of the land and people. If one can imagine the nation losing its trade potential with, and the support it receives from, other nations, finding itself increasingly bereft of the armaments with which it has heretofore established and maintained its position, losing all those benefits and advantages and aids which it can only preserve by continued alliance with the "kingdoms of this world", the prophet's words might be given a truly up-to-date meaning. Just as in Hezekiah's day he had to give up a great deal of his treasures and possessions before coming to the point of humble and implicit faith in God for deliverance, so now, it may be, the "chosen nation" will need to lose a considerable store of "this-world" advantages before it is in a true state of mind and heart to admit the saving power of "that world".

"*Half of the city shall go forth into exile*" (vs. 3). Sennacherib's claim that many deserted the city, including the "trusty warriors" brought in to defend it, is corroborated by Isa. 22.3 "*All your rulers have fled together, without the bow they were captured. All of you who were found were captured, though they had fled far away*" (RSV). Geikie's rendering of this passage is singularly impressive. "Thy nobles, fleeing as a body from the bow of the Assyrian, whom they expect to see presently, are taken prisoner by their archers, the vanguard of the enemy; all whom they find outside the gates, seeking to flee afar, are caught and put in chains". Zechariah saw this same thing repeated at the end of this Age. The word "half" in this verse does not mean necessarily an exact fifty per cent; it has the significance of dividing a portion and the phrase would be better translated a part or a portion go into exile. As then, so now, there is at the crisis a loss of faith on the part of some and a frantic endeavour to escape before it is too late. At the last moment they change their allegiance and take their side with the kingdoms of this world, abandoning the Holy Land and its people to what they feel is certain conquest. The only ones left are those whose faith is fixed in God; these are the ones who will pass through the crisis into the new Age then to begin, and find themselves indeed the "people of the Lord" who will cause the Law of the Lord to go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (Isa. 2.3). These are they who are "not cut off from the city"; immediately after the defection of the faithless, and the apparent advance of the enemy closing in for the kill, comes fulfilment of the stirring words in vs. 3 "*Then shall the Lord go forth and fight against*

*those nations as when he fought in the day of battle*". There follows the awe-inspiring sight of the Most High descending in glory upon the Mount of Olives first to destroy the forces of evil and then to establish the kingdom of righteousness upon earth. All this is a picture of our Lord's Second Advent and the happenings which are associated therewith. Such things go beyond the present discussion; the Sennacherib analogy ends

at verse 3 when, just as in that long-past day outside Jerusalem the angel of the Lord decimated the Assyrian host and sent the arrogant king with shame of face back to his own land, the Lord again intervenes in world affairs for the defence of his people. For the last time, the last great oppressor is vanquished and the people of faith delivered.

*The End.*

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## OUTLINE NOTE ON THE SECOND ADVENT

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The mightiest event of history since the Crucifixion is the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ to complete the work He commenced two thousand years ago. Through the centuries since Pentecost the Christian Church has hoped and looked for that day when the Lord returns to fulfil the promise He made to his earliest disciples. The apparent imminence of his Return has been proclaimed and prophesied many times during those intervening years, but the fact that so many lurid happenings have been associated with that Coming has, in this matter-of-fact day, thrown the age-old expectation into disrepute. The various attempts of well-meaning Christian students to fix upon a definite date for the visible appearance of Jesus in the clouds of heaven, and the consistent failure of those predictions, has disinclined many from paying attention to what they consider so visionary a subject.

It is true that many still expect the coming of Christ to be accompanied by terrific convulsions of Nature — rending rocks and falling mountains, hosts of trembling sinners brought up from the grave to hear their sins rehearsed and then condemned to everlasting punishment, a few saintly souls caught up to heavenly glory and the world and all that it contains burned up. All this is an inheritance from the literal acceptance of Bible imagery of mediæval times and it dies hard; nevertheless it is becoming more and more accepted by students that the vivid symbols of Scripture were not intended to be interpreted in so crudely literal a sense.

The return of Christ is pictured in the Bible as a time of universal rejoicing. He comes to inaugurate a reign of righteousness over the earth which has as its object the extermination of evil. The time of his return is to mark the downfall of every man-made institution and system which is founded on unrighteousness. His lightnings which enlighten the earth (Psa. 97. 4) reveal the inherent rights and privileges of every man and hence his return is the signal for a great clamour on behalf

of liberty. This present order of things will crumble and vanish away, the hills "melting like wax at the presence of the Lord" and "mountains being cast into the midst of the sea" (Psa. 97. 5 and 46. 2). Amidst the strife and confusion of this time of trouble which is the harvest of human misrule there will ring out commandingly the voice of One having authority: "Peace, be still". And just as it was when those words were first uttered during the storm on the Galilean lake, there will be a great calm.

The return of Jesus to this earth, and his revelation to all men, is an event to be expected. Our knowledge of the spiritual world makes it no longer necessary to insist that He must be seen by physical sight before the fact of his coming can be accepted. Our Lord's own words to Nicodemus make it clear that one who is of the world of the spirit comes and goes "as the wind" and is not discerned as such by the natural sight. It is evident that after dwelling among men in the days of his flesh and giving his life on the cross to save men, He returned to his Father's right hand to wait while his teaching had its primary effect. The world at the First Advent was not ready for the full revelation of all that Christ can do and will yet do for man; it was ready only for the germ of Christ's teaching, and it is that germ which for two thousand years has worked in the hearts of a relatively small proportion of earth's millions while the rest have followed the laws of evil and reaped the bitter harvest.

Christ returns to establish a new order of society the spiritual administration of which will be in the hands of those who during the past two thousand years—the "Christian Age"—have come into heart harmony with him and by reason of a consecrated devotion to his message and service are thoroughly trained in every aspect of the Divine law and ways. These followers of Jesus—called variously in Scripture the "Church", the "Bride of Christ", the "Little Flock", are those to whom the educational and uplift work of the

next Age can be entrusted. Christian disciples who have learned well the foundation principles of their faith and have manifested their profession in daily life will have achieved a balance of judgment and a clear apprehension of right and wrong which is lacking in many of even the noblest of men and women to-day. It is just these characteristics which will be needed in the administration of that coming day when all men will be required to hear the word of God, and hearing, make choice of their eternal destiny. It follows therefore that the first work to be accomplished by the Lord Christ at his return is the gathering to himself of his faithful "saints" who all through the Age have been "looking for his appearing". (Titus 2. 13). In order that these may be made like their Lord, which is the promise of

the New Testament, they must be "changed" from earthly to heavenly nature. Such passages as I Cor. 15. 35-38 and I Thess. 4. 14-18 describe this change to the spiritual world as the hope and destiny of the Christian church, and it is from that new environment in the spiritual sphere that these resurrected ones, partakers of the "First Resurrection", will administer the affairs of the new Kingdom on earth, Christ's Kingdom.

Thus the world in general, a groaning creation, travailing in pain, is waiting for the manifestation of the Sons of God (Rom. 8. 19). In the day when the power of the Almighty Father is manifested in that new social order which is the Kingdom of God upon earth, men will look up into the heavens and will realise that, even as he promised, Christ has come.

### A NOTE ON ZECH. 12.10

Who is the pierced one to whom reference is made in this verse? The speaker is God, declaring the great things He will do when He rises up at the End Time to deliver Israel from her oppressors and inaugurate the kingdom of the Messiah upon earth which is to abolish sin and bring in everlasting righteousness. There is a great repentance, for the spirit of grace and of supplication has been poured out upon Judah and Jerusalem, and there is a great mourning, as of those who mourn the death of a first-born. The Apostle John in John 19. 37 refers this text to the crucifixion of Jesus and the fact that the bystanders gazed upon him. Obviously John could not have intended more than an application of the text in an analogous sense, for the passage in Zechariah is clearly descriptive of a time when Israel is to be delivered from the Gentiles and is truly repentant. Israel at the time of the crucifixion was only just about to be delivered into the power of the Gentiles and was certainly far from repentant.

There is something incongruous in the idea of God Most High, Creator and Sustainer of all things, God the Father, the Eternal One, being "pierced" by his creatures. Neither does it ring true in a Jewish book, written by a Jewish prophet, for Jewish readers, to picture men as "looking" upon God. The Jewish belief was that no man can look upon the face of God, and live; that no man could aspire to behold his Person. The same understanding was carried over into Christian belief, as is witnessed by St. Paul, referring to the Deity "*who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; who no man hath seen, nor can see*" (1 Tim. 6. 16). This expression in Zech. 12. 10 with its

strange inconsistency of person "they shall look upon me... and they shall mourn for him" requires closer examination.

Several translations (RSV, Moffatt, Ferrar Fenton) render "him" instead of "me" and say that there is a certain amount of variation in the old manuscripts at this point. This emendation makes it easier to apply the expression to our Lord Jesus at his Second Advent, the more especially since the poetic quotation in Rev. 1. 7 "*He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him*" is evidently based in large measure upon this text in Zechariah. On the other hand, if the original was in fact "him" and not "me", the Jews of Zechariah's day, to whom the word was first addressed, would be left wondering who was intended, for they knew nothing of Christ, five hundred years before his birth, and certainly nothing about the two Advents of the Messiah. They expected but one, and that an Advent in triumph and glory. A clue to the prophet's meaning might, though, have been afforded to those of his listeners who were thoughtful, by the next verse, describing the mourning over this spectacle as being like the "mourning of Hadad Rimmon in the valley of Megiddon". This mourning was an annual event among the idolatrous people of the land—and not a few Israelites were idolators. Every year a ceremonial mourning was held on behalf of the youthful god Adonis or Tammuz, who had been cruelly slain by his enemies. In consequence of the lamentation he was held to have been resurrected so that peace and blessing should return to the earth. (Reference to this

pagan ritual is made in Ezek. 8. 14 where the prophet goes to the gate of the Temple and there finds "women weeping for Tammuz"). Perhaps that allusion helped to prepare some reflective minds for the truth that the Son of God must one day be pierced through, and die, that He might return in resurrection glory to bring blessings to all mankind. Perhaps in that way, the Holy Spirit, speaking through Zechariah, began to uncover a little of the mystery which was more fully revealed when St. John explained that the Word, with God at the first, was made flesh and appeared in the sight of men as the Son of God (John 1. 14).

There is an interesting link between Zechariah and John in this connection which may have meaning. The word translated "me" is based upon a primitive demonstrative pronoun having the same meaning as the Greek "*hautos*"—"this same". John uses the Greek word in John 1. 2, so that the two texts could read quite accurately "They shall look upon *this same* whom they have pierced and shall mourn for him" and "*This same* was in the beginning with God". The Hebrew word is composed of two consonants only, *aleph* and *tay*, (A, T) which are the first and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet. In the Book of Revelation, which was written in Greek, the Lord declares of himself "I am *Alpha* and *Omega* (A and O, the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet) the beginning and the ending saith the

Lord, the Eternal, the Almighty" (Rev. 1. 8). This has its origin in Isaiah, where in several instances God says "I am the first and I am the last; and beside me there is no God" (Isa. 44. 6, also 41. 4, 43. 10, 48. 12). Thus the reverent Jewish mind, conning over these words, might have been led, not to thinking of God himself being revealed in the sight of men and seen to be "pierced" at that, but a mystic figure, "*this same*," a revelation of God come from God, one which could be manifested in the sight of men and even be pierced by men without doing violence to the reverential awe and sanctity in which every true Jew held the Person of God Most High.

That is how the New Testament pictures the coming of Jesus. "No man hath seen God at any time. The only begotten Son... he hath declared (manifested) him". "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 1. 18 and 14. 9). It is in this fashion that Zech 12. 10 can associate the Father with all that is taking place whilst ensuring that the "seeing" and the "piercing" is manifested in the Son. That is to be a feature of the Second Advent when the Lord Jesus Christ is revealed to men for salvation and for judgment. It is not necessarily a physical seeing. Men will look upon him whom they pierced in exactly the same sense as, to quote Luke's rendering of Isa. 40. 5 in Luke 3. 6 "all flesh shall see the salvation of God".

## THE APPLE OF HIS EYE

"*He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye*" (Zech. 2.8.). A proverbial expression which is common in the English language to-day, a usage derived from the Hebrew idiom of the Old Testament. Something very personal and very precious. The word rendered "apple" refers to the pupil of the eye, but is expressive of the little image of oneself seen in the pupil of another's eye when looking closely into it. So this word "*babah*" means "little man" or "little figure" and is found in other languages as Syriac *bobo*, Italian *bambino*, Latin *pupa*, and English *baby*. In several other instances a different word is used but having the same meaning: "*Keep my commandments, and live: my law as the apple of thine eye*" (Prov. 7.2.) "*He*" (God) "*kept him*" (Israel) "*as the apple of his eye*". (Deut. 32.10) "*Keep me as the apple of the eye*" (Psa.17.8.). In all of these the idea of personal attachment and even kinship is inherent, and a close guardianship. Even this metaphorical use is apt for it can convey the idea of something so precious that it is kept close to the heart.

Remembering that man is said at the first to have been made "in the image and likeness of God" it is perhaps not too fanciful to think of this expression as relative to God looking closely into the eye of man and seeing his own image there. It may not look very much like it at present when so many of the thoughts and deeds and works of man are anything but Godlike, but may it not be that God looks into the hearts of the creatures He has made and knows what He can do with them, in due time, when the lessons of this unsatisfactory and sub-normal life have been learned and under the beneficent administration of the Messianic kingdom the many who are reclaimable do turn to "*call upon the name of the Lord to serve him with one consent*"? (Zeph. 3.9). And in the meantime, those who have already yielded heart and life to Christ can take to themselves the inspiration and exaltation of knowing that they already are growing into his image and likeness. "*We all, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory unto glory, by the Spirit of the Lord*".



# BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

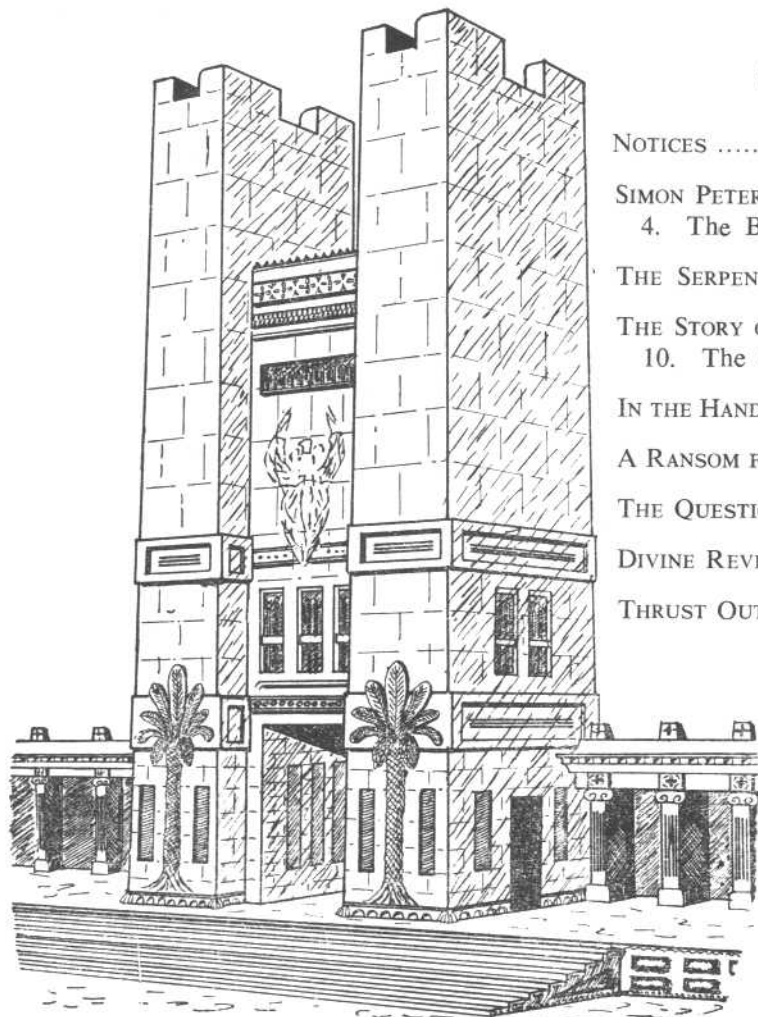
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JULY/AUGUST 1975

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

Published July 1st

Next issue September 1st



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

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## NOTICES

### Defective copies of BSM

It has come to our notice that a number of copies of the March/April issue were sent out with pages 35 to 38 missing and four other pages duplicated. This is sincerely regretted. We have no means of knowing how widespread has been this circumstance but would ask now that anyone who has received such a defective copy and would like it replaced advises us to that effect and a replacement will be sent immediately (although this itself will take six or seven weeks in transmission in the case of overseas readers).

### New booklet

The series recently appearing in the "Monthly" entitled "Samuel—Greatest of the Judges" is now available in booklet form and copies will be sent upon request, free of charge, although gifts toward the cost of production and postage are always very welcome.

### "The Bible tells it like it is"

Further to the review of this book appearing in the March issue, and to all notices of American books featured from time to time, we would say that any American book of Christian interest can be obtained through the Religious Bookshop, 79 Reginald Street, Luton, Beds., LU2 7RD, by giving full details including name of publisher. The Bookshop will obtain the book and send it to the applicant together with invoice against which payment can be made. Delivery usually takes about six to eight weeks.

### Literature and Back Numbers

A list of all literature available is obtainable upon request, such literature being supplied gratis to the genuinely interested. Leaflets dealing with various aspects of the Christian faith are available in small quantities for judicious distribution; for list of titles see literature list.

Back issues of the "Monthly" are available from 1971 onwards while stocks last, these also being supplied gratis on request although cost of postage is appreciated. In the case of copies not sent in response to such request it must be assumed that stocks are exhausted.

## ON SUNDAY

### 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."

## Gone from us

—:—

Sis. L. Bryant (Birmingham)  
Sis. E. Gibson (Ipswich)  
Bro. E. Godden (London)  
Bro. G. E. Heap (Warrington)  
Bro. A. J. Lodge (London)  
Bro. A. Oakley (Keswick)  
Sis. L. Spencer (London)  
Sis. N. Wright (Bradford)

—:—

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

## SIMON PETER — FISHER OF MEN

### 4. The Betrayal

So many facets of Peter's character seem to be revealed at the time of Jesus' betrayal. His fervent expressions of loyalty at the start are sadly belied by the story of his denials at the finish. We are left with the impression of a man who reacted quickly and not always advisedly to the circumstances of the moment. He desired and fully intended to be completely loyal to his Master at all times; it never entered his head that he could be anything else. But it was still a surface loyalty, taking its inspiration and power from his own interpretation of what Jesus had told them respecting their promised position in his Kingdom when that Kingdom should come. It was not a loyalty that was derived from a sober appraisal of the opposition and hardships that must inevitably come to those who avowedly took their stand with the Nazarene. Despite all that had happened in the past, Peter still had not realised that there was to be suffering and death before the promised glory and life. So it was with his usual assured demeanour that he went with John to prepare the room and table for their annual Passover meal. He probably wondered why Jesus had given him so apparently pointless an instruction instead of telling him plainly where the ceremonial was to be conducted. He was to go into the city and follow a man who would be carrying a pitcher of water—in itself a most unusual circumstance in a society where only women carried pitchers of water—and the place to which he was led was to be the venue. If, as tradition has it, it was the home of Mary the mother of John Mark, Peter and John must have known the house well. It is idle to speculate; suffice it that the two disciples carried out their instructions and at the appointed hour Jesus assembled there with the twelve.

The incidents of the supper are well known. The first one affecting Peter so far as the record reveals is the washing of the disciples' feet by Jesus. It was an object lesson, an example they were to remember and emulate in after days, when Jesus was no more with them. It was a lesson in the spirit of service and mutual helpfulness. At a time when their minds were still full of the idea and prospect of reigning as kings over Israel, an idea inspired by orthodox Judaistic Messianic hopes, they needed to be shown that their reign was to be one of service to the ruled, that as kings and priests among mankind they would be the servants of all; so Jesus pointed the moral by declaring "*I am among you as he that serveth*" (Luke 27.27). "*If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed*

*your feet*", He said on this occasion "*ye also ought to wash one another's feet*" (John 13.14). Perhaps some of the other disciples, the more thoughtful among them, understood and took to themselves the Lord's meaning, but not so Peter. "Thou shalt never wash my feet" he exclaimed protestingly. To him the very idea was abhorrent; He regarded Jesus as Lord supreme to be honoured and revered and kept on a pinnacle well above the common herd and he never realised that in this attitude he was also placing himself in a similar position in relation to the people around him. He would no more think of himself washing the feet of those whom he was called upon to evangelise than he would admit the propriety of allowing his Lord to wash his own feet. And while he was in that condition of mind Jesus had to say to him, as He did say, "if I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me". To which Peter reacted with his characteristic instantaneous change of mood and responded "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head". And now Jesus had to restrain his sudden overenthusiasm and bring him back to a calm and sober appraisal of the reason for which He was performing this little service in the first place.

But Peter was irrepressible. Not many minutes had elapsed before the time had come for Jesus to utter the word that was to strike consternation into the hearts of all at the table. The time of the betrayal was at hand and Jesus knew the identity of the betrayer. It was with a heavy heart that He looked around the circle of eager faces and said "*verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me*". There must have been a sudden amazed silence as incredulity and dawning horror registered on each countenance, and then, furtively, each began to look to others, as though expecting to see the truth written on one of their faces. No one dared speak. The silence continued until Peter, impetuous as ever, motioned urgently to John, who was seated next to the Lord, to ask him of whom He had spoken. Peter had already on a previous occasion contradicted the Lord when He had spoken of his coming suffering and death, and been rebuked. Perhaps he did not want to risk another rebuke at this moment; perhaps at this startling blow to all his own hopes of an early assumption of kingly power by Jesus, backed by all the authority of Heaven which He so manifestly possessed, Peter could not trust himself to speak. At any rate it was John who asked the fateful question.

It does almost seem as though only John and Peter heard the answer and understood the significance of the subsequent action. Jesus dipped a piece of bread in the liquid remaining in the dish on which the passover lamb had reposed and handed it to Judas, who thereupon hurriedly left the assembly. The following verses indicate that the disciples in general did not know why he went out or the significance of Jesus' words to him. Had they all understood the meaning of Jesus' action this could not have been said of them; they all would have known that Judas was the traitor. It would seem that Peter's gesture to John was unnoticed by the others, that John's question and Jesus' reply were uttered in a low tone of voice unheard by them, and that Peter, watching from his position a little distance away, sensed the reply by the movement of the Lord's lips or by his immediate action and was the only one besides John who did so. And that, at last, convinced Peter that his Lord meant what He said and was indeed going almost at once to betrayal and death.

It was in that mood that he listened the more intently to Jesus' next words. Only for a little while now shall I be with you, He told them, and "whither I go, ye cannot come". Feeling himself blundering on the edge of a great mystery, Peter could not let such words pass unchallenged. He must know. "*Lord, whither goest thou?*" But Jesus was not explicit. He was going, and Peter could not follow him now, but he would do so later. Peter was in no mood for conundrums. He only knew that he wanted to be with Jesus wherever He went and whatever He did, and if, as now appeared, that meant open conflict with his enemies and the risk of death at last, he was ready for that. "*Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake!*". Jesus must have looked upon him with eyes of love and sympathy, knowing how soon his rash avowal of loyalty to the end was to be put to the test. "*Though all men shall be offended because of thee*" the earnest disciple insisted "*yet will I never be offended*". Was it at that point the Lord spoke the comforting words which are recorded only by Luke "*Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren*". Jesus knew of the denial that was so soon to come; does this mean that He also knew Peter to be sound at heart, that despite that lapse he would come back and be the tower of strength to the church that Jesus had said right at the beginning he would be? Nevertheless there was a sad duty to perform, a hard word to fall on Peter's ears, unheeding though they be at the moment: "*verily I say unto thee, That this night,*

*before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice*".

Peter did not consciously disbelieve his Master; in his present excited and confident state of mind the significance of the words just did not sink in. He heard them, and understood their import, but they did not register as applicable to him neither did he receive them as a definite statement of an event which was certainly to come to pass. He answered hastily, perhaps only half appreciating the meaning of his own words; "*though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee*". The murmur of assent from the other disciples probably blurred the personal aspect of the matter in Peter's mind. It was an academic situation anyway, impossible of experience in real life, and he had returned Jesus an academic answer and there the matter could rest. And Jesus did let the matter rest there too. Only a few hours now, and what He had foreseen would, inevitably and tragically, come to pass.

But first there was the scene in Gethsemane where Peter tried to defend his Master by the sword. It is a strange little episode. How did it come about that Peter was armed with a sword in the first place and why did Jesus allow him to carry it at all? They had just come from the scene of the Last Supper; no fitting place for swords there. And yet they had two swords even in that hallowed room! Just before leaving for Gethsemane Jesus had told them in effect that the life which faced them after his departure would necessitate a change in his former instructions to them as evangelists. Whereas formerly they were to rely on the hospitality of their fellow-Jews to whom they preached, taking neither purse nor script with them, they were now to traverse the wider—and wilder—outside world where they would not necessarily encounter fellow-Jews and must make some modest provision for their needs themselves. Hence they must now take purse and script, and in addition, a sword. It has been suggested this latter was for protection against wild beasts although the allusion is not very plain. At any rate the disciples misunderstood him and excitedly produced two swords which they had apparently smuggled in. Luke is the only one who records the incident (22. 35-38) and our Lord's reference to the prophecy in Isa. 53 that He was to be reckoned among the transgressors may give colour to the alternative idea that the presence of the swords was to demonstrate that he could have defended himself from arrest, if He wished; hence his comment "it is enough". But the instruction in vs. 36 to sell their garments and buy swords must imply an application later than the emergency that now faced them and hence after Jesus' death. At any rate He allowed Peter to take his sword with him knowing that He would not accept its use to

achieve release from his enemies.

Peter, of course, was not to know that, and in his present frame of mind he was prepared to take on all comers. When the Temple guards approached to arrest Jesus Peter was sure that the hour of decision was come. Jesus would be compelled to declare himself now and use his heavenly powers to confound his enemies. But Peter intended to get one blow in first. His wild lunge—he was probably not very expert with a sword anyhow—missed whatever was its intended mark and succeeded merely in slicing off the ear of the High Priest's captain of the guard. For a moment, perhaps, the nature of the arrest hung in the balance. Fired by Peter's example, the rest of the disciples might well have joined in defence of their Master and a general melee develop. But Jesus stopped them with an imperious gesture. *"Put up again thy sword into its place"* He said to Peter *"for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword"* And then, more gently *"thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father and he shall immediately give me more than twelve legions of angels?"* A Roman legion consisted of six thousand men. Peter was stopped in his tracks; he had forgotten that Jesus had at his command other-worldly powers greater by far than this trumpery sword. And now he realised that Jesus had no intention of using that power; that He was not going to resist arrest. Perhaps, unbidden, words of old, well-remembered words, flashed into his mind with a new and terrible significance: "He is led as a lamb to the slaughter", and dark despair filled his mind. And with the despair came fear, fear of the relentless guards who now had Jesus, unresistingly, in their grasp; he dropped his sword and ran, following his fellow-disciples, ran with all his might from a scene which would evermore be etched on his mind as the time of his life's great disillusionment.

But once again his basic loyalty came to the top. Where he went we do not know, but it was not many hours before he was trying, with John, to re-establish contact with his captive Lord. Of the others there is no record; they had evidently gone into hiding, but Peter and John were hovering on the outside of the High Priest's palace where Jesus was being examined. John was known to the palace staff in other connections and so was able to get inside and somewhere near the group surrounding Jesus without being challenged. Peter was not so fortunate; he mingled with a group surrounding a fire which had been made in the courtyard and there he remained, hoping to escape detection until he could see for himself what the outcome was to be. It was an act of considerable courage, entirely wiping out his previous momentary panic in Gethsemane, for if he was identified

with the man now on trial, in the then excitable atmosphere, he would most certainly have been denounced and made to share his fate. So he remained there, endeavouring to be inconspicuous and saying as little as he could to anyone.

The attempt, of course, was futile. A Galilean fisherman in the midst of a crowd of town Judeans would be about as unnoticeable as a Cornishman in a group of London cockneys. Before long one of the young woman servants, passing by in the execution of her duties, looked upon him and remarked "Thou also was with Jesus of Galilee". The men around the fire looked up and there was a sudden silence. Peter looked around wildly for John; he was nowhere to be seen, and then at the circle of suspicious faces, and he panicked. "I know not what thou sayest" he blustered, and got up and went outside to the porch of the building. It was colder there but away from those accusing eyes. But his retreat availed him nothing, for in a little while another servant came by and observed to the little knot of bystanders "This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth" and again, with mounting fear, he denied the charge. "I do not know the man" he insisted, and then apparently, and strangely at variance with his evident state of panic, went back beyond the group round the courtyard fire and into the building to a point where he was within sight of Jesus. Despite his repeated denials, he could not tear himself away from his beloved Lord. And it was while thus standing, trying to follow the course of the trial and to see what was going on without making himself conspicuous, that he suddenly chilled at the words of the third challenge. "Surely thou art one of them, for thou art a Galilean". His nerve suddenly broke, and *"he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak"*. Hardly had the words left his lips than there sounded on the still night air, clear and piercing, over all Jerusalem, the long-drawn-out notes of the Roman bugle announcing the changing of the guard at the third watch (3.0 a.m.) the signal that was known as "the cock-crow" because it heralded the imminence of dawn. And as Peter, horrified, heard those silver notes and realised what he had done, remembered his confident boast of a few hours earlier and his airy dismissal of the mere suggestion that he would ever falter in his loyalty to his Master, the Lord turned and looked upon him. He met those eyes, eyes not of reproach but of love and sympathy and understanding, and too, of forgiveness. And as the crowd closed in again around the beloved Form, Peter stumbled unheeding past the hostile bystanders, past the group still seated round the fire, through the porch with its crowd of loungers, into the street, and wept bitterly.

*To be continued.*

## THE SERPENT OF EDEN

Almost every picture used to illustrate the story of the Fall has shown the instigator of all evil in the form of a large snake—sometimes coiled on the ground, sometimes encircling the branches of a tree, sometimes, and most improbably, standing erect on the tip of its tail,—and many have been the discussions on how such a creature could have been used to tempt Mother Eve in the matter of the forbidden fruit. No one doubted, of course, that the Devil was behind it all, but was it that he “materialised” in the form of a serpent to become visible to the woman, or did he use a conveniently handy reptile for the purpose? Did the serpent actually talk to Eve in the manner described in the story, or was that a figure of speech and in fact the temptation was by force of example, the creature twining its sinuous body round the tree and partaking of the fruit with evident relish, while Eve looked on? Against this very general impression must be set the fact that members of the serpent species have no sense of taste, no faculty of hearing, and are unable to make audible sounds except the well-known hissing which is effected by the rapid expulsion of air from the lungs, so that if the Eden story is to be taken as literal history and the idea of the serpent retained it is necessary to conclude that this intruder upon man’s primal innocence was a very special kind of serpent, deliberately created for the purpose. The alternative is to examine the text much more closely than is usually done.

The Hebrew word rendered “serpent” (*nachash*) is derived from a double basic meaning, first, the whispering and muttering of soothsayers and wizards, enchantment, sorcery, messages coming from another world; second, brilliancy or bright shining, from which latter meaning the parallel word “*nechushah*”, for copper, is derived. The fact that two such dissimilar ideas as enchantment and bright shining have their origin in the same word points to something which connected the two in the primitive languages which lie behind Hebrew.

Parallel with this is the meaning attached to the term “serpent” in earlier days. In mediæval times the term was also applied to the fabulous creatures called dragons and this is why in the A.V. Satan the Devil is referred to equally as a serpent or as a dragon (Isa. 27.1; Rev. 12.9 and 20.2). In early Biblical times the Babylonians and Sumerians looked upon the dragon-like serpent as the symbol of everlasting life, and endowed it with wings to denote its heavenly origin. Eight such winged serpents stood guard at the gates of the Temple of Marduk in Babylon, the centre of the whole system

of Sumerian religion, and those mythological figures were of highly burnished copper! Here is the connection between the two dissimilar meanings of *nachash*. In those far-off days when the story of the Garden of Eden was written down for men to read, the winged serpent-dragon was identified in men’s minds, theologically or mythologically, with a radiantly brilliant supernatural being claiming to be the bringer of life and demanding men’s worship. But, infers the chronicler, he was in fact a sorcerer and an enchanter, more cunning than any of the beasts of the field which the Lord God had made.

This brings us to the word “subtle” in Gen. 3.1. This is the Hebrew word “*arum*”, to be crafty or cunning, and comes from the Semitic—Babylonian “*erim*”, enchantment, magic, cunning, all in a bad sense. The Babylonian “*Lu-erim*” denoted a wizard or magician or necromancer. “*Arum*” is rendered “crafty” or “subtily” in Job 5.12, 13; 15.5; Psa. 83.3; 1 Sam. 23.22, and when St. Paul in the New Testament (2 Cor. 11.3) refers to the Eden story and the subtlety of the Devil he uses the Greek “*panourgia*” which also means “craftiness” (Eph. 4.14; Luke 20.13; 1 Cor. 3.19). The subtlety of the serpent in Genesis, then, is not wisdom in an intellectual sense, but cunning, deceitfulness, in an immoral sense, and this explains the reference to the beasts of the field. The writer of Genesis 3 was fully aware of the cunning displayed by wild beasts—the Hebrew word is one denoting carnivorous beasts as distinct from cattle and domestic animals—as they hunted their prey, but this “serpent”, he says, was more cunning than any of them. The serpent he was talking about was not one of the literal serpents which may have existed in Eden for they were “beasts of the field” like other animals. This was the serpent whom the Sumerians of his own day worshipped, “*Hanachash*” the serpent, just as in the preceding chapter we have “*Ha-adam*”, the man, the particular man Adam. The survivals of Sumerian and Akkadian words in these early chapters of Genesis show that they were originally written in the land of Sumer long before the days of Abraham and those early worshippers of the God of Abraham had no difficulty in recognising this allusion to the serpent as the radiantly brilliant yet crafty messenger of evil whom their idolatrous neighbours worshipped as the giver of life. They were familiar with the tablets and sculptures, of which examples have been found in our day, showing him as the ancients conceived him to be—noble of feature, aggressive and terrible of mien, sturdy feet that

he might stand on the earth and six-winged that he might fly from the heavens, strong hands grasping lightnings and thunderbolts wherewith to deal destruction to his enemies. The farther back we go in history the more does the later figure of the winged serpent-dragon merge into this conception of the six-winged god, the glorious radiant one to whom the Sumerians sang their praises, he who deceived the whole world in appearing as an angel of light.

But from whence did the ancients draw their inspiration for this terrible yet glorious appearance? Might it not be a lingering recollection, handed down through the generations, of one who was once seen by the first mother of us all, and whose form, because of the tragic consequences, was indelibly impressed upon her memory and described to her children, generation after generation? It might well have been so, for the stylised forms of celestial beings preserved on the walls of the ruined palaces of Nineveh and other ancient cities bear a distinct resemblance to the "seraphim" whom Isaiah the prophet saw standing around the throne of God (Isa. 6.1-7).

The seraphim appeared to Isaiah as six-winged angelic beings, capable of giving praise to God, of flying down to the prophet on earth and holding converse with him. He writes as though he knew his readers to be generally familiar with their form and does not embark upon a detailed description. The word "seraphim" is usually held to be derived from the Hebrew verb "*seraph*", to burn, an allusion to the brilliant glory of the seraphim, but this does not account for the fact that the same terms "*saraph*" and "*seraphim*" are applied to the "flying serpents" of Numbers 21 and Isa. 14.9 and 30.6. These passages taken together suggest an association of ideas between the seraphim of Isaiah 6 and the mythological Babylonian winged serpent beings which were known as the *sirush*, an almost identical word. It is very possible that the saraph (seraphim being the plural) as seen by Isaiah is a recollection of the visible manifestation of celestial beings, such as the one who deceived Eve.

This is supported by Ezekiel's graphic description of the heavenly being who was once in Eden the garden of God but because of rebellion was condemned. In his 28th chapter the prophet utters an intense denunciation of one who is referred to under the metaphor of the king of Tyre, but who clearly is not an earthly being at all. The covert reference is quite evidently to the fallen archangel who rebelled against God. Full of wisdom, perfect in beauty, radiant and splendid in appearance, this one is addressed, according to Leeser's rendering, which translates a number of obscure words more accurately than does the A.V. "*thou wast a cherub*

*with outspread wings and I had set thee upon the holy mountain of God, as thou wast. Thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the bright shining ones*"—the company of the seraphim, the glorious ones of Isa. 6. Here is a vivid description of the happy state of this celestial being of high rank who once moved among the holy attendants of God and eventually became a visitor to the garden which God had planted on earth. There he seduced the first human pair and from that moment became "that old serpent, the Devil, and Satan." "*Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day thou wast created, till unrighteousness was found in thee*".

It is not suggested that these wondrous beings who thus attend in the Heavenly courts do in their normal state bear such strange forms as are pictured in the Scriptures. The celestial world is so utterly unlike this terrestrial one that the human mind is incapable of visualising the nature of its citizens. The form which Isaiah saw was that in which such a visitant to this world might on occasion manifest himself to the human senses.

The glory of that form must have faded suddenly when the Divine sentence was pronounced: "*Upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life*". Banished from the courts of Heaven, thrown down from the heights, and made the lowest of the low upon earth. Even the dumb animals, the wild beasts of the forest, stand higher than does he, for they do follow the laws of their creation and function as God intended them to do whereas this one is of all created beings the most base. Is there, in this expression, an allusion to the Sumerian demon of evil, Rabisu, who is always depicted as slinking along furtively and crouching behind any means of concealment in order that he can spring out upon his intended victim? (This is the meaning of the reference in Gen. 4.7 where the Lord says to Cain "sin lieth, (or croucheth) at the door".) No longer may the glorious being Lucifer appear in his resplendent beauty to men; hereafter he is able only to approach by stealth and underhand methods, as it were from the ground. Neither does he any longer possess the gift of continuing life. As with Adam, so with him, the life-line of life from God the Creator of all, has been broken by sin; like man, he must eventually surely die. But with man there is at least hope. He returns to the dust from which he was taken, but after that an opportunity for repentance and new life. The ultimate fate of the rebellious archangel is hidden in the counsels of God, but it may be that Divine foreknowledge is revealed in the sentence that was passed. To "bite the dust" is a modern euphemism for death; in the Scriptures we are told that all God's enemies shall "lick the dust" (Psa. 72.9), and that even in the fair Millennial

kingdom "dust shall be the serpent's food" (Isa. 65.25). There is a world of difference between eating of the Tree of Life and eating the dust and perhaps it is that just as the one means eternal life so the other implies eternal death.

So it might well have been that Eve, wandering alone one day in the sunny glades of Eden, pondering over the ever widening vista of experience which life was opening before her, came face to face with a dazzlingly radiant, dignified, commanding figure strangely similar in form to her husband and herself and yet in many respects dissimilar. The burning glory which surrounded him and the voice of authority with which he spoke told her at once that here was a visitor from that other and unseen world from which God had so often spoken. Such an encounter would be a much more reasonable and credible proposition than one with a talking snake. Eve knew that the lower animals were inferior and subordinate to her husband and herself and that none of them had the gift of speech. She must have known that the snakes, like all animals, were subject to death; perhaps had even seen them die. Is it likely that she would have been deceived by such a creature's claim to know the secrets of godlike wisdom and eternal life? Knowing something of the facts of her own creation and of God who had given her life, it is surely inconceivable that she would have been persuaded by any message unless there was reasonable evidence that it came from the celestial world from which all they knew had eman-

ated. If she did thus find herself confronted by such a heavenly being, majestic and awe-inspiring in his splendour, her deception is easier to understand. His use of spoken words would excite no astonishment; his professed knowledge of the ways of God would seem logical; his insinuation that he was in a position to reveal knowledge hitherto withheld by God would appear quite credible. He had come from there, and he should know. There could have been no suspicion in her mind, for the very idea of an intelligent creature from heaven being disloyal to God who had made them all could never have crossed her mind. It must have been with the most intense interest and curiosity that Eve gave all her attention to the stranger as he began to speak . . . .

Afterwards, when the tragedy of Eden was a memory of years gone by, the appearance of that heavenly visitant, as told by Eve to her children, was repeated from generation to generation, ever growing a little more distorted and bizarre as men associated his form and features with the evil that was in his heart, until they pictured him either as a fearsome creature going about seeking whom he may devour, or an all-conquering ruthless deity demanding the worship of his subjects. And so it was that in the fulness of time, with those pictures in his mind, a man of God sat down and began to write "*And the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild beasts which the Lord God had made*".

## ST. PAUL'S THORN IN THE FLESH

*The note on the Apostle's alleged weak eyesight in March/April issue has elicited the following alternative suggestion from a reader who is a Bible student of long standing.*

\* \* \*

The Bible statement in Acts 9.10 reads "*Ananias coming in and putting his hands on him, that he might receive his sight*" not that he only partly received it. Vs. 17 goes on "*Ananias entered the house and putting his hands on him said Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, who appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me that thou mightest receive thy sight*". Can one say that Ananias failed to give Paul back his sight as authorised?

2 Cor. 10.10 reads "*For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible*". If they

praised his letters, which we know to be true, why lie about his speech when all were there to hear? In I Cor. 2.1 he says "*When I came to you, came not with excellency of speech*" and again in 2 Cor. 11.6. "*But though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge*". So in Gal. 4.13 "*Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first, and my temptation (trial) which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected*". This could not be referring to sight; it clearly referred to his preaching and that would mean his voice. Paul did not speak the Truth with his eyes; the 16th verse declares "*Am I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?*" Does this not clearly declare that it was not his eyes that offended them but his tongue, suggesting that this thorn in the flesh that Paul prayed three times to have removed was an impediment in his speech?

## THE STORY OF THE DELUGE

### 10. The Case for Mount Ararat

*Towns and travel routes mentioned herein connected with Mount Ararat are shown on the map appearing in the previous instalment.*

\* \* \*

Following the journeys of the two Jews, Benjamin of Tudela and Rabbi Pethakiah, late in the twelfth century, and their description of Mount Judi, in the south of Armenia, as the place of the Ark's landing, less than a century elapsed before the next travellers added their testimony. They, however, introduced a new and hitherto unknown mountain — Massis, in the north-east corner of Armenia and within a few miles of the governing centre of the very influential Armenian church. The western world calls it Mount Ararat, but that is not its real name. The local peoples still call it by its ancient name of Massis. Its official Turkish name—for it is now in the modern sovereign State of Turkey—is Aghri Dagh, by which name it is also known to the Persians and Kurds whose lands adjoin. It is sometimes stated that the Persian name is Kuh-i-Nuh, meaning "mountain of Noah" in that language, but this assertion, first made by the traveller Jean Chardin in 1673, is probably due to confusion with the Iranian mountain range of that name in Lat. 34N, Long. 46, near Kermanshaw and some 350 miles from Ararat. "Nuh" is the English spelling of the Arabic name for Noah, and mediæval Arabic influence in Iran (Persia) may account for the name of this mountain range and could suggest some ancient connection between the mountain and the story of the Flood, but no relevant legends appear to have survived.

The western world, however, knows Aghri Dagh only as Mount Ararat and connects it automatically with the "mountains of Ararat" of Gen. 8. 4. When Dr. Friedrich Parrot was in the district in 1829 no one understood him when he mentioned Mount Ararat; only when he referred to the great pile as Aghri Dagh did they realise what he was talking about.

The mediæval traveller who first acquainted the western world with the claims of the Armenian church for Mount Ararat was William of Rubruk, a Franciscan friar attached to the court of Louis IX of France, who in 1253 was despatched on a mission to the Mongolian potentates, Sartuk and Mangu Khan. After travelling through Russia and Siberia to the Mongol court at Karakorum he returned by way of the Caspian Sea and Armenia on his journey home. In 1255 he was the guest of

the Armenian ecclesiastical authorities and although he did not get nearer than twenty-four miles from Mount Ararat he was given full details of a legend which hitherto was more or less unknown outside Armenia. So it came to pass that in his book of travels—all travellers in those days wrote voluminous records of their journeys with little chance of any deviation from the truth being found out—he recounted what had been told him.

Says the worthy friar "*Baachu had me taken to a certain city called Naxua which used to be the capital of a great kingdom and was a large and beautiful city; but the Tartars have reduced it to nearly a desert. There used to be in it eighty Armenian churches but there are only two small ones now for the Saracens have destroyed them . . . Near this city are mountains in which they say Noah's Ark rests; and there are two mountains, the one greater than the other; and the Araxes flows at their base; and there is a town there called Cemanum, which interpreted means "eight", and they say that it was thus called from the eight persons who came out of the Ark, and who built it on the greater mountain. Many have tried to climb it but none has been able to. This bishop told me that there had been a monk who was most desirous of climbing it, but that an angel appeared to him bearing a piece of wood of the ark, and told him to try no more. They had this piece of wood in their church, he told me. This mountain did not seem to me so very high, that man could not ascend it . . . On the feast of the Purification I was in a town called Aini . . . there are in it a thousand churches of Armenians and two synagogues (mosques) of Saracens*" (Moslems).

Naxua is modern Nakhishevan in Soviet Russia, seventy-two miles from Ararat. Aini was a famous city sixty miles north-west, at one time the capital of Armenia, destroyed by an earthquake in 1319. No mediæval city corresponding to Cemanum is known, but in 1403 the Spanish diplomat Ruy de Gonzalez Clavijo, on a mission to the Mongolian ruler Tamerlane, passed within ten miles of Ararat, staying one day at the important city of Sulmari (Saint Mary) which he called Calmarin, forty miles west of Ararat, being told there that this was the first town built by Noah. Two days later he saw a ruined city on the western flanks of the mountain which also, he was informed, was the first town built by Noah, and it is possible that these ruins represent the elusive Cemanum. But let Clavijo tell his own story.

"We shall now describe the city of Sulmari which as we learnt was the first township to be built after the Flood. This is a very large city and at a distance of about six leagues was to be descried the great mountain of Ararat on which the Ark of Noah had rested when the Flood abated . . . Now this city of Sulmari was in truth, as said, the first township to be built on dry ground after the Flood, and those who built it were the sons of Noah . . . The castle" (of Igdır) "stands at the foot of the great mountain, called Ararat, where the Ark of Noah came to rest. This mountain, like all the other heights that we had passed over since leaving Trebizond, was entirely bare, having no forest even on the foothills . . . The next day we departed from Igdır and our way led us along the flank of that great mountain where the Ark of Noah had rested. The mountain is indeed extremely high and its summit is ever covered with snow . . . On the hill slopes we saw extensive ruins of a township that had evidently not been inhabited for ages past, and for a space of a league these remains were to be noticed on all hands. The people told us that these were the ruins of that first city which was founded in the days after the Flood by Noah and his sons . . . Adjoining the main peak is the lesser mountain peak of Little Ararat, which is equally steep, and between the two stretches a long saddle, and here it was, as they said, that the Ark came to ground."

Within a year or so of Friar William's journey there appeared the comprehensive "*History of the world*" of Vincent of Beauvais, a scholar who does not appear to have travelled but possessed the knack of acquiring information from all sources. He states that near the city of Aini in Armenia is Mount Arach, where rests Noah's Ark, and at the foot of this mountain is the first of all cities, which Noah built and called Laudamie, and round it flows the river Arathosi. This version of the story is distorted and bears all the signs of having passed through several intermediaries before being subjected to the pen of the industrious Vincent, but his "Laudamie" round which flows the river "Arathosi" looks very much like Sulmari which was bounded on two sides by the Aras (Araxes).

Forty years after Rubruk the renowned Venetian traveller, Marco Polo, having spent seventeen years at the court of the Great Khan in China, found himself in 1295 making his way northward through Persia and across Armenia. His route lay from Tabriz in Persia to Arzizi (modern Erzurum) on Lake Van, thence to Erzerum and Trebizond, so that he passed sixty-five miles from Mount Ararat. Nevertheless he collected the same story as had William of Rubruk forty years previously. "I will tell you, too" he says "that in the centre of Greater Armenia there is a very great and high cup-shaped

mountain on which it is said that Noah's Ark rested; for which reason it is called the mountain of Noah's Ark. It is so broad and vast that one cannot go round it in two days; and the summit is so everlastingly covered with so much snow that no one can climb it. But on account of the water that flows from this snow, the mountain is so rich in grass on its lower slopes that from all the neighbouring districts cattle are brought to graze there in summer."

The district around Lake Van through which he travelled is, and was then, the home of nomadic Kurds who to this day take their herds and possessions to Mount Ararat at certain times of the year for this purpose and it was probably from these Kurds that he received the story. (Navarro in "*The Forbidden Mountain*", 1955, tells how his party enjoyed the hospitality of such Kurds on the slopes of Ararat at the 13,000 feet level.) Marco Polo himself did not claim that he personally saw everything about which he wrote; in his preface he says "some things there will be, in truth that he did not see, but only heard tell of by men worthy of credit. And we will set down the things seen as seen, and heard as heard, that our book may be correct and truthful, without any falsehood."

For some time after Polo the political situation tended to discourage further visits of Europeans to Armenia. This gap was filled, however, and Mount Ararat received an unexpected advocate, in the person of no less a celebrity than the famous Sir John Maundeville.

"*The voyages and Travels of Sir John Maundeville*" was published round about the middle of the 14th century. The noble lord had travelled in every part of the known and unknown world and had seen many places and things which no other man had seen at that time, and quite a few which have never been seen at all, then or since. The book made a profound impression and is still regarded as one of the finest pieces of literature the Middle Ages produced. It has also, however, earned the generally agreed description of the "most wonderful literary forgery in the world". In short, the entire work was a fake. "Sir John Maundeville" never existed. Up to some years ago the author of the "*Travels*" was held to have been a French naturalist and physician named Jean d'Outremeuse who conducted all his travels in an armchair at his Liege home with the aid of a large library of books. In recent years this has been disputed on the grounds of evidence that the real writer was an Englishman from St. Albans and that his work was plagiarised by d'Outremeuse. In either case the basic fact remains, and it is well established that many of the famous legends of the Middle Ages owe their origin to "Sir John

Maunderville's" mythical adventures.

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

"From Trebizond men go to Armenia the great unto a city that is called Erzerum, that was wont to be a good city and a plenteous, but the Turks have greatly wasted it. From Erzerum men go to a hill that is called Sabiscolle, and there beside it is another hill that men call Ararat, but the Jews call it Tanis, (or Thom), where Noah's ship rested. And it is upon that mountain; and men may see it afar off in clear weather; and that mountain is above seven miles high. And some men say that they have seen and touched the ship, and put their fingers in the place where the Fiend went out when Noah said "Benedicite". But they that say such words say of their own will, for a man may not go up the mountain for great plenty of snow that is always on that mountain, neither summer nor winter, since the time of Noah, save a monk that by the grace of God brought one of the planks down that is in the monastery at the foot of the mountain. And upon this mountain to go up that monk had great desire, and so upon a day he went up and when he was upward the third part of the mountain he was so weary that he might go no further. And so he rested him and went to sleep. And when he awoke he found himself lying at the foot of the mountain. And then he prayed devoutly to God that he would vouchsafe to suffer him to go up. And an angel came to him and said that he should go up, and so he did. And since that time never one. Wherefore men should not believe such words".

The story of the monk who tried, unsuccessfully, to climb the mountain, and was given a piece of the wood of the Ark by an angel by way of consolation, is known as the "legend of St. Jacob". It appears to be no older than about the ninth century, the earliest trace of it being in the quoted writings of Faustus of Byzantium, whose date is in dispute anyway. It seems to have been related to most travellers of the time of William of Rubruk in the 13th century, although the good monk had been dead for nine hundred years by then.

Briefly, St. Jacob was a monk who became the patriarch, (Armenian bishop), of Nisibin about the year 320. He was a relative of the famous St. Gregory, the founder of the Armenian church and its chief prelate between A.D. 302 and 331. The legend is to the effect that the worthy St. Jacob, being greatly desirous of beholding the Ark with his own eyes, essayed to climb the

mountain several times. Each time he fell into a mysterious sleep when half-way up, and awoke to find himself at the bottom again. At last an angel appeared to tell him that no mortal man might ever ascend the mountain to see the Ark, but as reward for his piety the angel had brought him a piece of wood from the Ark, which precious relic was deposited in a monastery built by the pious monk at the foot of the mountain, named after himself. At some later date the sacred object appeared in the treasury of the Monastery of Echmiadzin, thirty miles north of Ararat, the governing cathedral of the Armenian church, where it still remains. This, of course, proves the truth of the story; at least, it might be thought to do so if the same treasury did not also exhibit a comprehensive selection of other relics, including the Roman spear used at the Crucifixion; a panel carved with the crucified Christ, the handiwork of the Apostle John; part of one of St. Paul's fingers (mummified); the hand and arm of St. Gregory, also mummified and mounted in a silver case, (an honour not extended to the Apostle Paul); and the hand of St. Jacob, to which the piece of Ark was attached. (At any rate that is how Parrot saw it in 1829 but when it was shown to Lynch in 1893 St. Jacob had been demoted and the piece of Ark bore a resplendent jewelled cross. It is described as being a small, square, dark coloured piece of wood.) The Armenian church insists as an article of faith that the cathedral was built on the express orders of Jesus Christ who personally descended from heaven in the year A.D. 300 for that purpose; this may or may not explain the rather bizarre collection of relics but it does serve to justify an element of reserve in accepting claims made and stories told.

St. Jacob lived, and died, early in the 4th century. The Monastery of St. Jacob in the Great Chasm of Ararat at the 6,000 feet level was founded certainly not earlier than the 11th century. While Parrot was there in 1829 the monks showed him an inscription in the wall giving the date 737 in the Armenian calendar which corresponds to A.D. 1288 and this could well be the actual date of its building. There was a church in the village of Arghuri two miles lower down the chasm which reputedly was built upon the site of Noah's altar but this dates from no earlier than the 8th century so that St. Jacob himself could have had nothing to do with either. (Village, church and monastery all were destroyed and buried by the great Ararat earthquake of 1840.)

There is a host of legends respecting various towns in the vicinity of Ararat which are claimed to have some connection with Noah and the Flood. Many of them are obviously repeats of

similar legends connected with Mount Judi. Perhaps the most frequently quoted is the one which states that Noah built a city/town/village at the spot where he and his family disembarked from the Ark, and that this is the present Russian city of Nakhishevan, this name, it is claimed, having the Armenian meaning "The place of descent". Nakhishevan, however, is seventy-two miles from Ararat so that Noah must have had a long gangplank; moreover it was not founded until the 16th B.C. century so that he must also have waited nearly two thousand years before starting to build. The alleged fact that the name means "the place of descent" is, according to Bryce (*"Transcaucasia and Ararat"*) refuted by competent Armenian scholars. The legend obviously stems from the older legend related by so many 6th and 10th century travellers concerning the town of Thamanin (now Cizre), at the foot of Al Judi, alleged to have been founded by Noah when he emerged from the Ark. The origin of both sets of legends lies in the words of Josephus (Ant. 1.3.5) to the effect that the mountain upon which the Ark rested was called *Apobaterion*, which in Greek (the language in which Josephus wrote) does mean a place or act of dismounting or descending from a ship in port; but Josephus says nothing about a city of that name.

The town of Marand (north of Lake Urmia in Iran) is claimed to be named after Noah's wife and that both her and her husband are buried there. Chardin brought this story back from his travels in 1673 and it has been repeated many times, being referred to as a town/village "near" Ararat. It is in fact 120 miles distant. Exactly the same story is told of the Kurdish village of Hasana near Al Judi.

Perhaps the most prolific stories cluster round the (former) village of Arghuri inside the Great Chasm of Ararat about six miles from the peak. This village, by an alternative set of legends, was the place where Noah first descended, built his first dwelling place, and planted his vineyard. Hence, say the Armenians, the name of the village, which means "he planted the vine." It is however stated (Lynch and Brosset) that the original and true name of the village was Acourhi and later Armenian writers changed the spelling to produce the special meaning now alleged. Be all this as it may, the village of Hasana on the slopes of Al Judi, mentioned above, carries exactly the same legend—and still shows the vineyard!

The position therefore appears to be that the legends and assertions respecting Mount Ararat made their appearance at some time between the 11th and 13th centuries and are replicas of similar

legends and assertions regarding Mount Judi current from the beginning of the Christian era and still told to visitors to that district up to the end of the 12th century at least. From Epiphanius in the 4th century to Rabbi Pethakiah in the 12th there is a constant stream of witnesses to Mount Judi; Mount Ararat is never mentioned. From the 13th century onward the claims of Mount Ararat are advanced and so far as Christians are concerned by the 18th century Mount Judi is heard of no more, although still, and to this day, held by the Moslem world at least to be the true mountain of the Ark. Perhaps the most reasonable conclusion is that with the destruction of the *Monastery of the Ark on Mount Judi in A.D. 776* Christian interest veered away from an area which had by then become predominantly Moslem, and settled in one which possessed an active and aggressive church having the advantage of the highest and most imposing mountain in Western Asia only thirty miles from its principal cathedral. So, it would seem, the *Monastery of St. Jacob* was built on Ararat to replace the defunct *Monastery of the Ark on Judi* and the associated legends and stories transferred to the new location.

After Clavijo in 1403 European interest seems to have lapsed until the visit of Jean Tavernier, noted traveller, in 1701. Next came the Chevalier Jean Chardin (Sir John Chardin in later life) who visited Ararat in 1673 whilst on his travels. Neither attempted an ascent. Chardin's *"Journal of Travels"* records several local legends, not always accurately, which have been repeated in many publications since. The first attempted ascent was by the French botanist Joseph de Tournefort in 1701. His interest was purely botanical and he only got two-thirds of the way up. Robert Ker Porter in 1813 contented himself with the view from a distance and in 1819 the Turkish governor of Bayazid (Dogubayazit) nineteen miles south of Ararat, organised a massive expedition to reach the top, which failed.

But a new and absorbing chapter in the history of this famous mountain was about to open. On 27 September 1829, Friedrich Parrot, a German professor in the service of Russia, and five companions, became the first men to stand on the summit of Mount Ararat. Their achievement was the signal to resurrect all the old stories of the continued existence of the Ark and start a search which has continued, by fits and starts, for a century and a half and is still being prosecuted. The account of Parrot's ascent, and of what followed it, is next in order.

*To be continued.*

## IN THE HANDS OF GOD

*A dissertation  
on faith and trust*

*"My times are in thy hand" (Psa. 31.15.)*

In these days when faith in God is failing through a reasoning away of the written Word and Science is usurping the place of Salvation, few are found willingly putting their affairs into the hand of God. To many professing Christians God is a nebulous Being in whom they have little confidence but to whom they pay some form of lip service. Knowledge of the true and living God and of his Divine purposes is mostly shallow and creedal. Personal association is often limited to public services or described by vague forms of mysticism which leave the sceptic unconvinced. The ignorance and indifference of the world at large is all too obvious. The Holy Name of the giver of every good and perfect gift has become a ready oath by which God is daily insulted, a common word by which the thoughtless express their annoyance and alarm with the trivialities of life. Despite the number of adherents on the registers of the various churches and religious groups, an altar to The Unknown God would be no more out of place in the twentieth century world than it was among the ancient Athenians when St. Paul began his Christian mission to the Gentiles. These new pagans put their trust in mascots, toys and charms which must accompany them on all their travels, to bring them luck or preserve them from disaster. They rely upon astrologers to read their stars; they have their fortunes told by any means which offers to satisfy their credulity and curiosity. When these empty cisterns fail them they are on the edge of darkness, despairing, bewildered, not knowing where or to whom to turn. Human sympathy and help is often vain. If those nearest and dearest fail, if they are sometimes even enemies of all that is best in human nature, how futile is the rag doll, the straw animal, the metal disk or the lucky coin to which so many pathetically pin their faith.

While the Roman world believed in its assorted gods, it hung together, but when the populace lost faith, and trouble came upon them, they became very frightened people and the empire fell apart. The historian Gibbon relates how they ran around the temples in the dark, crying out their despair because they were lonely and lost and there were none to help them. A broadcaster opened this year of grace, 1975, with a prologue which envisaged difficult days to come in which some real assistance would be invaluable. Years ago in similar troubled times people had been advised through the words of a poet to "Put your

hand into the hand of God". Nowadays, it was admitted, few believe in God. Present advice is to stick together. Except that all may be in the same boat it is poor comfort. The writers of the Bible, who themselves lived through hard times gave this advice: *"It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes"*. (Psalm 118.8-9). *"Trust ye in the Lord forever for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength"*. (Isa. 26.4).

These words, taken from a mass of testimony spoken and written by men who lived three thousand years ago, are as applicable to our age as they were to their own. They are the voices of faith ringing victoriously above the dark waters of evil and conflict. Times have not changed, neither has human nature. There is only more of it which has rendered our times more perilous than any other in history. God has not changed. He still seeks and responds to the trust of his human children. His ear is ever open to the cry of faith. He still stands pledged to lend a helping hand to those who call on him in sincere belief, with the heart as well as the tongue. He is still the mountain of unlimited strength, the fountain of wisdom and truth, still just, merciful and generous. His is still the hand that guides, that leads and keeps all those who have committed their lives and interests into his hand.

When David said "My times are in thy hand" he had not just put them there on a sudden impulse, because he was in a tight corner and needed some more than human help. From his early youth he had believed in God. The shepherd lad, wandering by day among the hills and wadis of Palestine, seeking water and pasture for his flocks, guarding them by night under the starry skies, had learned to know God by his observance of Nature, that other book of God by which Jesus later taught so many profound lessons. The visible revealed the invisible. The Psalmist gave credit to whom credit was due, his heart warming to the bountiful Spirit whose open hand supplied the needs of every living creature. Into that hand he most cheerfully and confidently committed his whole life. He walked with God, communing with him as naturally as a man does with his friend whom he sees face to face. In such a mould have all men and women of the faith been cast. To them God is an ever living presence who will shape the life he has given to the best advantage if it is freely yielded into his hand.

The hand is the symbol of power and authority, of defence and guardianship. It is the instrument of action, used to bless, to give, to heal, to convey strength, friendship, affection and sympathy by the sensitivity of its touch and clasp. Work is the chief occupation of the hand. It carries out a thousand services. All the arts of peace, beauty, bounty and skill lie in its palm. A paw, a claw or a hoof would not have served man as does the capable hand with the flexible fingers. It has produced the builder, the artist, the writer, the musician, the agriculturist, the physician and all those artisans whose labours have contributed so much to the wealth and comfort of the civilised world. Industrial and farm hands were so called because it was the work of their hands their employers wanted. Without a hand man could scarcely have been man, but that superb instrument responding to the brain as naturally as breathing elevates him to the likeness of God who made him, whose own hand is presented as mingling in all that concerns the affairs of man as race or individual as easily as his own hand conducts his own daily affairs.

The hand of God is a working hand. He is, in the first place, the Maker and Creator of worlds without end. Men fresh from their probings and investigations of these works, realising their own littleness in such a vast scheme, grow doubtful of their own place and importance upon a globe so utterly dwarfed by the magnitude of other celestial orbs as to appear as insignificant as a pea beside a pumpkin. Dazzled by star dust they ask the same question as the Psalmist, musing on the same glorious pageantry. *"When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands.* (Psa. 8, 3-6). The great dazzling universe is a mere work of creative fingers, produced by Divine energy and sustained by Divine laws. Man in his efforts to understand; in his struggles, doubts, confusions, rebellions and general disorders, may not appear to be much. In his present state on the globe created and equipped for human tenancy, he probably does not amount to much, but he is still the object of his Creator's interest. There is a Divine compassion at work on man's behalf. Those mistaken mentors who strive to impress him with a simian ancestry labour in vain, as do those deceivers who would delude him into the belief either that God is dead or has never existed. God is very much alive, an Almighty, eternal Being who before long must call collective man to

give account of his tenancy of the earth, as he called the man Adam to make his excuses for breaking the first law. It is not God who is dead but truth. Truth is fallen in the streets. Consequently falsehoods abound, vice replaces virtue, evil becomes more desirable than good, nature is degraded and society corrupted.

As a creation only a little lower than angels, the original work of God's hands, the human race cannot escape those hands. What God holds He keeps. His is a saving, keeping power. Man takes his own way only so far and so long. In due time, in the long run, the earth and her peoples will be brought through much tribulation to acknowledge in their deliverance from evil forces, in their redemption and restoration to a former dignity, this undeniable fact of life. *"O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay and thou our potter, and we all are the work of thy hand"* (Isa. 64.8).

Strength, power and purpose reside in the hand of God. Power is the exclusive right of rulers, to make plans and carry them out regardless of obstacles or opposition. The purpose of the universe remains a mystery but the purpose of God with man has been made known through a long line of prophets and apostles whose inspired record is known today as the Holy Bible or the Word of God. Time and again that ruling power has intervened in human affairs for the carrying forward of its own foreknown purpose. The kingdom of God established on earth is such a purpose. The power of God has scattered nations as it scattered the builders of Babel and overthrew the Egyptians at the Red Sea. The same power at a given time will smite the great Babylonish image on its feet and blow it to the four winds. This mammon of unrighteousness with its golden head and feet of clay, which has for so long commanded the services and enticed the worship of its devotees away from the true and living God, must at last break or be broken to make way for his kingdom of justice and peace. God is not only the Holy One who by his might and power created and sustains the boundless universe, he is also the Most High, ruling over the kingdoms of men.

*"Behold the Lord God will come with strong hand and his arm shall rule for him"* (Isa. 40: 10). The words foretell a time when the power of God, who measures the oceans in the hollow of his hand, to whom the nations are as a drop in a bucket and the people as grasshoppers, who takes up the isles as a very little thing, will be seen once again in operation among them. Man's residence upon the earth is but a fragment in creative history, a week out of eternity by Divine reckoning. The peevish complaints, the daring criticisms, the open voice of rejection, the doubts which cloud the minds of those who have scarcely

touched the fringe of the great mystery in which they daily revolve, will be silenced and dispelled. They have had no more effect upon the power and purpose of God than the poisons and viruses of earth's atmosphere have upon the power and presence of the sun, for He is "*the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning*" (James 1.17). He is the same yesterday, today and forever. He changes not. What he has purposed to do He will do. He seeks counsel of none, needs no advice, yields his authority to none, and since He will have all men to know that He is God by personal knowledge and experience, must yet reveal himself by ways and means so convincing that even the irreligious, the pagans of all nations "*shall know that I am the Lord*".

While God the Father keeps this ruling authority, this supremacy of purpose, in his own hand, He has and does "*give power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increases strength.*" (Isa. 40.28). This is the hand clasp of faith. There is a rich testimony down the centuries of deeds done, of evil overcome, of epic endurance under gruelling circumstances, because an Almighty hand infused some of his own vigour into flesh and blood, energised human minds by the power of his Spirit and upheld the weary in the strength of the Everlasting Arms.

Might and power defends and preserves the objects of its interest. Science trembles before the terrible array of weaponry which its Frankenstein mind has produced, fearing the annihilation of the globe and its peoples by the release of these death-dealing monsters. But God, who created the earth to be his footstool, will also defend it from destruction. The earth was made to abide forever, to be inhabited by a human race, serving God and living in harmony together. That this plan is not yet achieved is a Divine guarantee that the planet has a permanent place in the solar system. If evil forces are unleashed, as they might well be, in that day God will defend all that is his; by his own power He will destroy the destroyers. At all times He has been the defence of his people. In the smaller as in the greater "*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble*" (Psa. 46.1). "*He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence, I shall not be greatly moved*". (Psa. 62. 1-2.)

Job, that unique man of patience and wisdom, addressed God as "Thou preserver of men". Time and again he has preserved the race from total ruin. He has preserved the nation of Israel, he has preserved the Church, and he preserves people who trust in him. To those who followed him Jesus said, "*they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all; and no*

*man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.*" (John 10.27-29). There is the keeping, preserving power that will never relinquish its hold on one speck of universal empire or on one human life which has put its times into his hand. Jesus, dying on the cross, committed his spirit into that hand as unquestioningly as did his ancestor David. He had prayed in the garden that the cup of suffering might be taken away but if God allowed it he accepted it. It is a recognition of God's right of disposal of his people, one with which those who know God have come to terms. To leave life and its issues lying in the hand of God, to cease from personal choice, is the ultimate of trust, to accept the will of another, to say in effect, "Living, dying or dead, I am his for his disposal".

While mercy, healing, help and bounty come from the hand of God, it also administers correction. "*Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth*" (Heb. 12.6). The chastening of God is more in the nature of discipline than punishment. Love controls justice. The hand of God smites to heal. He seeks the highest welfare of all his creatures. The mean and grovelling must be lifted up, the weak made to stand on their own feet, the crooked straightened out, the perverse made law-abiding, the proud humbled, the arrogant made meek, the clever and conceited shown the paucity of their own wisdom, the selfish taught consideration for others. In the hands of God the mean become generous, the critical silent, the aloof loving. The long catalogue of human faults are rebuked and righted by the spirit and hand of One who is pure, wise and kind beyond human knowledge. Those who sing "O for a heart more like my God, from imperfection free" if sincere, are already under the hand of God, for schooling, correction and training, that they may be brought up to the state of Godliness. To be God-like is a noble aspiration.

Few are naturally noble in disposition. The Christian standard of conduct is found in Christ but the established model for all men at all times is that of the golden rule. "*All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do you even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets*". (Matt. 7.12). The prophets stated the requirements of God from man in three clauses, "To do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with God". The Law embraced man's whole welfare in two great commandments, wholehearted love of God and a true love of fellowmen. How little these rules have been observed and how far man has wandered from these standards is recorded by history and witnessed daily by the constant friction which disturbs private life and disrupts society. Evil appears to triumph but there is a law of retribution

which will yet exact a fitting price for every crime.

A better form of society will be achieved by the rule of the iron rod. The correction and training of the nations will be done in justice, with truth so evident there will be no hiding place for lies. At the appointed time he will "judge the world with righteousness and the people with his truth". A strong but benevolent discipline will bring man back to his Maker, a wholesome creature, restored in mind and made glad by the hand of God.

The bounty of God is everywhere apparent in the treasures and productivity of the earth, but in that day it will be a pouring out of good gifts never before experienced by mankind. "*I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh,*" (Joel 2.28). This energising power will not be for a privileged few. All humanity will feel its life-giving touch in mind and limb. The tide of death, distress and ruin will be halted, turned by the pouring out of such a superabundance of blessings "*there shall not be room enough to receive it.*" (Mal. 3.10). "*A feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.*" (Isa. 25.6) is another expression of Divine generosity, not merely for the satisfying of natural appetite, but of spiritual, mental and emotional joy. Neither eye, ear nor heart have yet comprehended what a changed future awaits the earth and her inhabitants. When the knowledge and glory of God displace the old world with a new heavenly atmosphere and a new earthly dominion, the veils of ignorance, evil and deception will have been torn away. Blind eyes will be opened, the tongue of the dumb will sing, the ears of the deaf be unstopped, the crippled and infirm leap like the hart, the deserts blossom as the rose and the desolate wildernesses burst into bloom. The love of an estranged race will be aroused when they exclaim "Lo, this is our God". Then and only then will the magnificent giving of God be fully seen and thoroughly appreciated. The chief gift of God is life but with it goes a long list of daily blessings. "All I have needed thy hand has provided" is not merely a present fact but a future assurance. The sunset of the dominions of this world heralds the sunrise of God's kingdom, a new era of everlasting peace and righteousness.

The Mighty hand of God is an expression of supremacy. Writing to the Christian churches the Apostle Peter advised them to humble themselves under that mighty hand. Pride is a common fault which engineers its own fall. It is fairly evident to any student of Scripture and history that pride is high in the list of hateful and detestable things. "*Everyone that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord*" (Prov. 16.5). Proud people are not liked by God or man. The ruins of proud men and nations litter the past in accordance with that

mighty hand which pulls them from their seats, which brings down their strength to the earth. The Son of God pronounced the doom of a proud city. "And thou Capernaum which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell". Babylon the Great was such a city whose crash shook the earth. From Babel onwards the towering expressions of human egotism and pride reach a pinnacle as high as heaven and then comes "confusion and catastrophe."

All that man has and is he has received from God. A recognition of this fact should produce reverence for the holy Name and Person of God, veneration for his work and words and a state of profound gratitude that He should permit any member of the erring human race to put their times into his hand. That He should invite them to do so, that He should seek reconciliation with sinners and provide a way of approach to so powerful and pure a majesty is love and condescending grace beyond compare.

Jesus humbled himself under the hand of God when he was "*found in fashion as a man—and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God hath highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name*", (Phil. 2.8-11). He is the grand example of meekness and lowliness of heart, of life lying in God's hands, without pride of person or plea for place, leaving all to the time and choice of One who has the authority to put down princes, the power to exalt the humble and the meek.

Finally God knows those who trust in him with genuine love and confidence. As one hand conveys to another the current of love and sympathy springing from the heart, so does the link of faith vibrate continually between the God of love and the life reposing in his care. "*The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and he knoweth them that trust in him*" (Nahum 1.7). "In the shadow of his hand hath he hid me". Even the shadow of his hand was sufficient assurance for the prophet Isaiah who spoke for all who have looked to the hand of God for protection, strength, assistance, instruction, providence, favour and un-failing care. The needs of his saints have always been met and always will be met to the end of the age.

As the last decades of a terrible century ebb away those who have long known God will simply say, "My times are in thy hand," and leave them there, free from all anxiety. The rest of mankind, who have yet to learn, are like those who go down to the sea in ships. Tossed about by the winds and waves of tempestuous times, they go up and down, reel to and fro, confused, afraid and at their wits end. In their extremity they will cry out to God and it will be his opportunity and his omnipotent

hand which will make the storm a calm and bring them to their desired haven. If men have never thanked God before for his goodness they will then.

*"O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men."* (Psa. 107.24-31).

## A RANSOM FOR ALL

*A Study Paper on  
Christian Doctrine*

The human race remains in bondage to sin and death since the Fall. No man can escape. "We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; as it is written 'There is none righteous, no, not one . . . for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God'" (Rom. 3.9-23). Our first parents were created perfect and capable of everlasting life so long as they remained in harmony with Divine law (Gen. 1.27-29; 2.15-17), but in consequence of sin the processes of death commenced to work in them. "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground . . . for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 3.19; 2.17). All human beings were born in a dying condition, of dying parents. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned . . . therefore by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation . . . for by one man's disobedience many were made sinners" (Rom. 5.12-19). No man is able to redeem any of his fellows from this unhappy condition. "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, or give to God a ransom for him, that he should still live for ever and not see corruption" (Psa. 49.7-9). But God promised our first parents, at the time of their fall, that a way of deliverance would be found. Speaking to the instigator of man's sin, he said "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head . . ." (Gen. 3.15). This theme, that the seed of the woman would recover man from the power of sin, runs through the Scriptures. Abraham, thousands of years later, was told "I will make of thee a great nation . . . and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12.3), "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 22.18). The Apostle Paul explained this when he said "Christ hath redeemed us . . . that the blessing of Abraham might come on the nations through faith . . . Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made . . . not to 'seeds' as of many; but as of one, 'and to thy seed', which is Christ" (Gal. 3.13-17). It is to be noted that two things are necessary before the blessing can be conferred. One is faith and the other is redemption—and redemption comes first. A Redeemer is

necessary to recover mankind from condemnation. So Elihu the friend of Job says, speaking of man's plight, "His soul draweth near to the grave, and his life to the destroyers. If there be a messenger (ambassador) with him, to show unto man his uprightness, then he (God) is gracious unto him, and saith 'Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom.' His flesh shall be fresher than a child's; he shall return to the days of his youth" (Job 33.22-25). That is a Millennial promise; it is paralleled by the declaration of Peter on the Day of Pentecost "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ . . . whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things" (Acts 3.19-21), and of Isaiah "And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isa. 35.10). That this means the abolition of death and mankind's entry into everlasting life is indicated by the emphatic declaration "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death; O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction" (Hos. 13.14).

Our Lord Jesus Christ gave the ransom price which achieves this grand purpose. "The man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time" (1 Tim. 2.5-6). Jesus said "The Son of Man came . . . to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10.45). This word "ransom" means "a corresponding price" or more properly "a price to set against"; used in this connection it alludes to the process known in New Testament times as "manumission", by means of which slaves could obtain their freedom. Someone had to pay into one of the pagan temple treasuries the price of the slave's release. A friend of the slave, willing to make the financial sacrifice, could do this. Then the slave went to the temple and the price was paid over to his former master and the slave became technically the property of the god. By virtue of that fact he became actually free, for whilst he continued the slave of the god no one could touch him. Adam forfeited his life because of sin and became the slave of sin. The life which our Lord Jesus gave

on the Cross released man from Adamic condemnation and at the same time made him the property of God. So Paul says "For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived (lived) that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living" (Rom. 14.9). "He that is called, being free, is Christ's servant. Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men" (I Cor. 7.22-23). "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (I Cor. 6.19-20).

This fact of our having been "bought" by means of a "ransom-price" is therefore a very real thing, and we Christians are in consequence the servants, bond-slaves, of Christ, a servitude which is, paradoxically enough, perfect liberty. The price paid was the human life of Jesus, often referred to in the New Testament as the "blood" of Christ. The Jews had always been taught that "the life is in the blood" (Lev. 17.14) and it was a perfectly natural thing therefore to be told that they had been "redeemed . . . with the precious blood of Christ" (1 Pet. 2.18-19). Drawing an analogy with the Tabernacle ceremonies of old times, the writer to the Hebrews says "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal deliverance for us" (Heb. 9.12). "Thou was slain" rings the heavenly chorus in the "Throne Scene" of the Book of Revelation "and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood" (Rev. 5.9). John in his prologue to the same book declares of Christ that He "washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Rev. 1.5). Paul adds his testimony when, writing to the Ephesians, he says of Christ "In whom we have deliverance through his blood" (Eph. 1.7), and to the Colossians that he "made peace through the blood of his cross" and would in consequence be the means of reconciling all things to God (Col. 1.20); finally to the Romans that "being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him" (Rom. 5.9).

Justification by faith in Christ is granted on the basis of the ransom given by Christ and the faith of the believer in that ransom. This justification constitutes a "redemption" or "deliverance" from the bondage of sin in this present time and results in actual deliverance from death when the due time has come for that deliverance. Hence the ransom given by Jesus is often referred to as the means of our redemption. (The words rendered "redemption" in the New Testament have the meaning of being set free, and are usually better translated by our English word "deliverance".) So Job was able to say with confidence "I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth"

(Job 19.25). The Apostles, preaching at Pentecost, made it plain that "there is none other name given under heaven, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4.12) Paul, writing to the Galatians, emphasised that "when the fulness of the time was come God sent forth his Son . . . to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4.4-5). The fact that Christ gave his human life to effect this redemption is stressed in the preceding chapter: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse (cutting-off) of the law, being made a curse (being cut off) for us" (Gal. 3.13). He came deliberately for that purpose, as he himself testified "the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost" (Matt. 18.11). "I came not to judge the world, but to save the world" (John 12.47) "The Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives but to save them" (Luke 9.56). To that is added the emphatic words of the Apostle, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. 1.15) and his reminder to Titus "our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity" (Titus 2.14).

So far we have spoken only of the death of Jesus on the Cross as providing the ransom, but nothing of the outcome. In his instructions to the Christians at Rome, Paul says "if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Rom. 5.10) Something more than the death of the Saviour is involved; there is also his resurrection. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thine heart that God has raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. 10.9). His was a life that came from above; before the world was created, He lived (John 6.38, 51; 8.58; Prov. 8.22). After his death on the Cross He rose again in the power of that endless life and took again the glory that he had with the Father before the world was, the glory that He had laid aside for the suffering of death. (God's) "mighty power" says Paul "which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand" (Eph. 1.20). The humanity of Jesus was given as the purchase price for the redemption; Jesus himself is forever in possession of his spiritual glory "far above all things in heaven and earth".

Wherein lay the necessity of the death of Jesus? Could not his example, his teaching and his influence do for man what was necessary? He gave the answer to that question himself. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12.24). In God's wisdom it was only by taking the sinner's place even unto

death that Christ would be able to win men from the other side of death. "I am the good shepherd" said Jesus "and I lay down my life for the sheep. I lay down my life, that I might take it again. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again" (John 10.15-18). Perhaps Peter tries to explain that cryptic utterance when he says "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but quickened (made alive) in the spirit" (1 Pet. 3.18). That at any rate introduces us to one of the deepest themes in the Bible, the redemptive power of suffering. We may not know just how it is that suffering borne on behalf of others creates a power that saves, but the Bible is clear that it is so. The 53rd Chapter of Isaiah is well known for its description of the sufferings of Christ Jesus; "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief . . . . He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows . . . He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities . . . he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter . . . he was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of my people was he stricken . . . he hath poured out his soul unto death; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (Isa. 53.3-12). Explaining this passage to his disciples after his resurrection, Jesus said "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day" (Luke 24.46), and again "O . . . slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" (Luke 24.25-26). Later on Peter recalled those words when he spoke of the Spirit in the prophets testifying beforehand "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow" (1 Pet. 1.11) The writer to the Hebrews had a clear vision of this matter; he says "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels (i.e. made man) for the suffering of death . . . that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man . . . forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil . . . for in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are

tempted" (Heb. 2.9-18). "In the days of his flesh . . . though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5. 7-9) Peter again rejoins with confirming testimony "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example . . . who in his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree (the Cross). . . by whose stripes ye are healed" (1 Pet. 2.21-24) Paul, preaching to the Thessalonians, "reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must need have suffered, and risen again from the dead" (Acts 17.3.)

It is in consequence of this understanding, that the sufferings and death of Jesus constitute the power behind mankind's eventual reconciliation to God, that the Apostle John declares "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2.2) and Paul, writing to the Romans "God hath set forth (Jesus) to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past" (Rom. 3.25) This word "propitiation" has certain pagan associations which give it the meaning of sacrifice as upon a pagan altar, but the original word used means a covering, and is referred to the covering over of sins so that they no longer appear in the sight of God. There is no thought here of a blood sacrifice demanded to appease an angry God; that idea is inconsistent with the Scriptural presentation of the Father, the God of love, working in complete amity and harmony with the Son. The idea is rather that expressed in Psa. 32.1 and quoted by Paul in Rom. 4.7: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven; whose sin is covered" and Psa. 85.2 "Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin". God, speaking through the prophet Isaiah, says "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and . . . thy sins" (Isa. 44.22).

The Lord Jesus Christ came from above and became man to give himself a Ransom for All, because only through the avenue of suffering and death could the Divine purpose be effected. Jesus is Lord of all, and in his resurrection life He has both authority and power, born of his experiences on earth, to reconcile "whosoever will" of all mankind to God.

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The family discipline is the discipline of wisdom. He who administers it is the God only wise. What deep wisdom there must be in all his dealings; He knows exactly what we need and how to supply it, He knows what evils are

to be found in us and how they may best be removed. His training is no random work, it is carried on with exquisite skill. The time, the way and the instrument are all according to the perfect wisdom of God.

## ? THE QUESTION BOX ?

*Throughout the Bible the patriarch Abraham seems to be picked out for special favour, and his descendants the nation of Israel are repeatedly referred to as the "chosen people". Why so; does God have favourites?*

\* \* \* \*

The latter part of the question is quickly answered; "there is no respect of persons with God" (Rom. 2.11; Eph. 6.9; Col. 3.25). The basic principle of Divine dealings with man is that God uses men according to their fitness and if he chooses a particular man or a particular people for a stipulated duty it is because of their fitness for that duty. We however may not always be aware of all the facts as God is aware of them and so may not always understand the reasons for his choice. Sometimes a little thought will afford a few clues. Taking the case in point, we know that Abraham was a Semitic Akkadian born in the Sumerian city of Ur on the Euphrates about 2,000 B.C. Contemporary records and relics attest that his neighbours and fellow citizens were worshippers of the Sumero-Akkadian pantheon of gods. So, too, on the authority of Josh. chap. 24, were his father and immediate forebears, and in probability his near relatives. It would seem that, in that land and at that time, idolatry had all but submerged the true understanding of, and faith in, God. And this was the moment that God was about to initiate the preparation and training of that whole body of people, including the Christian church of this Age, which is to be his instrument for the reclamation of the whole race of mankind from the disasters wrought by sin. The plan involved the selection of the man from whom, both naturally and spiritually, that instrument should eventually be developed. The fact that the Divine choice fell upon Abraham is evidence that of all possible candidates he was the man best fitted, by personal faith in God and sterling character, to fill that position. There were probably not many candidates; his own brother Nahor remained behind in Ur after Abraham quitted the city for Canaan in response to God's invitation, and the Genesis history reveals that three generations later that branch of the family still cherished the appendages of the old idolatry (Gen. 31). The Most High, looking upon Abraham, saw qualities in this man which He knew would persist in his descendants and make them, or at least the best of them, peculiarly fitted for his coming purpose. So he called Abraham the city-dweller to leave his highly civilised and rela-

tively luxurious life in Ur, his house and possessions and friends and all the amenities which that wealthy city had to offer, for the life of a nomad wanderer and eventually tent-dwelling cattle breeder in a distant and relatively unknown land. Abraham accepted the call, and, says the writer to the Hebrews "he went out, not knowing whither he went" (Heb. 11.3). This was no case of favouritism; the man abandoned a settled life and all he had, to start again in a strange land in conscious acceptance of a Divine invitation.

His descendants have made their mark on history. Ishmael and Esau, together with other sons and grandsons, between them are the progenitors of a major part of the Arab races, peoples who have played a great part in world affairs and during the Middle Ages at any rate displayed their genius in the development and continuance of a great civilisation. His son Isaac and grandson Jacob provided the line which led ultimately to Israel, the people which for another fifteen centuries preserved the knowledge and the truth of God in the world, remained God's witness to mankind despite manifold grievous shortcomings, suffering untold injury and persecution on that account. God said He had chosen them out of all the nations upon earth but He did so because, as in the case of their illustrious forefather, He saw in their national character that which peculiarly fitted them for his purpose, more so than in any other people. To this day they retain the name given to their ancestor Jacob four thousand years ago—Israel, "a prince with God". The very fact that in this modern day, Israeli names are in the forefront in almost every branch of knowledge, of science and technology, is just one indication that there is something in this racial strain which God can, and will, use mightily when the time comes for instructing all men in the "issues of life" (Prov. 4.23). The selection of Israel, then, was not favouritism; it was on the basis of fitness.

Final fitness for the Divine purpose, however, demands a final selection of those who have appreciated and achieved full understanding of the Divine standards. Said Paul on one occasion "they are not all Israel which are of Israel" (Rom. 9.6). When discussing this very question of who shall be adjudged truly fit at the end he enunciated a new and momentous truth "if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3.29). This is where the Christian church has its place; dedicated believers in Christ, of whatever race or descent, if they

partake of the spirit and faith of Abraham, are his children spiritually and selected as joint-heirs with Christ in the glory of the Kingdom. The consummation reveals the Christian church, the spiritual seed of Abraham, exalted with Christ to

lead the world back to God, and the choicest of Israel, serving in a like capacity among the nations upon earth, as the chosen of God. But the choice has in both cases been on the basis of fitness.

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## DIVINE REVELATION

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Our contemplation of the grandeur and diversity of things revealed by the Holy Spirit, the power of God, in Divine Revelation, constitutes in thought and variety a very wide spectrum of God's plans and purposes, as manifested by the Prophets and by the Gospel of our Lord, and his apostles. None but God's Son Jesus Christ can reveal the glory of the Father. The light of the knowledge of the glory of God is something more than that which gives splendour, or a symbolic mantle, as an insignia of high Office. The glory of God must be explained as the august content of God's own nature, embracing the aggregate of all his attributes according to their undivided yet revealed fulness.

Who would not reverence and glorify God, knowing his manifestations of wonderful goodness. How greatly it appeals to the contrite heart that He is indeed the affectionate Father, ever ready to accept the deep satisfaction of requited love, and to exercise and impart to his people the delicious sense of his Fatherly affection. Should we not therefore take down our harps from the willows and have them tuned in harmony so as to unite our spiritual hearing in unison with the splendid rendition upon the harp of God, comprising the master composition of things both old and new, which brings the many virtuosos of Divine Truth into an orchestrated whole within the human heart? As the strains of this glorious melody emanate from the score of a heavenly composition which epitomises the joyful sound produced through having the knowledge of the Divine Plan sown in our hearts, we are indeed edified by the words of the Psalmist (19.15), "*Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance*".

Advanced Truth can be received only by those whose minds have been prepared to receive it. If the soil of both mind and heart be not porous it will not absorb sufficient moisture to mature the perfect grain of fuller growth into the likeness of Christ.

That humility gives evidence of a priceless quality of character is expressly attested by the Father of lights, as He speaks through his Prophet Isaiah (57.15) "*For thus saith the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit.*" Words of wisdom indeed are these, pointing to the way of humility, and admonishing to humbleness of mind. Jesus, during his ministry, manifested the sublime quality of self abnegation, whereby we are enriched in the spirit, by his testimony (Matt. 11.29) "*Take my yoke on you, and be taught by me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and your lives will find a resting place*" (Diaglott).

With hearing ears attuned to spiritual revelation, for such as would be favoured with continuous light from heaven upon his pathway, and walking in the light, as God gives us to see the light, we may visualise by faith the wonders of foreknown purposes, manifesting the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through "JESUS CHRIST" (Eph. 2.7). By enjoining our reasoning in accordance with the Divine attributes of Wisdom, Justice and Love, we may look up to HIM before whose grandeur all men must keep awed silence, and true reverence in our adoration for the gift of such sublimities, of eternal distinction, in a boundless Universe, having been called out of darkness into his marvellous light.

But it is not till we think of each individual Christian man and woman as God would have each one to be, that we come within sight of the wonderful range of this word and promise, "He that overcometh." It is there in this one or that who has not allowed the pressure of the world to

prevail, who has not let the salt of a consecrated personality lose its savour, or the light of a steady witness to Christ grow dim, who has used the God-given talents, be they ten or five, or even only one, as God would have them used, that the answer to the message of the risen Christ is given.

## THRUST OUT OF THE KINGDOM

A lesson from  
past history

*"Ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the Kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out."* (Luke 13.28).

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

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

But as time went on the Pharisees gradually came to a position of power and leadership in the nation, and then, like the Christian Church in the days of Constantine, they forsook their primitive simplicity and singleheartedness, failed to continue in progressive understanding of Divine revelation, and began to count as of supreme importance the letter of the Law and the "traditions of the fathers". Blinded by their own refusal to "walk in the light" they failed to recognise the evidences of the developing Plan of God revealed in Christ, and so, although so sure of their place in the Kingdom, that Kingdom was taken from them *"and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof"*. (Matt. 21.43). They lost that position, and did not know they had lost it. They had once been God's honoured instruments in the ministry of his Plan; they now became broken vessels, and God could find no further use for them. They opposed and denied the Truth due to be understood, persecuted and put to death the men who proclaimed that truth, and lost for ever any further share in either the understanding or the execution of the Divine Plan, then, or in the future. Instead of becoming rulers in the Kingdom, they will take their place among its subjects and learn, in that day, the lessons they

might have learned in their lifetime.

What was the cause of their failure? To what must we attribute that blindness which led them to know not the time of their visitation? It was largely the fault of overconfidence! Confidence is accounted a virtue, and for those who would serve God it is a virtue when the confidence is in God and in his power. But the Pharisees' confidence was in themselves, their own wisdom, their own power, their own righteousness, and they knew not that their wisdom was foolishness in God's sight, their power was weakness, and their righteousness as "filthy rags" (Isa. 64.6). It was the wrong kind of confidence. They *"trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others"* (Luke 18.9-10). They relied on their relationship to Abraham. *"We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man"* (John 8.33) and their knowledge of doctrine: *"whence hath this man letters, having never learned?"* (John 7.15). And that attitude of mind led them to the terrible position where, like one of their number in Jesus' story, they stood each before God and addressed him in tones of irreverent familiarity: *"God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are"* (Matt. 18.11).

It was that presumptuous self-confidence, leading on to overwhelming pride, that begat in them the second great cause of their failure—uncharitableness. Secure in positions of worldly honour and often possessed of worldly affluence and wealth, they cared nothing for the material or the spiritual welfare of the people. When Jesus healed on the Sabbath day they were more concerned with the affront to their traditions regarding Sabbath keeping than the relief and happiness brought to some suffering soul. When the opening of the eyes of one born blind, on the Sabbath, made it imperative that the rulers take some official notice of this new prophet who had arisen, they sought by every means in their power to entrap the once-sightless man into an admission that would deny the Divine power that was in Christ. (Luke 9.1-41). It was this determined uncharitableness of the Pharisees that led them openly to deny the manifest power of the Holy Spirit and caused Jesus to utter those terrible words of denunciation: *"He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of age-abiding judgment"* (Mark 3.29).

These two failings — over-confidence and uncharitableness—produced in them a frame of mind which rendered them incapable of receiving new

ideas. It was not merely that they would not receive Christ and his message; the condition into which their minds had set made it that they could not receive him and accept his words. "This people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should... be converted, and I should heal them." (Matt. 13.15). In their early years they had believed in the progressiveness of doctrinal understanding, but not now. Their position and organisation could only be maintained by holding rigidly to the outworn creeds of the past and stifling every attempt to introduce new wine into old bottles. Jesus drew attention to the impossibility of their receiving his message within the framework of their old system when He employed that very illustration (Matt. 9.17). Once they had been "in the Truth" but now the clearer truth of the Kingdom at hand, and the King in their midst, had gone past them and left them behind. True, they held still to Moses and the prophets, and were faithful to the form of words which those men had spoken; but Moses and the prophets had spoken of Christ, and the Pharisees knew it not. True, they had the right foundation, the foundation of the Divine Plan as it had been revealed in earlier years. The doctrine they did have was good, so far as it went, but in Jesus' day it did not go far enough, for there was a deeper and a more spiritual revelation to be made to those who had hearing ears. They looked for another Moses and another David, and in their looking failed to see Christ, the One of Whom Moses and David both had spoken.

It was not so with the "Ancient Worthies", the men who, said Jesus, would step into the places which these Pharisees had failed to attain. The patriarchs of old had confidence, but it was a confidence born of living faith in God and a humble dependence upon him. Abraham showed that confidence when he offered Isaac, "accounting that God was able to raise him up". (Heb. 11.19) and Isaac manifested the same confidence in allowing himself to be bound for the offering. (Gen. 22.9)—for the strong young man could easily have overpowered his aged old father and made his escape from the scene of sacrifice had he so desired. Isaac's faith, no less than Abraham's, was pleasing to God on that fateful day. Jacob's dying words manifested his own confidence in God's promise even although he had twice had to leave his native land and was to die in a foreign country and see the Land of Promise no more; nevertheless "Behold, I die, but God shall be with you, and bring you again into the land of your fathers" (Gen. 48.21). Joshua, dying, revealed the calm maturity of a one-time violently zealous character when he told his followers "Behold, this day I am

going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you" (Josh. 23.14). Perhaps one of the grandest exhibitions of confidence on record is that of Job, who lost family, health, possessions, friends, all that makes life worth living, and then was able to say "Though this body be destroyed, yet in my flesh shall I see God" (Job 19.26). Through all his troubles—and they were many—he never lost faith. At last he received the reward of faith, for he was able to make that grandest of all declarations "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee" (Job 42.5). It is by experience that we come to really know God, and therein is our confidence.

This confidence in God and in his good purposes begets the true spirit of charity towards others. If the love of God dwells in our own hearts it is impossible for us to do other than reflect some of that love to those around us. The uncharitableness of the Pharisees was because they had not love in their own hearts, and if we are uncharitable toward others the reason is the same. Abraham was kindly and hospitable to the three men who came to him—and he received a blessing, the promise of the Seed (Gen. 18.10). The widow of Samaria shared what she had with the man of God although she was at the point of death—and she received sustenance throughout the famine and at its end the raising of her only son from the dead (I Kings 17. 10-14). Boaz was kindly and considerate towards the foreign maiden who sought his protection — and of him came Christ (Ruth 2.12). These are but a few examples of the many cases where kindness, charity and love, built upon a foundation of complete confidence in God and a deep appreciation of his Plan of salvation, has led the individual into a very close connection with the outworking of that Plan, and assured for him a place in the administration of the Kingdom "at the end of the days" (Dan. 12.13).

Finally, this outlook upon our walk with God and its application to daily life leads to true progressiveness in understanding. "New light" does not consist necessarily in the production of original and startling interpretations of Scripture requiring the immediate and total abandonment of all that has previously been believed. It does involve, very often, a modification of previous conclusions in the light of greater and more accurate knowledge, or an amplifying of what has been seen in the past, so that it reveals more deeply and more gloriously the hidden mystery "now made known to the saints". Our progressiveness so far as matters doctrinal are concerned usually

lies in the direction of re-stating the old truths in terms more easily understood by us to-day; in reasoning more logically and accurately than we have in the past on the basis of the fundamental principles which always stand without change. And the real progressiveness so far as we are concerned is not along lines of doctrine at all; it is along lines of Christian experience and growth. "God hath showed me," said Peter, "that I should not call any man common or uncleaſt." (Acts 10. 28). That is the progressiveness of understanding, of the head. "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear," said Job, "but now mine eye seeth thee." (Job 42.5). That is the progressiveness of experience, of the life. "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine" cried Habakkuk in fervency of spirit "the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will joy in the God of my salvation." (Hab. 3.17-18). **THAT IS THE PROGRESSIVENESS OF FAITH**, of the heart, and that is the condition to which we must all attain if we, too, like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, are to sit down in the Kingdom of God and serve with Christ in the bestowment of Divine

blessings to all mankind. "Knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth" said Paul (I Cor. 8.1). "Love never faileth, but knowledge... shall vanish away." (I Cor. 13.8). Of all men in the early days of the Church's history Paul was most qualified to place these things in their proper relation to each other, and without hesitation at all he declared "The greatest of these is love".

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

## NAPOLEON'S TRIBUTE TO CHRIST

*This eulogy is said to have been penned by the celebrated Napoleon Banaparte (1769-1821) and was often quoted in Christian periodicals of several generations ago. It is improbable that he did in fact express these sentiments; the origin of the composition is completely lost: but the words are worth reading and for that reason worth preserving.*

\* \* \* \*

"There is something about Jesus which I cannot understand, Alexander, Cæsar, Charlemagne and myself have founded great empires, but upon what did these erections of our genius rest? Upon force. But Jesus founded his upon love, and to this very day millions would die for him. I have inspired multitudes with an enthusiastic devotion, such that they would have died for me; but to do this it was necessary that I should be visibly present with the electric influence of my looks, of my words, of my voice. When I saw men, and spoke to them, I lighted up the flames of devotion in their hearts. But Jesus by some mysterious influence, reaching down through a lapse of

eighteen hundred years, so draws the hearts of men towards him that thousands at a word, would rush through fire and flood for him, counting not their lives dear unto them. Christ alone has so succeeded in raising the mind of man towards the unseen that it becomes insensible to the barriers of time and space.

"Across a chasm of eighteen hundred years Jesus Christ makes a demand which is beyond all others difficult to satisfy. He asks for the human heart; He will have it entirely to himself. He asks it unconditionally, and forthwith this demand is granted. Wonderful! In defiance of time and space, the soul of man, with all its powers and faculties, becomes an annexation to the empire of Christ. All who believe in him experience that remarkable supernatural love toward him. This phenomenon is unaccountable; it is altogether beyond the reach of man's creative powers. Time, the great destroyer, is powerless to extinguish this sacred flame; time can neither exhaust its strength nor put a limit to its range. This is it which proves to me quite convincingly the Divinity of Christ."



# BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

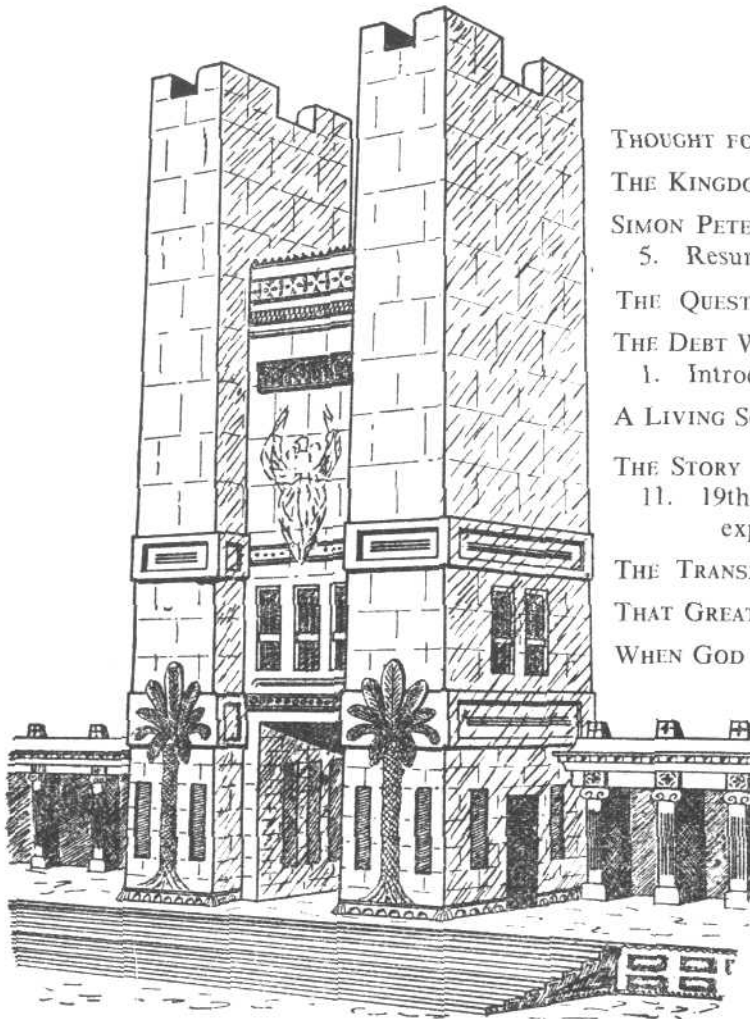
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Thou, therefore, endure  
hardness as a good  
soldier of Jesus Christ

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

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## Thought for the Month

*"The profit of the earth is for all; the king himself is served from the field."* (Eccl. 5. 9).

King Solomon is known to have been something of an expert on horticulture (I Kin. 4. 33) and in this casual remark in Ecclesiastes he showed himself possessed of an insight which seems lacking in the economic world to-day. *"The abundance of the earth is for everyone. The king is dependent on the tilled field"* is the Septuagint rendering; those old scholars who translated the ancient Hebrew into Greek for the benefit of the then known world certainly caught the essence of Solomon's idea. The economics of ancient civilisations were based on the growing of crops and the keeping of flocks and herds. Their arts and crafts, their industries and manufactures, all that made for the refinements of their cities and their trading enterprises, were not allowed to affect the fertility of their soil or the welfare of their pastoral interests. Pagan and sunk in idolatry as were so many of them, they knew that the perpetuation and development of human life upon earth depended upon their own husbandry of the soil and that which Nature causes to spring forth from it. Even in their religious observances "fertility rituals" which had as their object the maintenance of the gods' interest and influence in the productiveness of Nature were always the most prominent feature, and in this at least those pagan religions showed something of early man's understanding of the essential need for man to co-operate with Nature and to preserve the balance of Nature which was already established, if man is to continue upon earth.

Modern man ignores all this. Modern man, arrogantly contemptuous of those earlier generations, goes on his way heedless alike of Nature's laws and the needs of the future. He turns fertile

land into dust bowl deserts in his greed for immediate quick profits; he despoils the land of trees in his insatiate appetite for raw materials and industrial development, so depriving the birds of their homes and reducing their numbers. Therefore insect pests increase and so he poisons with insecticides the earth already polluted by industrial "smog" and the exhaust gases of tractors. He defiles the streams and rivers with chemical waste and kills the fish, and now has started dumping radio-active waste in the sea with the bland assurance that there is too much water in the oceans for it really to matter. New and unknown diseases attributable to the vitiated and poisoned food thus produced appear among men and terrifying drugs are invented to counteract the diseases. Here and there a few enlightened voices are raised in protest and warning, but they are at once dubbed cranks and old-fashioned and the mad orgy of destruction goes on. And the thoughtful Christian, who, like his Master, loves humanity and the earth of God's creating wonders where it is all going to end.

It ends, of course, when God intervenes in human affairs and establishes the Messianic Kingdom. This very orgy of destruction is one of the evidences that the time is very near for the close of man's rule on earth and the inauguration of the reign of Christ. Then will be the time that the wilderness and desert places,—largely man-made—will rejoice and blossom as the rose. The cleansing of the rivers and seas and the re-fertilising of the earth will be a long and arduous process but it will be accomplished and the words of the Psalmist be fulfilled *"Then shall the earth yield her increase, and God shall bless us."*

For "Gone From us" see page 120.

## THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN AT HAND

It was at a time of crisis like the present that one of the most singular figures of history came to the front. John the Baptist was a man of obscure parentage, the son of a priest, brought up in a country village and never moving more than a hundred miles from his birthplace. But his influence upon world history and the fates of nations has been tremendous. The principles he enunciated, the moral teaching he expounded; above all, the startling declaration which formed the chief burden of his message, all have been proven true, gloriously true or tragically true according to the notice men have or have not taken of them, throughout all centuries since his day.

He was born two thousand years ago, and was executed by a tyrant whilst still a young man. He was thirty before he came into the public eye, but within six months he had an entire province of the Roman Empire waiting on his words. His short-lived appearance prepared men for the coming of the greatest teacher the world has known—Jesus of Nazareth! But the impetus of that forward move which accompanied the birth of Christianity has spent itself, and now the world we know faces an even greater crisis than that which destroyed Judea two thousand years ago.

The effects of society's disease are manifest. Crime, vice and immorality; rampant and increasing. Respect for law; vanishing. The most elementary rights of the weaker are habitually denied them by the stronger. Fundamental qualities such as self-denial and generosity are discounted as signs of weakness; selfishness, self-seeking and greed are exalted in their place. Honour in business and political life has given place to intrigue, bribery and corruption. The social fabric is undermined by laxity in the marriage relationship, dishonesty in daily life and excessive addiction to debasing pleasures and diversions. Twenty-year-old boys shoot policemen and gangs of children rob houses. A dry rot permeates society and causes grave concern to all serious observers. And the question comes "Why?"

The peoples of earth—speaking now more particularly of the so-called "civilised" peoples—have renounced God and in the main no longer acknowledge his supremacy. The moral principles of the Bible have been cast aside and many men take whatever course their inclinations, desires and passions dictate. There is no real belief in judgment to come, or in the certainty or likeli-

hood of retribution for their crimes. Therefore many indulge themselves according to their fancy without thought of the consequences to themselves or their fellows.

But the Bible still proclaims the basic principles of creation: that which is evil cannot endure; it may subsist, uneasily, for a time, but it must eventually pass away. It bears within itself the seeds of its own destruction. That is why St. Paul says in one place "the wages of sin is death" and Ezekiel in another "the soul that sinneth, it shall die", and St. Peter, referring to the order of things instituted by man upon earth, speaks of a heaven and earth of evil repute, which now exists, being destroyed as by fire and replaced by a new heavens and earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. The operation of this Divine law implies retribution, judgment, and so a secondary maxim is propounded: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap".

The world is reaping a bitter harvest, one of its own sowing. The ills from which we suffer have their origin in the things we or our fathers have done in times past. There is no escape; it is inevitable that the world should enter into this period of judgment and suffer the calamities that must come upon it. It is unjust to blame God. We were created with the ability to govern ourselves along lines of benevolence and equity, but we have elected to take the easier way and must find for ourselves that it leads only to destruction. God means to save: He does not will that his purpose in creation should be frustrated; but men must learn their lesson.

Now although there can be no universal deliverance from the judgment of this world, there can be, and is, individual deliverance from the state of mind and way of life that has led to this state of things. That is the first step. Multiplied a thousand, a million, ten million fold, it will bring world judgment to an end and usher in an eternity of peace. But it can only be attained by means of repentance.

The word "repentance" is associated with the emotional fervour of nineteenth century revivalism, conjuring up visions of the old-fashioned "penitent form" in mission halls and impassioned appeals to leave one's sins at the foot of the cross. Now this does enshrine a fundamental principle, but it is not the whole meaning of the word. To "repent" means to change the mind, to repudiate a previous course of action, to enter upon a new way. Applied to men and women conscious that

all is not well with the world in which they live, nor with themselves, it means to consider what *there is in one's own way of life that is out of accord with the principles of rightness, and to resolve that those things shall be banished and a new way of life adopted, a way which shall have as its object due acknowledgment of the supremacy of God, and the well-being and happiness of one's fellows.* Since no such resolve can be put into effect to any appreciable degree without close attention to the examples and precepts of Jesus Christ, *it follows that such repentance must of necessity involve belief in the efficacy and integrity of his teaching and acceptance of his leadership in life.*

This of itself is not enough. Many have sought to model their lives after the example of great philosophers and teachers, becoming powerful influences for good in consequence; but they have not banished the evil that is in the world, and nothing short of the elimination of evil can solve the problems which distress mankind. The acceptance of Jesus and his message involves something more than any other teacher demands. Jesus claimed to have come from above, from God, to bring his world-saving message. He declared the necessity of his death as man in order that men might be saved, and also his intention of returning again to earth after the lapse of a pre-determined period of time—during which the seed of his teaching was to germinate and spread among the nations—to complete his work of abolishing evil and bring all men into fellowship with God. If Jesus is to be accepted as a reliable guide to a new way of life all this must be accepted too. If He was mistaken in this theological and eschatological aspect of his message, forming as it does the whole framework within which his teaching is set and upon which that depends, then He was a misled and completely deluded man and no leader in whom men to-day, with the problems they have to solve, can afford to repose confidence.

Jesus was not mistaken! He did come from God. In his Divinity He is supreme over all created things, and comes again in the glory of that Divinity, a glory not perceptible by human sense but none the less real, to finish his work on earth. There can be no physical or intellectual

proof of all this, for these are matters transcending human values and means of measurement. The proof comes *after*, and not before, the repentant individual has "turned" to serve God. Having accepted Christ, not only as a guide to conduct and instructor in morals, but a personal Deliverer from sin and the effects of sin, he becomes increasingly conscious of a new and different sphere of understanding which advances satisfactory and convincing proofs not capable of demonstration by the materialistic arguments of every day.

Repentance, then, *does* involve coming to Jesus in submission as to a Master and leader. It *does* involve claiming him and accepting him as a personal Saviour and subordinating one's whole life and interests to his service. The object is not merely that one may be "saved from the wrath to come". God does not look with approval on people whose sole desire is to save their own skins, and advance their own interests. The world has seen too much of that already. Rather should one come to God in dedication of life to be used by him in the further reclamation of the world from evil. It implies service, and it implies hard work. The day set aside by God for this purpose is the still future Millennial Age, during which all men, including the returned dead, will be taught the ways of God and be led to choose between good and evil and decide their future destiny for themselves. Nevertheless there is much that can be done in this present day, before God breaks through into human affairs with his promised Millennial Kingdom. That is why the repentance and dedication to Christian service of any man or woman has an immediate effect upon the prevalence of evil. It is one more blow struck for right dealing and right living, one more influence making for peace and rectitude in the affairs of men and nations, leading immediately to some mitigation, however slight, of the troubles that now afflict mankind.

This then is God's call. "*Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus Christ . . . whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things*". (Acts 3. 19-21.)

The native Christians in a West African village had no privacy for prayer in their huts, so they formed the habit of retiring to the bush to get quiet moments with God. Presently from each hut occupied by a Christian a little track could be seen leading into the bush. If they grew slack in prayer, the track soon became overgrown,

and then some watchful elder Christian would approach the back-sliding one and say: "Brother, there is something wrong with your track". In these days of haste it is good to remember that if we are too busy to pray, we are busier than the Heavenly Father wants us to be.

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## SIMON PETER — FISHER OF MEN

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### 5. Resurrection Days

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There came a violent hammering on the door; John looked across to Peter and for a moment both men sat, tense and rigid. Had Caiaphas' men discovered their retreat and was this to be the end? Jesus was dead but the vengeance of his enemies was certainly to be visited upon his disciples if they could be found. The two had remained hidden in this room since the terrible climax of two days ago and there was no knowing what had been happening in the outside world during that time . . . The tension relaxed at the sound of a woman's voice outside the door; "it's Mary; let me in". A swift movement, and Peter had crossed the room and unbarred the door. In another moment Mary of Magdala was with them, distraught, frightened, her veil awry and her hair in disarray. Peter led her quickly to a chair and stood, with fear-shadowed eyes, as she sat endeavouring to regain her breath. She had been running and she was exhausted. But in a moment, brokenly, she was able to speak. *"They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him."*

A moment of stunned disbelief, and both men were out of the house and running hard towards the sepulchre. Gone now were all their fears of apprehension by the High Priest's officers. This was a totally unexpected turn of events and they must inform themselves of the situation at first hand. Mary was left to follow as best she could; they had to get to the sepulchre as quickly as possible. Assuming that their hiding-place had been the house of Mary the mother of Mark they would have a little over a mile to cover, along the undulating tracks which traversed the rocky ridges and ravines outside the western wall of the city. John was in better shape than his fellow-disciple—he was probably a few years younger and he got there first. Nevertheless he did not go in. Perhaps his Jewish upbringing made him afraid of ceremonial uncleanness during this Passover week. He looked inside and saw that the body of Jesus was gone and the grave clothes were lying on the rock-cut shelf. Then Peter arrived, panting, and without ado, ceremonial uncleanness or not, went straight inside. He could only confirm what Mary had told them; the Lord was not there. But he did notice something of the significance of which had escaped Mary when first she looked into the tomb. The grave clothes were certainly still there; whoever had taken the body had removed them and left them behind. And as he looked at them Peter was conscious

of another inexplicable factor; as John, overcoming his reluctance, came inside and stood looking, he too became conscious of it, and recorded it later on in his Gospel. Those wrappings had not been unwound as would normally be the case; they were lying folded in their respective places just as though the body had been extricated without disturbing them, almost as if it had been dissolved out of them so that they fell neatly flat, but still folded, on the rock shelf.

Long and silently the two men looked, and then, without speaking, turned away. Mary was waiting outside as they emerged but they did not say anything to her. They looked around the garden but there was nothing unusual and no one else in sight. Perhaps if they had remembered the Lord's assurance that on the third day He would rise again they might have found the explanation of those folded grave clothes but they had taken so little heed of that assurance that they had forgotten all about the promised Resurrection. They only knew that Jesus was dead and all their hopes dashed, and all they had left was his grave where they could come and remember him, and now even that was denied them because someone had taken the body away and they knew not where it was. For once, Peter had nothing to say and nothing to suggest. With an expression of defeat on his face he turned away from the sepulchre and in company with John made his way back to the house he had so recently left.

Mary remained—and saw the Lord. Had Peter and John stayed with her a little while they too would have seen him. But it was Mary and the other women who had braved the possible dangers of being accosted by the Temple guards appointed to watch the sealed tomb, and to them it was given to see and talk with the risen Lord first of all. First to Mary, and then to all four of them as they made their way to the disciples. All that is recorded in detail, but of the next appearance nothing is preserved save the bare fact. For when, at the close of that eventful day, the two excited men from Emmaus burst in upon the assembled disciples with their news of the stranger they had entertained to supper who turned out to be the Lord himself, they were met with the jubilant news *"the Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon"* (Luke 24.34). And in the next few minutes Jesus himself was standing in the midst of the assembly. That appearance to Peter must have been at some time during the Sunday, after Mary and the women had brought

the news and been disbelieved. Paul in 1 Cor. 15.5 alludes to this same appearance as being the first after the Resurrection; he ignored the part played by the women. How Peter came to see the Lord and what passed between them no man knows; perhaps in view of Peter's tragic denials of only a few days earlier the episode was too sacred to talk about. Peter never referred to it afterwards. One cannot doubt though that he sought and obtained forgiveness for what he had done and that he became a better man for the experience. From then on he was a pillar of strength to the little community of believers which so soon became the nucleus of the Christian Church. At Pentecost, only seven weeks later, he espoused the cause of Christ in public without fear, and the authorities, with all their threats, found it impossible to shake or weaken his rock-hard resolution. At long last Peter came to understand those many things his Lord had told him about his coming death and resurrection. For so long had the Galilean fisherman allowed his Judaistic beliefs and expectations regarding the Messiah to colour his reception and interpretation of Jesus' words. He did not really believe that Jesus was going to die and for that reason all the talk of rising again on the third day had passed over his head. But now he had experienced the bitterness of realising that his Master had indeed suffered death at the hands of his enemies and God had not intervened to save him. He knew what it was to feel like a sheep that had lost its shepherd. He saw all his dreams and hopes and expectations dissolve into chimera. He found himself hiding from the vengeance of enemies seeking him for his adherence to what he now felt to be a lost cause. "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel" said his two sad compatriots to the stranger who had accosted them on the way to Emmaus. We had trusted, but we trust no longer; that was their unspoken feeling and it had been that of Peter also. But now all that was changed; he had seen his Lord again, he knew now that He had survived that death on the cross, that his enemies no longer had any power over him, and in the light of that tremendous revelation, and the knowledge of forgiveness for his own sad lapse, Peter was ready—fully ready—to embark upon his destiny to be a fisher of men.

One more experience during that halcyon seven weeks must have stood out in Peter's mind in later life whenever he thought of those days. He and the rest of the disciples, in conformity with the Lord's injunction, had left Jerusalem and gone back to Galilee, probably within a couple of weeks of the Resurrection, there to await further intimation of their Master's will for

them. They still had no idea in what way they were to continue his work of preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom; it was clear now that the Kingdom was not yet to be established and the appearance of Messiah in glory and power was at some indeterminate point in the future. And in the meantime they must live. So they overhauled their boats and nets that had been lying idle these past three years and set out for their first catch. "And that night they caught nothing."

They must have been puzzled. They were, most of them at least, expert in their trade and knew all the moods and characteristics of the Sea of Galilee, when and where to expect the shoals of fish which their net was designed to take. Dispirited, at daybreak they headed for shore. Approaching, they discerned a solitary stranger standing on the beach. To his shouted enquiry as to their catch they responded with the dismal news. He told them to cast their net again on the right side of the ship and they would have better fortune. Probably to humour him more than anything, they did so, and immediately the net filled with such a shoal of fish that they could not get it into the boat. In a flash John perceived the situation. "It is the Lord" he said. In a moment Peter was over the side and in the sea making his own way to shore. The boat was only three hundred feet away and the water was probably shallow enough for wading; in any case Peter would certainly be a strong swimmer. By the time the others had got the boat to shore with their catch Peter was already with Jesus and there was a fire burning with a meal of fish and bread waiting.

Many things must have been said at that meal which have not been recorded. What has been preserved is the thrice-repeated question of Jesus addressed to Peter: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" Each time Peter replied in the affirmative and each time he was told in response to "feed my sheep". Peter was grieved at the reiteration, we are told, and that was certainly in part because he remembered his thrice repeated denial of his Lord at the trial. And yet perhaps he took a grain of comfort from the circumstance. Three times he had denied; now three times he had affirmed. And the Lord had publicly restored to him his office of pastor and leader of the little company which so soon was to grow into a great and numerous Church. That forgiveness which Jesus undoubtedly did extend to Peter when He appeared to him in private a little earlier was now reiterated and confirmed in public, in the hearing of the other disciples. From now on, no man could hold Peter's lapse against him and all knew that he was still the Lord's choice for the leadership and guidance of the little band which was to

plant the truth of the Gospel in the world.

There must have been other appearances. Only some eight or nine are recorded, all of them during the first couple of weeks or so, but Luke says (Acts 1.3) that He showed himself "by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" and that must imply a virtually continuous series of meetings. They had returned to Jerusalem from Galilee and were commanded to remain there until the Holy Spirit should come upon them on the Day of Pentecost. And at the end of the forty days Jesus led them out of the city to the heights of the Mount of Olives above the village of Bethany, out of sight of Jerusalem. There they asked him, hesitantly, if the time had come for the establishment of his kingdom over

Israel, and gently He indicated that it had not. Again he reiterated their commission, the work to which their lives were to be devoted. "Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth". And Peter, listening quietly now, understood at last what it was that lay before him and what it was that he must do.

So they watched Jesus ascend into heaven and knew that now they would not see him again—not until in some far distant day He would return as He promised in the reality and the glory of his Kingdom. But first they had to be his witnesses and proclaim his Gospel in all the world for a witness unto all nations. Only after they had done that would the consummation of all things come.

*To be continued.*

### Dr. Seiss on the Logos

In his exposition of Revelation, chapter 1, Dr. Seiss said this: "How sublime is the majesty of our blessed Redeemer as thus set forth! Never before had He given such an account of himself. He had intimated as much, and permitted his apostles to use language which implied the same. But never till in this Apocalypse had He formally assumed to himself such Divine majesty. . . . He is THE WORD — the embodiment of all Divine verities from first to last. God is a Spirit—an invisible, incorporeal, intangible, unapproachable Spirit. But that hidden and unsearchable Mind may be expressed, may let itself forth in comprehensible utterance. And that expression, that utterance of invisible Deity is Jesus Christ—the Divine Wisdom—the only communication from the absolute to the created. . . . "who is, and who was, and who is to come." This sublime form of speech is used to describe the Eternal Father; but it belongs equally to the Son. He is the I AM, whose being is the same through all reckonings of time. As the Father exists in all the past, present and future, eternal and unchangeable; so Christ, who is the express image of the Father, is 'the same, yesterday, to-day and for ever'."

*(Dr. Joseph Seiss, Philadelphia.)*

Perhaps the most vital sentence in that extract is the phrase "the only communication from the absolute to the created." We have come a long way—we hope—from the time when God was pictured as a kind of superman sitting upon a throne of gold somewhere in the upper atmosphere, although as Christians we do demand belief in God as the supreme Creator of all things

and the source of all life. But of his nature and his being we know nothing and can visualise nothing—even Dr. Seiss' description of him as incorporeal and intangible, whilst perhaps true from our terrestrial viewpoint, may not be a correct definition. Of one thing we can be sure; the Power that existed before anything was made that has been made, before anything happened that has happened, before time and space as we understand those terms, must needs ordain a channel of communication with intelligent minds later to be created whose lives and whose thoughts are reflections of his own. The Old Testament speaks of that channel as the "Word" or "Wisdom" of God and thus it is that in John's Gospel the Divine Word of God, made flesh and appearing among men in all the plenitude of the power and authority of God, is that channel. God dwells in the unapproachable light and no man hath seen nor can see him, but man can commune with him through Christ, and this is as true to-day as when men saw him standing before them in the flesh and heard him say "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." That is why no man can come to the Father except by Christ; why only in the name of Jesus and by faith in him can any man receive deliverance from the power of sin and enter into the condition of peace with God and acceptance by God. That is why it is that eventually, when sin has been eliminated from Divine creation, it is in the name of Jesus that every knee shall bow and every tongue confess, for it is in thus rendering loyalty and service to Jesus that we are rendering loyalty and service to God.

## ? THE QUESTION BOX ?

**Q.** *Matthew's genealogy of Christ states (ch. 1. 17) that there are three sets of fourteen generations between Abraham and Christ, but the third set as given in vs. 12-16 contains only thirteen names. What is the explanation?*

**A.** It will be noted that Jehoiakim the son of Josias and father of Jeconias is omitted in vs. 11. If this name be restored then he is the fourteenth in the second set and Jeconias becomes the first of the third, so making fourteen in this set. Some late N.T. manuscripts do have Jehoiakim's name here but not the earliest or principal Mss on which the Authorised Version is based. It is generally thought that Matthew would hardly have omitted this name deliberately and that it must have appeared in his original Gospel and been omitted by a very early copyist, some later Mss, but not all, restoring the name because of the obvious error. If, as is probable, Matthew originally wrote his Gospel in Aramaic and it was afterwards translated into Greek it might well have been at this point that the mistake occurred. The two names in Aramaic would look extremely similar and the eye of the translator could easily have passed over one of them. In such case Vs 11 would have originally read "And Josias begat Jehoakim, and Jehoiakim begat Jeconias and his brethren . . ." Since this translation into Greek formed the basis of all future manuscripts the fact of the early omission would be explained.

A related point is that Jeconias did not have "brethren" as vs 17 says; he had only one brother according to the O.T., whereas Jehoiakim had three, of whom two reigned as kings in turn. It may therefore well be that the original verse ran "And Josias begat Jehoiakim and his brethren, and Jehoiakim begat Jeconias . . ."

It is also true that three generations of kings—Ahaziah, Joash and Amaziah—are missing in vs 8 between Joram and Ozias, but for this there is probably a different reason. These three were apostate kings and were the descendants of wicked Ahab through his daughter Athaliah to the fourth generation. As such their names were probably blotted out from the public records as unworthy of perpetuation. (As to this blotting out the names of apostates see Exod. 32.33 and Deut. 28.18-20.) These three names do appear in the genealogies of 1 Chron. 3, which would support the general view that Matthew took his list from the Temple records rather than the

Bible of his day, and this is further supported by the fact that the spelling of many of the names in his list differs from their spelling in the Greek Bible, the Septuagint, which was the one in common use in his time.

\* \* \* \*

**Q.**—*In Col. 3. 1-10 we are told in vs. 6 that the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience" and in vs. 8 that we must "put off" wrath among other undesirable traits of character. If wrath is one of God's characteristics why are we counselled to put it off?*

**A.**—The dictionary definition of "wrath" or "anger" is "emotion or passion aroused by a sense of wrong". Divine "wrath" is referred to about twenty-four times in the New Testament and in many cases the context shows that the word includes the idea of judgment. Divine wrath always appears in connection with sin and against sin. The Greek word is sometimes used in classical Greek writings to refer to the punishment of evil doers. So we have "Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come" (Matt. 3. 7). "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness." (Rom. 1. 18). "The great day of his wrath is come" (Rev. 6.17). In every case where the expression "the wrath of God" or its equivalent is used it refers to the determinate counsel and will of God proceeding to the execution of judgment against sin. There is no thought of the hasty rashness that usually accompanies human manifestations of wrath, and that is where the difference lies. A man may be angry or wrathful from a perfectly proper motive, such as indignation at some act of meanness or cruelty committed by another; but in his imperfect state he is liable to allow his anger to get the better of his judgment and lead to some violent action which in itself might be wrong. Hence the Apostle warns us against anger and wrath because we are not yet fit to be trusted with the power of executing judgment upon evil. We are unable to be completely dispassionate and absolutely just in our estimation of the matter that has called forth our anger and therefore we are told, in another place, to "judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts." (1 Cor. 4. 5). The wrath of God is scrupulously fair and just; ours is not: that is the difference.

## THE DEBT WE OWE

### Part I

*"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God."* (Eph. 2.19).

The household of God is an ancient establishment by man's reckoning. Its foundations were laid in the morning of time, when the earth was fresh and young and there were few people in it. Stone by stone it has risen through the centuries, a building fitly framed together, a holy temple; a habitation of God.

These were the words written to the saints at Ephesus, to Gentile converts to the Christian church. They were written by a man who described himself "of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews". He was a well informed man. When he told the Ephesian Christians that they who had previously been regarded as foreigners were now admitted to the household of God he was speaking of something long in existence; something with which he was very familiar. Christians are apt to think it all began with Christ, that there was no house and no saints before the days of the apostles, that the Old Testament and its heroic characters have little place in the Christian era except as historical figures or examples of faith. The records of the first Testament are indispensable to the second and the second is the outgrowth of the first. One is incomplete without the other. Gaps in time have created no cessation in the work of God nor brought about any change in the solid fabric of the house which is faith, not just a faith but the faith.

Faith in those early days was not merely a matter of belief in one God, of trust in a Divine Creator. These were facets of a faith which went deeper, which had a steel-like principle to which those who understood it anchored their lives. It was "the pearl of great price" even to those who had never heard the phrase, for which they were prepared to give their all and did give it in many ways as enumerated in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The comfort and security of the saints of these latter days who watch and wait on tiptoe for the grand finale of the drama of the ages is a happy lot compared to that of those who were in at the beginning, who laid the beams and raised the pillars of an indestructible edifice. These men and women who dared and endured so much, for we must not leave out the women whose courage matched that of their partners, whose co-operation was an

essential part of the whole development: these patriarchs, prophets, ancient worthies, household of servants, whatever title time and study has given them, were the consecrated ancestors, the hereditary keepers of the faith, the sacred force which they cherished and bequeathed to the Christian church as an imperishable legacy.

Concluding his hasty review of these great members of the household of God the writer says "*They without us should not be made perfect*", "us" being those of the Christian faith; yet "us" or we who embrace that faith could not have been without them. Christianity is a continuity, a completion of a work begun in them. Without their noble contribution there would be no whole building. They were the foundations of a fabric built through the ages, of whose completion they were assured, whose inspired testimony now pinpoints the last decades of this Age as the Time of the End, when the finished work will be ready to function, to let loose those streams of blessing into the earth from which evil has been forcibly ejected and "*the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ*" (Rev. 11.15).

When Jude exhorted the sanctified to "earnestly contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints" he must have had *that faith* in mind, as also the Apostle writing to the Roman Christians "who also walk in *that faith* of our father Abraham". Jesus Christ was recognised and named not only the foundation stone of the Church but the chief cornerstone of the whole edifice. All the prophets wrote and spoke of him, their lives and deeds a living picture, a forecast of one who should come, greatest of all, to put the final touch to a great purpose. He is the centrepiece, the top stone, the living head, the spiritual climax towards which the whole building reaches up as living stones united harmoniously to the precious corner stone laid by God (Isa. 28.16).

*"Every house is builded by some man but he that built all things is God"* (Heb. 3.4). Great houses are more than buildings. They have traditions, ancestral pride, possessions, wealth, titles, honours and privileges. Heirs to these royal and noble lines are important personages, guarded, educated and trained against the day when they will assume office with all the responsibilities which such a position entails. They exhibit with pride their long portrait galleries where succes-

sive generations look down from their gilded frames, eager to trace in themselves some likeness to their ancestors, finding satisfaction in a family trait, boasting of an unbroken dynasty, having a natural pride not only in forefathers who handed on, but in heirs who will receive and continue line, name and rank in the manner to which they have been accustomed. In that they are but microcosms of that greater house of God, which also has its portrait gallery down which the heirs of salvation, the heirs of God through Christ, the heirs of the Kingdom which he has promised, may walk with profit, contemplating the lives of the fathers of the faith, taking a salutary look at those whose stature seems to dwarf that of some who claim descent, who hope some day to emerge as fully grown sons, children of the Most High. Happy are they if some resemblance can be discerned, some trait discovered which stood out strongly in those men and women whose legacy they inherit, whose portraits glow in unfading colours from a great past. *'If children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ'*. (Rom. 8.17).

The riches of the glory of this inheritance is something beyond natural comprehension. Only as understanding is enlightened can the mind grasp at something of its extent and greatness. Rather does a member of this household of faith take on trust the dimensions and future responsibilities of that kingdom, humbly conscious of the great honour bestowed upon the called, chosen and faithful who will in God's due time inherit all its fulness. The important issue of this life is to be found worthy, to be qualified, fully instructed, eligible, faithful to the faith to God, to Christ, to fellow heirs, prepared and ready for removal to that place prepared for the "blessed of God from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25.34).

When Jesus walked this earth he was not unobservant of the build-up of society. The princes of the Gentiles exercising dominion over the masses: the great of the earth with their authority to command service, to use the lives of men and women for their own ends, did not escape his attention nor did they win his admiration or approval. There and then he set up his own house, founded a way of life which would run counter to that of the worldly overlords with their cherished titles and all the power and privileges attached to them. *"It shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be great among you let him be your minister, and whosoever will be chief among you let him be your servant, even as the Son of man came not to be ministered to but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many"* (Luke 20.25-28). To serve others and to give is

the spirit of true greatness. This was his standard, the rule of his house, "whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end" (Heb. 3.6). Not that this house of Christ cancelled out anything that had gone before. It was a taking over, a continuation. an embellishing of the whole building of God. *"Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy but to fulfill"* (Matt. 5.17). His house was built upon a foundation which already existed.

That Divine providence has protected and preserved these heirs of the kingdom through nearly two thousand years of fierce persecution, calumny, ostracism and subtle delusions which might have destroyed a lesser loyalty, undermined a less tenacious faith, is evident. They have never been more than a few, the true blues of the seed royal, but they have been there in every generation, steadfast, staunchly righteous in the midst of crookedness and perversity, separate and aglow with a light not of this world. Not spared the sufferings of Christ, but found faithful unto death they rest assured of the crown of life which is God's gift to all his overcomers. For them, *"an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ"* (2 Pet. 1.11).

So the selected few from the world's millions down the passage of many centuries, in whose manifestation the world in these closing days of grace looks for deliverance from its many evils without knowing it, may be termed the heirs of all the ages, those past as well as those to come. Those who inherit the present occupy a unique position, being able to look backward with an educated intelligence, and forward with an enlightenment concerning the lengths and breadths, the heights and depths of the purposes of God, as no others have ever done. The veil thins with flashes of insight, gleams of a substantial nature never afforded to others, as this present evil world and its ruling Prince of Darkness approach their final showdown, with the Almighty arm made bare in the eyes of all the nations, when the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God (Isa. 52.10).

Viewing the future with intelligent perception and earnest longing, the past also takes on a new significance. Where, how and why the great house of God began, grew, and in spite of fierce opposition will reach its culmination in the New Jerusalem, the new heavens and new earth, becomes increasingly clear. However familiar the facts they can never become commonplace. "This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes" must often be on the tongue and in the minds of those who serve God in sincerity and truth.

The debt we owe to those founding fathers of the faith is immense. To live at the end of one age with the next on the threshold which they saw afar off, cherishing it as a precious inheritance which they passed on, for which they waited in hope, is a great and rare privilege. None can look forward to the coming rule of righteousness upon the earth without looking backward, to join hands with all those early members of the household of faith of whom the world was not worthy, but who will be there in due time to claim their share of that kingdom of God in which they so ardently believed and for which they so earnestly looked. Though all else of their world has gone their portraits still adorn the long gallery of time as clear and fresh as yesterday, the revered men and women of God whose spirit and example have influenced and moulded both events and people into the foreknown pattern of

a Divine intention. To live at the present time as part of that pattern and intention is to have taken part with them in all the drama of the ages, to look with them for a city to come, to share with them the great and glorious hope of a rejuvenated earth in which the light and radiance of God's glory fills and enfolds all nations, when the shadows of evil, sorrow, deception and death flee away, dispelled by that all-compelling power of justice, purity and love.

All who have gone before, all that has occurred, have led to this very hour in history, to this close spiritual relationship with God, to this confidence, this assurance, this union with Christ and through Christ to this "*inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you who have been begotten unto a living hope by his resurrection from the dead*" (1 Pet. 1. 3-4).

*To be continued*

## A LIVING SOUL

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

Fortunately for the enquirer, the Bible gives a clear and unambiguous definition of the soul. Speaking of the creation of man—an instance of direct Divine intervention in mundane affairs—the record runs "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2.7). The Hebrew word is *nephesh*, translated "soul" over 400 times, "life" over 100 times, and person, self, heart, mind, beast, body, creature, thing, mortal, fish, all conveying the thought of a living personality or creature, a great many more times. According

to this definition the soul is the result of the spirit of life operating in, and manifested through, a living, breathing creature. Thus Gen. 46.18 tells us that Leah bore sixteen souls to Jacob, Exod. 1.5 that seventy souls came from his loins, and Num. 31.28 that animals are "living souls". In Isa. 19.10 the word is applied to fish, in Lev. 24.18 to beasts, and in Gen. 1.21, 24; 2.19; 9.10, 15, 16 to creatures. It is used for "person" about 30 times, of which Gen. 14.21, Num. 5.6, Deut. 10.22, Prov. 28.17, Jer. 52.30 and Ezek. 27.13 are examples, "men" in I Chron. 5.21, "body" in Lev. 21.11 and Hag. 2.13, "thing" in Ezek. 47.9, "one" in Lev. 4.27, and "mortality" in Deut. 19.11. Scores of other examples can be found upon referring to an analytical concordance.

In the New Testament the word "soul" is translated from the Greek *psuche*, which occurs about one hundred times, of which about one half are rendered "soul" and the remainder, with few exceptions, "life". *Psuche* is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *nephesh* and has the same meaning, this fact being demonstrated by the connections in which the word is used. Thus in Rev. 16.3 the creatures in the sea are referred to as "living souls" and in Rev. 8.9 as having "life," the same word *psuche* being used in each case. It occurs also in the sayings of Jesus: "The Son of Man . . . came to give his *life* (*psuche*) a ransom for many." "The good shepherd giveth his *life* (*psuche*) for the sheep." (Matt. 20.28, John 10.11.) In quotations from the Old Testament *psuche* is used to translate *nephesh*, as for

instance, 1 Cor. 15.45 "The first man Adam was made a living *soul*" (*psuche*) and Rom. 11.3 "I am left alone, and they seek my *life*" (*psuche*)—quoted from Gen. 2.7 and I Kings 19.10 respectively.

These are only some of the texts which show that the word is used to denote the living man in whom the Divinely-bestowed spirit of life is operating. The Book of Acts tells us that three thousand "souls" were added to the church, Jacob's kindred numbered seventy five "souls", and the ship in which Paul voyaged carried two hundred and seventy six "souls" (Acts 2.41, 7.14, 27.37). Peter, likewise, says that eight "souls" were saved in the deluge (I Pet. 3.10). A very telling word in Heb. 4.12 speaks of the "dividing asunder of soul and spirit", a clear intimation that the New Testament definition of the soul is one that identifies it very closely with the physical body. This was evidently in the mind of Paul when he used the same Greek word in its adjectival form to describe the difference between the physical human life and that spiritual life which belongs to the unseen world. In these instances *psuchikos* is translated "natural" — "The *natural* man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God" (I Cor. 2.14); "It is sown a *natural* body . . . there is a *natural* body" (I Cor. 15.44). In an even more intensely physical manner the word is translated "sensual" in two places (Jas. 3.15 and Jude 19) where the seventeenth century meaning of "sensual"—pertaining to the physical organism—is intended.

When it is understood that there can be no "soul" without the body it becomes easier to perceive the necessity of a resurrection from the dead in order to attain the future life. The Church recognises this fundamental truth in the creeds, but it is stated more clearly and logically in the New Testament. The great theme of the apostles was that life after death comes by means of a resurrection from the dead (Acts 4.2; 17.18 & 32; 34.15 & 21) and Paul in his famous "resurrection" chapter (I Cor. 15) showed that God will, in the resurrection, give to every person an appropriate body, to some a natural (earthly) body, and to others a spiritual (heavenly) body. This is only one of the many indications in the Scriptures that the Divine purpose includes for a restored and purified earth on which human beings endowed with everlasting life will give eternal glory to God's Name, a phase of his plans quite separate and distinct from the "heavenly home" which awaits the "spiritually minded in Christ Jesus".

The philosophy of Plato, which coloured Jewish thought at the time of the First Advent, and which insists that the soul has existed consciously from all eternity and will exist to all eternity,

being carried into Christian theology, greatly obscured another important aspect of the Scriptural presentation. Jesus declared that God can, and will under certain circumstances, destroy the soul. "Fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in *Gehenna*" (Matt. 10.28). That the destruction of the soul is the inevitable consequence of deliberate, wilful sin, after full opportunity for reformation has been given, and rejected, is clear from Jas. 5.20 and Ezek. chapters 13, 14 and 18. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" is as definite a pronouncement as Paul's parallel statement in Rom. 6.23 "The wages of sin is death". If, as Gen. 2.7 indicates, the combining the spirit of life with a suitable bodily organism constitutes a living soul, then the withdrawal of that spirit of life with the consequent death of the body means the end of that soul. Hence it is only as the spirit of life is safe in Divine keeping that a resurrection of the individual is assured, and this is the Biblical position (see Eccl. 3.21).

It is probably true, however, to say that in our day the expression "soul" is taken to refer, not so much to the physical living being as such, which is the Bible usage, but rather to mean the seat of consciousness, desires, intellect; that permanent part of man which endures throughout life as distinct from the flesh, which is constantly undergoing change and renewal. (It is said that each part of the human body is renewed every seven years.) It might be justly said that what the normal Christian regards as the "soul" is that to which the Scriptures refer as the "spirit" or "spirit of life", and as Eccl. 3.21 declares, it is *this spirit of life which, at death, returns to God Who gave it.*

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

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

## THE STORY OF THE DELUGE

### II. 19th Century Ararat Exploration

*"And as they talked of this and that,  
The Ark it bumped on Ararat."*

So runs the old jingle; despite all that has been argued as to the probability that the Ark actually landed at a spot much farther south, the general impression, buttressed all the way from nursery rhyme to serious scientific treatise, remains firm that this famous Turkish mountain is the place. So much is this so that since the beginning of the Nineteenth Century the forbidding pile has hardly ever been free from the questing feet of some doughty adventurer seeking to find out for himself whether "there really is anything up there".

The local Armenians have no doubts. For generations past they have asserted that the Ark is hidden on the top of the mountain, Divinely protected, and no man can possibly reach the summit to look upon it. Although the summit was reached by Europeans at least nine times during the 19th century the locals steadfastly refused to admit as much. Their present-day successors have had to modify the traditional attitude now that exploration on the mountain is proceeding practically continuously.

The first successful ascent of the peak was by Dr. Friedrich Parrot, Professor of Natural History at Dorpat University, Russia, a German. Dr. Parrot was on an official state meteorological mission involving scientific researches on the mountain, but being a convinced Christian and believing that the Ark landed on Ararat, he included a search for the possible remains of the vessel in his work. His book (*"Journey to Ararat"*, Longmans, 1845) contains the only extant description of the village of Arghuri, and the Monastery of St. Jacob, which were destroyed and buried in the 1840 earthquake. After two unsuccessful attempts he and five companions reached the summit on 27th September 1829, and this date marks the commencement of an unremitting search for the Ark which has continued to the present. Parrot erected a ten foot cross bearing a lead plate recording his achievement, a thousand feet below the summit, and a smaller oak cross on the summit itself; but he found no sign of the Ark.

That of itself is not surprising. It would have required—and still requires—prolonged exploration definitely to prove that the Ark is not there. This mighty extinct volcano which is Mount Ararat spreads its long range of peaks and rocks

over a territory something like seventeen miles long by twelve wide. Within that area are two distinct mountains seven miles apart, Little Ararat, thirteen thousand feet high, and the reputed mountain of the Ark, Great Ararat, seventeen thousand feet, a confused mass of volcanic rock, of precipitous cliffs and sheer pinnacles, of deep ravines and fearful canyons, and a vast chasm on its northern face which leads straight down to the plain below. Known as the "Chasm of St. Jacob" or the "Great Chasm", this tremendous cleft, which can be discerned many miles away, has its upper reaches filled by a glacier fed by the perpetual snows of the summit, giving birth to a stream which eventually finds its way into the river Aras and so to the Caspian Sea.

Parrot's first attempt at an ascent was by way of the Great Chasm, which leads into the heart of the mountain. Leaving the village of Arghuri at the entrance to the Chasm, he reached the Monastery of St. Jacob some distance inside, this becoming his headquarters for the rest of his expedition. From here he climbed the ravine to the little stone shrine known as the Chapel of St. Gregory, and its adjacent holy spring, the Well of St. Jacob, at an altitude of 7,500 feet. (The legend is that St. Jacob was on his way up to view the Ark when, becoming thirsty, he tapped the ground and the well sprung forth miraculously to satiate his thirst and that of his companions; he called to them "*Agri, Agri*" which meant "*Come, come*" and this, they say, accounts for the name of the mountain, "*Agrhi Dagh*". In Turkish it really means "Great Mountain".) Up to this point there were trees — walnuts, willows, poplars, birches, and low shrubs in profusion. Veering eastwards, he encountered grassy slopes with a wealth of flowers, until he passed the 13,000 feet level, and then at 14,000 feet he encountered the lower edge of the ice cap. By the end of the following day he and his party had managed only another thousand feet and they gave up and returned to their base.

The second essay involved a circuitous climb round the northern and western flanks of the mountain, by which means they eventually emerged on the 11,500 feet level grassy plain known as Kip-Ghioll which has since been the scene of many 20th century explorations. They got within a thousand feet of the summit and erected the large cross, which was intended to be

visible from Erivan thirty miles away, and then again had to return.

The third attempt, by roughly the same route, was successful, and they reached the top, a more or less level platform several hundred yards across with two small peaks of rock rising above the surface. Here they erected their second cross, in such a position as to be visible, against the white snow background, from the village of Arghuri eight miles away in the plain far below.

Five years later, in 1834, (following two abortive attempts by Hamilton and Rawlinson) a Russian astronomer, K. Spassky Aftonomoff, also on a scientific mission, explored the mountain and reached the summit. He was not primarily looking for the Ark and he did not come across it. Then in 1840 occurred the great Ararat earthquake. Masses of ice and rock were precipitated down the mountain into the Great Chasm and the village of Arghuri was wiped out with all its 1,600 inhabitants. The Monastery of St. Jacob, two miles farther into the Chasm, which had stood for five hundred years, was destroyed and buried, and never rebuilt. Three years later a German geologist, Dr. Moriz Wagner, spent a considerable time on the mountain on an investigation into matters connected with the earthquake, followed two years afterward by another geologist, a Russian this time, Dr. Hermann Abich, on the same quest. Abich made four attempts before reaching the summit and explored much of the mountain. The next year, 1846, an Englishman, Henry D. Seymour, with several companions, reached the top and, like his predecessors, found nothing. Then in 1850 a party of Russian scientists led by General Chodzko, and his assistant N. V. Khanikoff, with sixty Cossacks and their officers, spent two months on the mountain, including five days on its summit, in connection with the surveying and mapping of Southern Caucasia. Although these men were on an official mission and not directly interested in finding the Ark, it is noteworthy that their extensive stay on the mountain yielded nothing of interest in this direction. They erected a cross on the summit next to Parrot's to commemorate their work. 1856 saw a British exploring party headed by R. Stuart notable in that they attacked the mountain from the south for the first time, but otherwise having nothing new to report. In 1869 another British party led by Douglas W. Freshfield failed to do any better, and then in 1876 came the memorable ascent of Lord James Bryce.

Viscount Bryce was one of that famous breed of Victorian Britishers who would go anywhere and dare anything for the sake of the pure achievement. His book "*Transcaucasia and*

*Ararat*" (Macmillan 1877 4th edition 1896) is renowned as a classic. Having embarked on a hazardous journey through southern Russia and the Caucasus he decided to visit Mount Ararat while in the district and see for himself whether any trace of the Ark remained. Making his way first to the 7,000 feet "saddle" between Great and Little Ararats, he established his headquarters at the then frontier post village of Sardarbulakh. With one Russian and one Kurd he reached the summit in fourteen hours, starting at midnight, and was back in Sardarbulakh by dawn of the next day. He did not discover the Ark, but he did find a piece of wood that had been fashioned by some tool and was more than half inclined to believe that this fragment was a relic of the ancient vessel. Let him tell this part of the story in his own words.

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

His claim, however, was rejected with scorn by the Royal Geographical Society of England.

Two more ineffectual ascents followed, in 1878 and 1882 (Baker and Sivoloboff) and then in 1883 came startling news. The Ark had been found, or so it was claimed.

The story started in the Turkish Press, was re-published in London newspapers, and finally appeared in America, with the usual degree of embellishment. It was said that a Turkish party of technicians investigating avalanches on the

mountain came suddenly upon an enormous wooden structure protruding from a glacier. Local villagers declared they had seen it for the preceding six years. Upon forcing an entrance into the structure, the technicians found the interior divided into rooms fifteen feet high. Most of the interior was filled with ice; they could penetrate into only three of the rooms. The final story contained a delightful bit of journalese: "there was an Englishman among them who had presumably read his Bible, and he saw it was made of the ancient gopher wood of Scripture, which, as every one knows, grows only on the plains of the Euphrates." The Authorised Version does state that the Ark was made of gopher wood, but no one either in 1883 or since has discovered what particular species of wood that was. Only in recent years has the puzzle been solved. "Gopher" is not the name of a timber species at all; it is the Hebrew transliteration of the Sumerian "gipar" and Akkadian "gipparu" which means trees of the forest generally. Noah was told to build his Ark of forest timber. As to everyone knowing that gopher grows only on the plains of the Euphrates, the fact is that the Iraq plain through which that river flows is completely treeless with the solitary exception of the date palm in the south. The difficulty with a story like this is that the reporters love to imagine a few extra details to heighten the interest without paying much regard to accuracy, so that although there is probably a basis of truth in the story, and the Turks did find something very unexpected up there on the mountain, the journalists' embellishments must be taken with a certain amount of reserve. It is noteworthy that if any further action was taken by the Turkish authorities to verify and investigate the find they did not consider the results worthy of further publication; although Turkey is a Moslem nation the story of Noah and the Ark is just as much a part of their religious heritage as it is of the Christian.

Four years later, in 1887, the mountain was ascended, according to his own account, by a Nestorian church dignitary from India, John Nouri, who claimed to have reached the summit and found the Ark in a ravine. He announced his discovery some five years afterwards when in America as a delegate to the 1893 Chicago "Parliament of Religions". During 1892 he lectured in various cities on the subject and a very full account of his expedition appeared in certain successive issues of the "San Francisco Examiner" during that year. "The bow and the stern" he said "were clearly in view, but the centre was buried in snow and one end of it had fallen off and decayed. It stood more than one hundred feet high and was over three hundred yards long.

The wood was peculiar, dark reddish in colour, almost iron coloured in fact . . ." The site was inaccessible so that he and his companions were unable actually to reach the Ark or whatever it was that they saw. A party of prominent Californian citizens organised an expedition to return to Ararat with Rev. Nouri to verify the find but in the upshot this expedition never set out. A sidelight on the story comes from a book by a Kurdistan missionary, Frederick Coan, published in 1939 ("Yesterdays in Persia and Kurdistan") in which he described a visit from this same John Nouri about 1896, when the story was recounted to him, although in not quite the same form as before. This time Nouri asserted that he got inside and made "careful measurements" which "coincided exactly with the account given in the sixth chapter of Genesis." Since the precise length of the ancient cubit has always been a matter of uncertainty and even today is still not agreed, this latter constituted quite an achievement. As with the former story, minor discrepancies in the alternative published accounts might well justify the conclusion that whilst the worthy Nestorian might very well have seen something—perhaps the same object as that reported by the Turkish technicians five years previously—much of the descriptive details with which the stories are adorned were illusory, illusions quite honestly held by the narrator, but illusions nevertheless.

The next few years saw quite a bunch of explorers; Dr. E. Markoff 1888, Semenoff 1888, Raphaelovich 1889, Leclerq 1890, Allen and Sachtleben 1891 and Postukhoff 1893. None of these except Markoff reached the summit and none of them found any signs of the Ark. Markoff left an inscribed metal plate near the summit and Postukhoff an inscription on a rock, both of which were found by Lynch shortly afterwards.

The century closed, appropriately enough, with another of the "bulldog breed". H. F. B. Lynch, a British traveller of the calibre of Lord James Bryce, and a party of companions, traversed the Caucasus, Persia and Armenia during 1893 and of course had to do what by now was quite definitely expected of every traveller worth his salt—climb Ararat to see if the Ark was still there. Lynch's book, "Armenia; Travels and Studies" in two massive volumes (Longmans Green 1901) ranks with those of Parrot and Bryce as first-class descriptive accounts of the mountain. Lynch reached the summit by the same route from the south-east taken by Bryce seventeen years earlier and Nouri six years earlier. He found a stout wooden stake set in a pyramid of stones, a relic doubtless of some earlier mountaineer, but no Ark. Like others, he believed that the Ark came

to rest on the summit.

Undeterred, he investigated the terrifying recesses of the Great Chasm, which leads directly into the heart of the mountain and is terminated by a sheer precipice many thousands of feet high and partly filled with a glacier descending from the ice cap above. He notes the persistent local legend that the buried village of Arghuri was the first dwelling place of Noah and the site of his ill-destined vineyard. He was shown the ancient willow tree which was supposed to have grown from one of the planks of the Ark, and told of the village church which had been built on the site of Noah's altar. Then he climbed the ravine, past the buried Monastery of St. Jacob, to the place where the Chapel of St. Gregory stood before the 1840 disaster, and St. Jacob's Well still gave its clear water. This was still a holy place to the local people and pilgrimages to this rocky spot on the mountainside were frequent. Wild roses grew in profusion all around, and one famous rose bush was adorned with pieces of cloth tied on by pilgrims, each piece representing a petition to one of the saints.

But he found no sign of the Ark.

One more fruitless ascent about which not much is known, by a Swiss named Oswald, 1897, ended the story of 19th century Ararat exploration and served to precede the intense burst of

activity which characterises the 20th. There had been at least twenty-four ascents during the century, of which nine or more are recorded as having attained the summit, practically every part of the mountain having been visited by one or another. Only two claimed to have found anything; the Turkish technicians in 1883 who reported the discovery of a giant wooden structure and the Nestorian archbishop Nouri in 1887 who insisted that what he found was in fact the Ark and he had been inside it. Neither of these stories was ever confirmed but in the light of the last few years' discovery of massive timber beams in the ice at the 13,000 feet level on the north-west side it is very possible that some such structure did exist at that time and was seen by these men. Nearly all the other ascents—apart from Parrot's—were made from the south-east and south so that it may not be surprising that no one else in that century saw these remains. There is a 20th century story of an Armenian who as a boy in the 1850's accompanied three "atheist" scientists on an ascent and discovered the Ark; the Armenian is long since dead and the story has passed through several intermediaries but if there is anything at all in it this same timber structure may be what they also found. The timber is still there; the question "what is it?" remains unsolved.

*To be continued.*

## A CORRECTION

The instalment of this series in May/June issue, page 64, quoted the "World History" of Jordanus, (A.D. 500-570) Bishop of Ravenna, Italy, as telling of Noah building a house and planting a vine on the slopes of Mount Judi. There has been a confusion of names and places, not uncommon in modern works of reference where ancient writers are concerned. The individual actually concerned is a much lesser known Jordanus, Bishop of Columbum, India, who about A.D. 1330 passed through Armenia on the way to his diocese. Only after a prolonged search was an English translation of his 14th Century Latin manuscript "Wonders of the East" obtained, too late for the May/June instalment, and from this it is clear that this Jordanus referred to Mount Ararat. He must be added therefore to the other 13/14th Century travellers who spoke of Ararat as the mountain of the Ark. The relevant quotation from "Wonders of the East" is given here-with.

*"In Armenia the Greater I saw one great marvel. This is it: a mountain of excessive height and immense extent, on which Noah's Ark is said to have rested. This mountain is never without snow, and seldom or never without clouds, which rarely rise higher than three parts up. The mountain is inaccessible, and there never has been anybody who could get farther than the edge of the snow . . . This mountain hath a compass of more than three days journey for a man on horseback going without halt . . . In a certain part of the mountain is a dwelling which Noah is said to have built on leaving the Ark; and there, too, is said to be that original vine which Noah planted, and whereby he got drunk; and it giveth such huge bunches of grapes as you would scarce believe . . . I believe I have been at the place myself, but it was in the winter season".*

## THE TRANSLATION OF ENOCH

Enoch is one of the most singular characters of the Old Testament, a man who appears on the stage only to leave it immediately; visible long enough for it to be known that he was a man of God and that God took him. The Old Testament says "*Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him*" (Gen. 5. 24); the writer to the Hebrews adds "*By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God*" (Heb. 11. 5).

This unusual ending to the brief record of a saintly man's life has given rise to endless conjecture and speculation; so much so that the question "What really *did* happen to Enoch?" is by no means an uncommon one.

The usual conclusion of nineteenth century commentators was that Enoch went to heaven without dying—a kind of instantaneous passage from the scenes of earth to the presence of God. Many have found this a satisfactory answer, but the fact that other words of Scripture are contradicted by this conclusion is sufficient justification for an endeavour to attain a deeper and more accurate understanding of these two cryptic texts.

In such an enquiry any suggestion which may be of assistance, no matter from what source it comes, will be of value as an aid to thought.

Besides the two texts quoted above, Enoch is mentioned in only one other place in the Scriptures. Jude (verse 14) quotes him as predicting the coming of the Lord with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment. This reference contributes nothing to our knowledge of the life of the prophet and does not materially assist our enquiry. It does however stamp Enoch as one of the prophets who spoke of the coming of the Day of the Lord.

The first point of enquiry is as to the precise meaning of the words in Genesis 5.24. Does the phrase—"*Enoch walked with God, and Enoch was not, for God took him*" really mean that he was taken to heaven without dying as is so often supposed, or does it bear another meaning?

"*What man is he that liveth and shall not see death?*" asks the Psalmist (Psa. 89. 48). "*Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God*" says Paul (1 Cor. 15. 50) and again "*the King of Kings and Lord of Lords . . . dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen nor can see.*" (1 Tim. 6. 16). Our Lord declared "*No*

*man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man*". (John 3. 13). Such Scriptures are sufficient to confirm that no man, not even Enoch, has escaped Death, even had not the writer to the Hebrews stated so definitely, after including Enoch in his portrait gallery of heroes, that "*these all died in faith.*" (Heb. 11. 13). It should be accepted therefore that Enoch, when his allotted span was expired, *did* pass into death and "*slept with his fathers*".

The use of that latter expression serves as a clue to this strange word in Gen. 5. 24. Although we must believe that Enoch did eventually sleep with his fathers, there is no record to that effect in Genesis. This is the more strange when it is noticed that in every other case the formula is consistently the same "*Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son . . . And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years, and he died.*" (Gen. 5. 3-6). The same expressions are used for each of the patriarchs up to Methuselah, *except Enoch*. Why the exception?

Is it not a reasonable conclusion that the time and circumstances of Enoch's death were not known to the men of his day, and therefore the record could not be completed? There is another fact that helps to confirm this thought. The ages of the antediluvian patriarchs ranged between 895 and 969 year, but that stated of Enoch is an exception. The record states that he lived 365 years and God took him. Is it possible that the ancient historian intended his readers to understand that Enoch lived 365 years among men, famed for his piety, and at that age disappeared unaccountably and was never heard of again? Was it that God took Enoch away from the habitations of men perchance to carry out some work during the remainder of his earthly life, living perhaps as long as his fellow patriarchs and, like Moses, ending his life in a solitary place known only to God?

"*Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.*" The Hebrew here has the significance of "walking to and fro" as a man does with his bosom companion. That could well depict the fact that Enoch was a man living in close and habitual communion with God in a day when quite certainly the wickedness of man was increasing on the earth and "*every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*" (Gen. 6. 5). Heb. 11. 5 confirms this view

by saying "Before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." Picture then this venerable man surrounded, in all probability, by a godly family, attaining what would be considered "middle age" of nearly four hundred years. One day Enoch was not to be found; he "was not" for he had been "translated". What had happened?

"God took him" says Genesis. The word is "laqach," meaning "to be taken away" or "removed" as in Amos 7. 15 "The Lord took me as I followed the flock," and Josh. 24. 3 "I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood". A more definite word is used by the writer to the Hebrews when he declared that Enoch was "translated". The two occurrences of this word in this verse are from the Greek *metatethemi*, meaning to take up an object and put it down somewhere else. These words appear frequently in the New Testament and a clear idea of their usage is gained by noting the following occurrences:

Heb. 12. 27 "signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken."

Acts 7. 1 "And were carried over into Sychem."

Luke 16. 4 "When I am put out of the stewardship."

Acts 19. 26 "Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people."

This word "translate" continued to bear this same meaning, of transference from one place to another, in much later times. There is in Wakefield Cathedral a memorial tablet to a one-time Bishop of Wakefield who, at a certain date, says the tablet, was "translated to Newcastle," meaning that he was appointed to the latter city and so was transferred from Wakefield to Newcastle.

It is not necessary to insist that the expression "was not" must imply death, or the death condition. It need only indicate that the one referred to is not present or not to be found. A striking example of the usage of this expression occurs in the Babylonian story of the Flood. (It is probable that Genesis 5 was originally written in the same language—Sumerian—and perhaps not very much earlier than the Flood story, which has survived in its purest form in Genesis and in a much more distorted form in the Babylonian account.) Telling of the time when he sent forth the birds from the Ark, Uta-Napishtim (the Babylonian Noah) says "To and fro went the dove, and returned, for a resting place was not . . . to and fro went the swallow. She too returned, for a resting place was not". In this light the expression need only mean that Enoch was not

to be found, and this is exactly what Heb. 11.5 declares. This usage of the term "was not" is extremely frequent in Sumerian literature.

It seems then that both the inspired writers intended their readers to understand that Enoch was taken away from amongst men, but not necessarily to heaven. It could well be to some other part of the earth. From that day onward, Enoch was never seen or heard of again, and the ancient chronicler who first compiled the history which now appears in Genesis 5—probably in the days immediately after the Flood—was unable to say any more about this venerable character beyond the well-known fact that in the three hundred and sixty-fifth year of his life he "was not—for God took him". Where He had taken him was not known, and for that reason the length of his earthly life and the time of his death could not be recorded.

Now it is a remarkable fact that the traditions of the Israelites shed a distinct light on the fact of, and reason for, this mysterious disappearance. The apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus declares (44. 16) that "Enoch pleased the Lord and was translated, being an example of repentance unto all generations". This can only be taken as a reflection of Jewish understanding of the Genesis account, but one is impelled to ask in what way Enoch could be an "example" to "all generations". Perhaps the answer is to be found in the Hebrews verse, where it is said that in faith was Enoch translated, having already pleased God (Heb. 11. 5). Now in that chapter Enoch's faith is placed on the same level as that of Abraham, Moses and others, who at the call of God left their home, kindred and country and went out to a place which God would show them, *not knowing whither they went*. (Heb. 11. 8). Perhaps Enoch also went out to a solitary place, away from men, in close communion with God, to do a work for God just as did Abraham and Moses in later days, and maybe that was the secret of his translation.

Many have wondered from what source Jude took his famous quotation when he said (Jude 14) "Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints . . ." and so on, for the quotation is not to be found in the Old Testament. It was more than a hundred years ago that a complete copy of the "Book of Enoch", in which this passage occurs, was made available in the English language, and although none would now claim that this book was written by Enoch, competent authorities declare that not only Jude but our Lord himself was quite familiar with it. It is to this book that we are indebted for sufficient light on Judaistic tradition to con-

firm the suggestion advanced above as to the nature of Enoch's disappearance.

Although the Book of Enoch was put together in its present state no earlier than one or two centuries before Christ, its nature suggests that certain portions are taken from written records which are considerably older. Apart from a great deal of pseudo-astronomical lore with which we have no immediate concern, the book purports to tell of the conditions prevailing immediately before the Flood—an amplification of the story told briefly in chapter 6 of Genesis. It is evident that various "fragments" of older records, some considerably distorted by their passage through the generations, by copying and recopying, translation and re-translation, have been put together in a very clumsy and disjointed fashion with much material of later composition, but a careful study of these "fragments" does reveal one very interesting fact. That fact is that the prevailing theme of the book is the taking of Enoch away from the world of men and his establishment in some part of the earth where he could not be approached except by one or two favoured ones who were aware of the secret. The story tells of both Noah and Methuselah visiting Enoch thus, and of the family of Methuselah coming to hear his words. Perhaps the most eloquent passage in this connection is 1 Enoch 12. 1, which says "*Before these things Enoch was hidden, and no one of the children of men knew where he was hidden, and where he abode, and what had become of him. And his activities had to do with the Watchers, and his days were with the Holy Ones*". Again chapter 70, verse 1 declares "It came to pass after this that his name *during his lifetime* was raised aloft to the Son of Man and to the Lord of Spirits from amongst those who dwell on the earth. And he was raised aloft in the chariots of the Spirit and his name vanished from among them".

The similarity of this to the story of Elijah is very striking, and this likeness is heightened by words which are accredited to Enoch himself. (39. 3) "*And in those days a whirlwind carried me off from the earth and set me down at the end of the heavens*". Elijah too was separated from Elisha by a chariot of fire and carried up by a whirlwind into the heavens (2 Kings 2. 11) and the translation of Enoch is depicted here as having occurred in very similar fashion. The sons of the prophets besought Elisha that they might go and search the mountains, believing that the "wind of the Lord" (Heb. *ruach*, translated "wind" or "spirit" as required by the context, and incorrectly rendered "spirit" in this instance in the A.V.) might have dropped Elijah somewhere within reach (2 Kings 2. 16). They

searched, and found him not. So with Enoch; it seems the Israelites believed that he had been removed to some inaccessible part of the earth and throughout the Book of Enoch he is described as continuing in a closer and more direct communion with God and the spiritual powers of heaven than man had enjoyed since the Fall in Eden. They believed that he bore God's message to the "fallen angels" of whom both Jude and Peter speak in the New Testament (Jude 6; 2 Peter 2. 4), warned Methuselah and Noah of the coming Flood, and declared that the judgment of God would come upon the ungodly; but as far as mankind generally were concerned, they knew not where he was and they never saw him again. Incidentally the Book of Enoch depicts the events of Genesis 6. 1 as first taking place in the time of Jared, the father of Enoch.

The "*Book of Jubilees*", written about two hundred years before Christ but incorporating much legendary matter from the lost "*Book of Noah*" of unknown antiquity, says that Enoch after his translation was with the angels of God in the lost Garden of Eden for 294 years, during which time he wrote down all the knowledge they taught him concerning the heavenly bodies, the seasons and the forces of Nature. He also recorded the sin of the angels (the "fallen angels") and the coming Divine judgment, the Flood. The origin of this piece of information is quite unknown, but it does at least indicate the popular belief that Enoch was not in heaven, but very much on earth, in the forbidden land of Eden, still guarded by the Cherubim with the "flaming sword that turned every way". Since the Book of Genesis says that Enoch was 365 years old at his translation, the addition of this legendary 294 years away from the homes of men would make him 659 years old at his death, which does at least compare fairly well with the ages of his fellow patriarchs before the Flood.

It was the opinion of Jewish tradition that Enoch was the one to whom God entrusted the secrets of astronomy, of heavenly wisdom, what we in our day would call "scientific knowledge", and of writing and other useful arts, to be revealed in turn to mankind. It is of interest therefore to find that in the Babylonian tradition of the ten kings who reigned before the Flood, sometimes thought to be a dim memory of the ten antediluvian patriarchs, the seventh, who would in that case correspond to Enoch, is supposed to have been a special favourite of the gods of heaven and to have been initiated into all the mysteries of heaven and earth. Such legends have some value in that they show a fixed idea, prevailing throughout ancient times, that there once was a man, especially acceptable to God for

his piety, who was entrusted with Divine secrets and taken into some place of separation from his fellows in order that he might learn those secrets. The short remark in Genesis about Enoch, brief and uninformative as it is, is quite evidently true history.

There is a hint in Heb. 11. 5 that some search for Enoch was made after his translation, for the verse declares that he was "translated that he should not see death, *and was not found*", as *though men searched for him and their efforts were fruitless.*

The most difficult part of this verse is the expression "that he should not see death". Once only is the same expression used elsewhere in the Scriptures, and that is in the well known saying of our Lord "*If a man keep my saying he shall never see death*" (John 8. 51). It should not be thought that this promise implied the escape of the physical human frame from the inevitable end which comes to all men when life's allotted span is past. Our Lord referred to a far deeper truth, and a far more enduring life than that which men to-day are pleased to call "life". Those who are the faithful of Christ, who have been "born again" and have a life within them which is from above and not of "this corruptible seed" (1 Pet. 1. 23) shall truly "never see death" even although their "earthly house of this tabernacle" (2 Cor. 5. 1) be dissolved. In like manner the Ancient Worthies of old who are said in Heb. 11. 39 to have obtained a good report through their faith have not failed of their reward, and it can truly be said of them that having manifested their loyalty and allegiance to God by their faith there is a city which God hath prepared for them. (Heb. 11. 16). They, too, do not "see death".

Enoch was one of these; and his faith, exercised as was that of Abraham, Moses and Daniel, is an assurance that he inherits the promise which God has prepared for him and so does not "see death"; but just as surely as Abraham and Moses and Christian believers throughout the centuries, finishing their course with joy, have gone down into the grave, so, in some lonely place far from his fellow-men, Enoch must have yielded up his breath to the One Who gave it.

One can well visualise the saintly old man in his quiet retreat spending his time in meditation on the things of God, perhaps seeing in ever clearer vision the trend of events in the world of sin and death, and—who knows—being the one who first discerned that impending fate which hovered over the antediluvian world. It may have been that he perceived the natural signs of the impending catastrophe many years before it happened—perhaps with knowledge born of long observation of the heavens, undisturbed by other distraction, realising something of the mighty changes which were at work in the earth and which at length culminated in the "breaking of the great waters of the abyss" and the opening of the "floodgates of heaven" (Gen. 7. 11). Some dim memory of this may be the reason why those long passages about the stars, winds and forces of Nature in the Book of Enoch are accredited to this mystic personage. It seems that he lived as a righteous man in a world fast giving itself over to every form of evil, that he prophesied to it concerning coming retribution, and that in the heyday of life he was removed from his place among men and until the day of his death lived in his peaceful retreat, serving and living in "quiet fellowship with God".

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## A GLIMPSE OF THE FUTURE

The sun sank behind the horizon in a blaze of glory. Fiery tints glinting across the placid sea struggled for an instant with a deeper reflection from darkening skies. Quietness descended upon the earth and the evening stars began to twinkle, shining with increasing brilliancy as the radiance died out of the western sky.

Down in the valley lights gleamed, and here and there doors closed as families came home for the evening meal. Up amongst the rhododendrons a pack of wolves wandered about a little and then snuggled down into the undergrowth and were at peace. Upon the still air came a faint sound of music from those houses in the valley.

*"Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty,  
We thy children praise Thy Name and  
joyfully adore.*

*Holiness triumphant reigns on earth before  
thee,*

*Peace on earth, goodwill to men shall be  
forevermore."*

The friendly stars shone from the velvet sky. One by one the lights in the valley disappeared. A gentle breeze ruffled the tree tops and the wolves stirred a little and were quiet. The earth slept; and angelic guardians, keeping ward from on high, watched over a sinless world in which everything that had breath lived only and for all time to the eternal praise of God Most High.

## THE GREAT DAY

A word from  
the prophets

We have with us in the world today those who are described as prophets of doom and gloom. The O.T. prophets can be similarly described. In Joel 2.11 the great and terrible day of the Lord is described in vivid detail. *"A day of darkness, of clouds and thick darkness. A day in which the Lord's great army will rage over the earth; before them the people are in anguish, all faces become pale. This day of the Lord is great and very terrible and who can endure it?"* The words of Jer. 30.5-7 are full of foreboding. *"Thus saith the Lord, we have heard a voice of trembling and panic, of terror and no peace. Ask now and see whether a man can give birth to a child? Wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces turned pale? Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble."*

Zephaniah describes this great day. Moffat's translation of chapter 1.7 to 18 reads "The Eternal's day is at hand. The Eternal has a ready victim for a sacrifice and his guests are all prepared. The Eternal's day is near, speeding apace. A day of wrath that day, of woe and anguish, a day of stress and distress, darkness and gloom, a day of cloud and thunder-cloud, a day of trumpet-blast, and battle cry against towns fortified and ramparts high, when men must grope like blind men desperately. No silver and no gold avails to protect them on the day of the Eternal's anger, when the fire of his fury consumes the whole earth."

These are but a few of the many O.T. prophecies of gloom and doom and there are similar prophecies in the N.T. Jude 6 refers to the judgment of the great day. Rev. 6.17 speaks of the Great Day of God's wrath and asks (with Joel) who shall be able to stand. Rev. 16.14 refers to the battle of the great day of God Almighty.

Coming back to the present time, we have with us, as well as the prophets of gloom and doom, those who see a bright future ahead. Their optimism is, however, based upon a feeling of euphoria (a feeling of wellbeing not supported by the realities). O.T. prophets too see the future in a different light, but their utterances are based not on a feeling of euphoria, but upon the expressed word of God. For instance, the prophecy in Jer. 30 referring to Jacob's trouble continues "but he shall be saved out of it". In Joel 2, after the great and terrible army has done its work, a different message goes forth (verses 21-23) "Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice; for the Lord will do

great things. Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field. Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month."

In all the minor prophets there are promises of times of plenty, prosperity and rejoicing to follow the great day of God's wrath. Therefore, we, who believe that the Word of God is the expression of God's Divine Will for all mankind, can look beyond the present darkness which covers the earth to that great day in which, first of all, the world will be cleansed by the wind, fire and earthquake, then filled with that flood of light and truth which will vindicate the great God of all creation.

However, we must still live in the world as it exists and be touched with the feeling of men's infirmities, so we need constantly to stand aside from the present situation, and try to relate the present with the glorious future which lies beyond. In an attempt to do this we turn our attention to the remarkable visions described in the last three chapters of Zechariah.

The phrase "in that day" occurs sixteen times in these three chapters, and the visions swing from one extreme to the other, now foretelling plague and destruction, then promising blessings which will never fade away. In chapter 12.2-4 it is *"the Lord which stretcheth forth the heavens and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him"* that speaks, and there is no greater authority on earth or in heaven. He will *"make Jerusalem a cup that sends the nations reeling away from it, and an awkward boulder for the nations to lift"* (Moffatt). He will strike panic into all the horses and frenzy into all their riders. He will set himself to destroy all the nations that attack Jerusalem. In chapter 13 the city and the land are purified, and all idols destroyed. Then in chapter 14 details of the coming calamities are seen, followed by the final outcome.

Before considering some of these details we need to decide what is the symbolic significance of Jerusalem. It has been stated that all prophecy has a literal and a symbolic fulfilment, but the details of these visions present a problem, inasmuch as some may have a literal fulfilment, but others can only have a symbolic meaning. Jerusalem is itself a symbol in the same sense that London, Paris or Brussels are symbols of the

country and government they represent. Jerusalem in O.T. times had two functions. Zion, the city of David was (in his day) a fortress, and Moriah became the centre of religious life and rule. So the Jerusalem seen in Zechariah's visions would seem to represent both political and religious government of the city and the nation. Today both the political and religious power is dominated by the prince of this world, but this is to be changed in that great day and all government will be in the hands of him whose right it is. Events in the Near East at the present time demand our constant attention, but we are so close to them that it is quite impossible for us to get them into focus; we must try to interpret the confused situation of the present in the light of the many prophecies which seem to relate to this juncture in the history of the human race.

The visions of Zechariah 12.14 constitute the second "burden of the Word of the Lord", and this would indicate that they refer specifically to the Second Presence of the Messiah. With this in mind let us briefly consider some of the details of chapter 14. The chapter opens with scenes of violence in Jerusalem. "*For I will gather all nations to battle against Jerusalem, and the city shall be captured, the houses rifled and the women ravished*"; half the citizens must go into exile, but the rest of the people remain. The remnant left may well despair but at this point Jehovah goes forth to fight against the nations, his feet stand upon the mount of Olives, and the mountain shall be split in two from east to west, till half the mountain slides northwards and half southwards leaving a wide valley with Jerusalem elevated upon the mountain (Ps. 48.1-2). Then the Lord will come with all his holy ones, saints and angels. (The A.V. is a poor translation, other versions are better). Verses 6 and 1 are by no means clear in the A.V. "and it shall come to pass in that day, the light shall not be clear or dark, but it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night, but it shall come to pass that at evening time it shall be light". The prophecy in Isa. 60.1 and 2 provides a clue as to the condition described as being "not day or night", but the important point to note is that at evening time it shall be light.

Verse 8 continues "*in that day living waters shall go out from Jerusalem*", half to the east and half to the west (in the valley left by the great earthquake) flowing on through winter and summer alike. This last phrase means nothing to us in the west but to the land of Israel it is full of significance. Every year in the hot season the streams dry up, the pastures and the land generally become parched. Then in the first month, Tisri or Ethanim, the early rains begin and the

fall continues for the next two months. However, in that great day there shall be an abundant and continuing supply of healing waters, pictured in the rivers of Ezekiel and Revelation. In verses 12.15 the pendulum swings again, this time to describe in detail the dreadful plague which will come upon all those who make war on Jerusalem. Verse 16 foretells that the survivors of all the nations shall year by year go up to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles, but the nations that do not go up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles, upon them shall be no rain, and a plague shall smite the family of Egypt. The rest of the prophecy seems to end rather sketchily; let us leave the vision there and turn our thoughts to "that great day" of John 7.37.

The three annual festivals were originally based upon the agricultural activities of the people, the Feast of Tabernacles being a harvest festival, in which the people dwelt in booths or tents, and rejoiced and gave thanks for all the blessings of the land. However, by the time of our Lord's First Advent two additions had been made. Early in the morning of the first day of the festival a priest, accompanied by a procession enlivened by music, went to the pool of Siloam where he filled a golden ewer with water from the pool. Returning to the Temple he was met by another priest who carried the wine of the drink offering; the water and the wine were mingled and flowed down to the brook Kedron. This was repeated every day of the festival. On the "great day" or climax of the festival, Jesus stood up and cried "If any man thirst he can come to me and drink. The man who believes on me will have rivers of water flowing from his inmost heart".

On the evening of the second day of the festival four great candelabrum, or branched lamp stands, were set up in the court of the Temple, casting their light far and wide over the city. Omitting the passage consisting of John 7.53 to 8.11 (which most authorities consider to be out of place here) we read in verse twelve to chapter eight, that Jesus again spoke to the assembled crowd saying "I am the light of the world, he that followeth me shall never walk in darkness but shall have the light of life". These invitations were accepted then by a nucleus which will have its special function in the next age, but the world of mankind will see the Messiah standing in the New Jerusalem and hear his world-wide invitation.

By linking this incident recorded in the N.T. with the last part of the vision in Zechariah 14 we have a graphic picture of the scene at the end of "that great day". The battle of the great day is over, the great sacrifice, or supper of the great God, is finished, the harvest of the earth has been

reaped, and the nations march up to Jerusalem, the new seat of government, to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. There they will perceive Jesus and his Bride standing ready with the invitation

"Come, and take of the water of life freely". All this in the New Jerusalem, which has no need of the light of the sun or of the moon, for the glory of God and the Lamb is the light thereof.

## WHEN GOD SPEAKS TWICE

A Bible  
Study

The subject is allied to the use in the Scriptures of the figure 2. The Bible uses figures to indicate things; 7, 10, and 12 each give the idea of completeness. 7 days make a complete week, 10 commandments a complete law; 12 tribes a complete nation. So the figure 2 gives the idea firstly of completeness. (Matt. 22. 34-40). They asked for the great commandment and the Lord said, "there are two". If a man keeps these two he will keep the ten; they constitute complete instruction. The law and the prophets—two again—the revelation of God for Jewish instruction is divided into two. In later times Revelation 11 speaks of two witnesses; two olive trees. The Old and New Testaments are the complete revelation of truth to us, they contain complete advice; although they are two they are one harmonious whole—two witnesses but the same story. The two commandments referred to are not exactly the same yet together they form God's one requirement.

We have now come to another phase in the meaning of the figure 2. We see firstly that it teaches completeness, but we now see also the idea of *unity*. The Old and New Testaments differ but together they are unified in one story. At the beginning of creation God said, "Let us make man in our own image"; two hearts that beat as one. Our Lord said later, "I and my Father are one". Thus we see the thought of unity. Man and Wife is another Scriptural instance of two being one. Evening and morning make one complete day. Two advents of our Lord but they fill one purpose, they are united in the one purpose of God.

The third thought in the use of the figure 2 is a strange one; it is that the second is better than the first. There are, however, limits to this. 1 Cor. 15.45. Two men, the second superior to the first. Some speak of the Lord as the second Adam, but the Scriptures say the *last* Adam is he who lays down his life for the first Adam; He is the last Adam because there will never be another. The fact that the Bible speaks of a first *man* and a second implies that there will be other, but there are two Adams only. The second is superior to the first because He redeems him.

Heb. 8.6-8. The word "better" used here presupposes that there are only two covenants being

discussed. The second is superior to the first because under it the words of God, instead of being written on the tables of stone will be written on the tables of the heart. (Heb. 10. 8-10). The second, superior, whether it be the covenant or the offering because it does that which God really intended should be done, the second is the enduring or better phase of God's work. If a man die, shall he live again? Yes, and the second time is the enduring time; the second time brings individual responsibility. Our Lord said, "If I go away, I will come again and receive you unto myself." The second is better than the first for at the Second Coming the Lord receives his own to himself.

The fourth idea in the usage of the figure 2 is that of *finality*. The second death is final, the Scriptures do not speak of a third. (Isaiah 11.11). That will be final. He will gather the outcasts of Israel. The first time He put forth his hand was at the Exodus, but the second time will be final and Israel will be really gathered into their own land. Mankind knows this usage of the figure 2; Paul said his second letter to Timothy was written just before he went before Nero the second time, and he knew it would be his last. He knew he would not be released this second or final time. We see it is difficult to say all that is meant by this figure 2 in a few words, but we realise how important it is, and it is never used haphazardly but always with some definite point in God's mind. So, if anything is spoken twice it is important. When the storm arose on the sea of Galilee while the Lord was asleep, the disciples said, "Master, Master! carest Thou not that we perish?" The matter was urgent. We use this repetition in every day life. (Luke 22.31-32). You see how the point gains by our Lord saying "Simon, Simon". He would catch Peter's ears by this. I John 21.15-17 the Lord went beyond the usual practice, He asked Peter if he loved him more than twice, He asked him the third time, and Peter grieved because He asked him the third time, but by so doing the Lord drove it right home to Peter. On the way to Damascus the voice said "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"

An instance of God speaking twice occurred

at a very important time in the history of Israel, as recounted in 1 Sam. 3. Eli and Samuel had gone to rest and the voice spoke to Samuel. The third time Eli woke to the fact that it was the Spirit of God. The voice told Samuel that Eli's house had been judged, and the end of Israel's priests for the time being had come, it broke up the priesthood. Verse 10, "*Samuel, Samuel*". This repetition of the name was the prelude to a great change in the history of Israel, and you will find that this is so in every instance; Samuel, Samuel; Simon, Simon; Saul, Saul; each marks a very important phase in the history of God's people. When God speaks twice it is most important, something momentous is to occur. The first use of God speaking twice occurs to Abraham. (Gen. 22.10-17). *Abraham, Abraham*, lay not thy hand upon the lad. Isaac was taken away and the ram sacrificed in his place. Isaac was not really Abraham's only son, he was the second, the superior one, so superior that the other one was not mentioned and Isaac is spoken of as the only son. God said, "In blessing I will bless thee". Repetition again, then two examples are given, as the stars and as the sand. How very important is this instance of God speaking twice! First He repeats Abraham's name, then (verse 15) the angel called the second time and affirms the promise. First the promise is given, then He swears. (Heb. 6.13-18). God here used a mode of speech to drive the lesson home to his people. He could have said, "I will bless thee," but instead He said, "In blessing I will bless thee". There was no need for God to bind himself by an oath, his promise was enough, but in order to drive it home to Abraham and his seed He speaks twice.

If God will thus speak to his people that they might believe, we ought, when God speaks twice, to believe more whole-heartedly than we do. When God speaks twice the object in view is that our faith may be strengthened, by God, as it were, repeating himself. Remember all we saw in the use of the figure 2; Completeness, unity, finality. The next time God speaks twice by repeating a name is Gen. 45.25 to chapter 46.4. The brethren told Jacob that Joseph was alive; then God intervenes, repeats his name and the heart of Jacob is strengthened for the rest of the journey. God speaks twice and the heart is strengthened. The next time God speaks twice was at the burning bush. (Ex. 3.2-7). This was another important time; Moses was then commissioned to be Israel's deliverer, and God started him on his journey by calling, "*Moses, Moses*". These are all the instances of God speaking twice by repetition of name, but in Ex. 3.7 we read: "I have surely

seen the affliction of my people", etc. Acts 7.34 in recounting this incident says, "*I have seen, I have seen the affliction,*" etc. Exodus says, "I have surely seen"; but the original says, "*I have seen, I have seen.*" This also occurs in other texts. "In the day thou eatest thou shalt surely die," or "*dying thou shalt die.*"

There are other instances of God speaking twice but not by repetition of name. God gave the tables of the law at Sinai and He gave two tables of stone; on these two stones was the complete final instruction for Israel. Moses broke them, but God is very forgiving and He wrote them a second time. In spite of their idolatry He said, "this law is for you", and He gave it them a second time. (Ex. 34. 1-6). Here is a repetition of God's name. God speaks twice when He gives them the law and repeats his own name. This is an illustration in some respects of the time of the presence of the greater Moses when God will speak anew in the New Covenant. (Hag. 2.6-9. Heb. 12.26-28). The first shaking meant the institution of the law, the second shaking means the breakdown of earthly kingdoms and the establishment of his Kingdom. Not only kingdom promises, but church promises gain by God speaking twice. (Isaiah 26.3). Although our version is quite correct in saying "perfect peace", other versions give this verse, "Thou wilt keep him in *peace, peace*", and it is so given in the margin. (Heb. 13.5). This is literally, "*Not, not, will I leave thee, not, even not, will I forsake thee.*" These words are the first given in Josh. 1. 5. God said this to Joshua at the end of the Israelites' wilderness journey just as they were about to enter the promised land. The second time these words are used is in Heb. 13.5. God has cared for his Church through her journey and the promise comes just as we are about to enter the land: —"*Not, Not, will I leave thee, not even, will I forsake thee.*"

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### Gone from us

—:—

- Bro. W. Brooks (*Bristol*)
- Bro. A. James (*London*)
- Sis. A. Parsons (*Bristol*)
- Bro. J. Shaw (*Middlesbrough*)
- Sis. J. Sketchley (*Nottingham*)
- Bro. H. J. Slade (*Southsea*)
- Bro. M. J. Watkins-Ball (*London*)

—:—

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

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*J. J. Johnson*



# BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

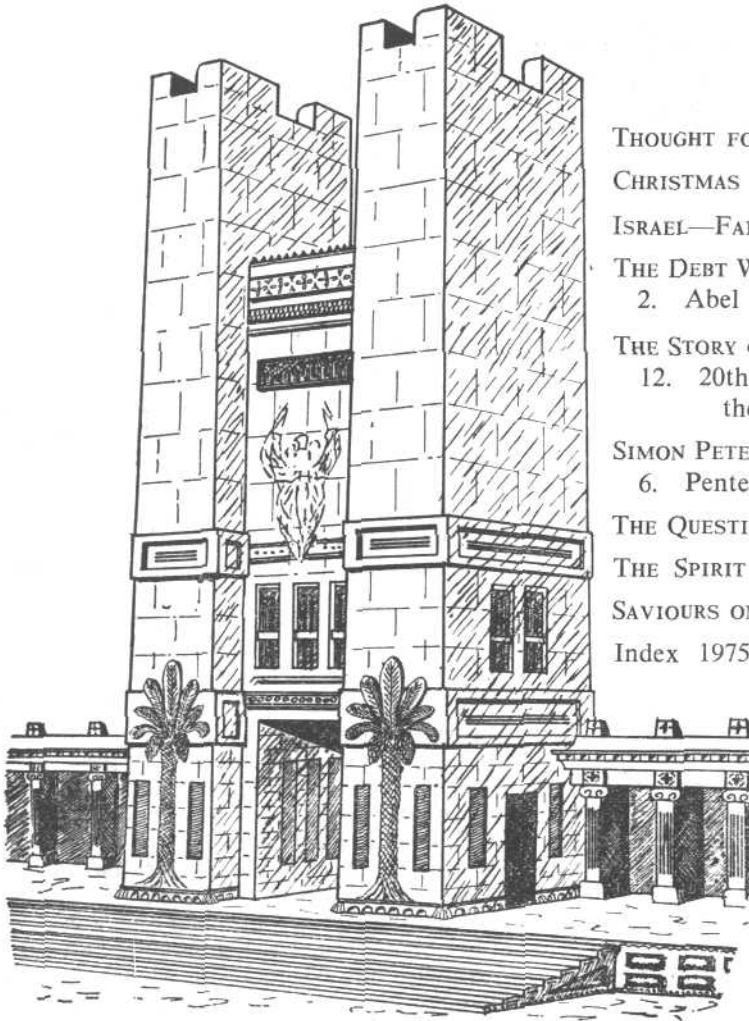
Vol. 52, No. 5

NOV./DEC. 1975

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

Published November 1st

Next issue January 1st



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

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## Thought for the Month

*"Stand still and consider the wondrous works of God . . . the wondrous works of him which is perfect in knowledge"* (Job 37. 14-16).

Here is an attribute of God which is not always realised as it should be, even although the fact is self-evident when we come to think about it—that God is perfect in knowledge. He is the originator of all things and it is by his power that all things are. It follows that He has all knowledge and performs no act or carries out no work without having full knowledge of the effects and consequences. That, perhaps, is why He said through Isaiah that He *"declares the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done"* (Isa. 46.10). The secret of Divine foreknowledge, incomprehensible to mortal man, is bound up with this. And the physical characteristics of our earth, our galaxy and our universe, in which all things work together and inter-work to produce a continuing environment admirably suited to the continuing organic existence of its noblest product, man, is evidence of the perfect knowledge which has produced such wondrous works.

Man—Twentieth Century man in particular—takes great pride in his own wondrous works, and wondrous they are indeed, but does not stop to consider sufficiently that they are without exception all based on incomplete knowledge. We have burnt more fossil fuel—coal, oil, gas—in the last hundred years than in all the nineteen centuries before that back to the time of Christ, and we complacently accept the standard of living, the facilities of travel, the marvels of manufacturing skill, which have resulted therefrom, but we do not know what serious havoc we are creating in the earth; whether so much carbon dioxide is being generated that the atmosphere will warm

up and the polar ice melt and we shall all be drowned: or so much atmospheric oxygen is being used up in the processes of combustion that by and by there will be no breathable air and we shall all be suffocated. We do not know to what extent the vast amount of spent aerosol gases continually rising into the upper skies is reacting with the earth's ozone layer so as to destroy its protective function and so vastly increase the incidence of malignant evils like cancer. We do not know what is going to be the long-term effect of modern pesticides, fertilisers and drugs, what evils they may inflict upon future generations. We do not know how long the containers of radio-active waste now being dumped in the oceans will hold back their lethal load from escape into the sea. We do not know. With all the care taken by scientists and others responsible for these things, no man can be sure that disaster will not come, because no man has perfect knowledge and the unknown factor is just that which if known might have held men back from their actions.

But God does know. God, the great Master Controller of all things, "working all things after the counsel of his own will", permits men this brief time of experimenting with the materials and forces He has given into their hands, but He will not suffer his creation to be irretrievably ruined. The Devil promised our first parents that he would give them the knowledge of the gods but man has never attained the knowledge of God nor discerned the difference between good and evil. Only when, in the future Age and by Divine intervention, man learns to take his place in creation in willing co-operation with God will he achieve the knowledge necessary to the rightful administration of his heritage.

## CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

Some Seasonal  
Thoughts

*"We have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him."* (Matt. 2. 2).

All the world worships a baby. Its innocence and freshness, no less than its helplessness, command the adoration of all around, and these Wise Men from the East were no exception to the rule. They had watched and waited for many long years for him that should save the world and they had found him at last in the form of a little child. Not amid the pomp and glory of kingly courts, the ritual and ceremony of sanctuary and temple, the wealth and magnificence of city and market—but in the quietude and simplicity of a cave in a Judean hillside, did they find the Saviour of all men. And beholding the child—they worshipped.

They were, all three, probably old men. It is not likely that they ever saw the child again. They certainly never knew Jesus of Nazareth the leader of men. Their worship was of a child and not of a man; their adoration directed to a hope and an idea rather than to a calling and a life's devotion. Their journey was prompted by sentiment more than by sacrifice. They came, worshipped, presented their gifts, and went away. We see them no more; history knows nothing further about them. Their contribution to the outworking Plan of God was almost negligible; they have provided a theme for Christmas cards and Christmas carols and to that extent added some little moiety to the beauties of Christian worship, but that is all.

The faith and belief of a great many disciples in this our own day fails to rise to any higher level. In far too many cases and to much too great an extent the faith of Jesus is maintained on a level of sentiment and a form of intensified baby-worship. A great many Christian hymns and a considerable amount of devotional preaching takes one no farther than an exaltation of the personal attributes of Jesus, viewed more or less through the veil of his flesh. *"My beloved, the chiefest among ten thousand, the one altogether lovely."* That is the idol in the hearts of a great many whose conception of the Christian life enshrines a feeling of personal security and acceptance with God but does not include service and sacrifice, all that we mean by the expression "the consecrated life". A brother, once spending some little time in a country meeting room of some evangelical body of the more emotional type, found himself assailed on all sides by an almost constant barrage of "I do love Jesus" "Do you love Jesus" "Isn't it lovely to be loved by

Jesus" and so on. That sort of thing tends to be, in a spiritual sense, unhealthy. The Christian is called to a sterner and more practical life and with the world in the state it is in to-day we need more than ever to turn our eyes away from the babe in the manger and look to the Galilean preacher as he moved among the men and women of this sin-stricken world, treating kings and priests and publicans and harlots with complete impartiality and absolute understanding.

In somewhat similar fashion there is a tendency to behold with such whole-hearted regard the spectacle of the dying Christ on the Cross as again to forget the value of his life. Whilst we must hold very tenaciously to the oft-repeated Scriptural truth that "Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures" and that only through faith in the saving power of his death can anyone attain reconciliation with God and everlasting life, still does it remain true that unless we give due heed to the lessons of his life and so learn to walk as He walked, we shall never progress beyond the immature stage of personal adoration which was all that the three Wise Men achieved. It is no use our hailing Jesus as the Lamb of God Who taketh away the sins of the world if we ourselves do not learn and then accept for ourselves the life of devotion and service which alone will eventually provide the means God has ordained for the actual removal of the effects of sin. Jesus died on the Cross and by that act made it possible for all men to be restored from the death that comes upon them in consequence of human sin; but the power of the Lord's life on earth, reflected through the lives of those who in this Age have been his faithful consecrated followers, is going to be called for when it comes to removing sin's effects in the minds and hearts of earth's millions thus restored from death. In the ancient Tabernacle ceremonies ordained by the hand of Moses there were offerings first made to make reconciliation—a covering—for sin, but before the ritual was complete it was necessary that all the transgressions and all the sins of the House of Israel, covered over from God's sight as they had been by the sin-offerings just presented, had to be loaded in a figurative sense on the back of a beast and taken away into a far land from which they could never be brought back. The Millennial Age is set aside for just such a bearing away of sin; as men accept for themselves the redemptive work of Christ, and in the power of that "pouring out his life

unto death" of Jesus' three and a half years' devotion and sacrifice at the First Advent, and the similar pouring out of life unto death of his Church during the two thousand years of the Gospel Age, begin to progress toward human perfection, so their weaknesses and imperfections and failures to live up to God's perfect laws will be steadily taken away into a "land not inhabited"—away from this whole earth which is the abode of men. Thus, at the last, when transgression is cleansed from the earth, the great High Priest can pronounce the final blessing "*Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*"

The message of Christmas to the instructed Christian, then, is not so much a remembrance of Jesus in his childhood as it is of Jesus as He afterwards became. It is a looking forward to the promise of the future and a willing acceptance of all the obligations which real association with that hope implies. The Wise Men from the East were not the only ones who looked and waited for the Saviour. Others there were, better instructed in the ways of God, who perceived deeper values inherent in that tiny form and lifted up their hearts to God in gratitude not only because they had seen the Saviour but because God had now commenced his promised work in the world and the days of inactivity had ended. Anna and Simeon in the Temple, Zacharias and Elisabeth, Mary the young mother, and Joseph her upright young husband; these were made of other stuff than the Wise Men, and whilst the latter were not lacking in faith and piety, these added to those things a willingness and even anxiety to be used in the outworking purposes of God that has immortalised their names in the annals of those who have rendered God service.

These people who "looked for deliverance in Jerusalem" (Luke 2. 38) were practical, matter-of-fact believers in the reality of God's promises. They all cherished a deep and sincere devotion to God and reverence for the revealed Word; they all believed passionately in the coming Kingdom and they all watched and waited for Messiah. But their knowledge and their hope and their watching was not merely academic. They expected in Messiah not merely an embodiment of all that is pure and just and holy, not merely a royal expression of the Divine majesty on earth, but they looked and waited for One Who would assuage the sufferings of the oppressed and bring to an end the ravages of hitherto uncontrollable disease, One Who would care for the lowliest and most insignificant of his creatures, carrying the lambs in his bosom and gently leading those that were with young, as the

prophet Isaiah had predicted. They knew, did these peasants and artisans, and the lowly priests who ministered to them, how much the world needed that kind of Messiah. The magnificent vision of a King seated on David's throne must have weighed very little with them compared with the picture of a Man who would not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, nor fail nor be discouraged until He had set judgment and justice in the earth. And when, at that first Christmas season, they set wondering eyes upon the babe whom Simeon had blessed and declared the Lord's Anointed, they saw not the babe that then was, but the Man that was to be. "*This child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel*" declared the saintly old man, and his hearers knew that there must be sorrow and heartache, and stern endurance, before all that the prophets had spoken could come to pass.

That is the message for this Christmas and every Christmas. We look, not at the birth which took place two thousand years ago, important though that birth was for all that came after. We look rather to the things which sprang from that birth, and not least of all to the Kingdom which is the fulfilment of the promises made at that birth and which is now so imminent. We look at the world in which we live and see it peopled by men and women living much the same kind of lives and oppressed by much the same kinds of sins and weaknesses, and troubles and distresses, as in our Lord's day. He moved among them and helped them, while He could. His preaching to them the gospel of the Kingdom was illustrated by the practical acts of mercy which He did. His call to single-hearted devotion to God and holiness of living was underlined by his own example. He was the perfect pattern, to man, of how man should live and behave toward his fellow-man. Surely we can do no less than follow his example.

Yet with all this He was no recluse, no visionary, no "holier-than-thou" ascetic. He was the perfect example of the man who is "in the world but not of the world". He could mix with men and women of every station in life and put them entirely at their ease, and yet remain himself immeasurably above them. He could sympathise with them in their petty troubles and help them out of their day-by-day difficulties without ever condoning their weaknesses or pandering to their faults. When the wine ran short at the wedding feast, He made more. When the five thousand omitted to bring provisions for the day, He created a supply. When the little children came running to him, He received them. How truly then had it been predicted of him "surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows". Now we, if we are to continue his brethren, must

needs follow the same course.

Let us then, as this Christmas season runs its course and we enter upon a new year, take to ourselves the word of Scripture which says "as he was, so are we in this world" (1 Jno. 4. 17). Let us seek to manifest and practice toward all men the same tolerance, understanding, goodwill and ever ready impulse to help and heal that He manifested in such abundant measure. So doing, we shall exemplify in very truth at least one phrase of the angel's song, sung to the shepherds at the time of his nativity; "Goodwill to men". That is the real spirit of Christmas. The bringing of gifts is only secondary. All the gold and all the

frankincense and all the myrrh left by the three Wise Men to brighten and perfume that Judean cave wherein lay the Holy Child counted for little in the courts of Heaven compared to the ecstatic praise of the little band of faithful workers which surrounded the same babe in the Temple courts only a few days later. "*Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me.*" That is the spirit in which we must go forth into the world to-day, and in that spirit we shall gain our needed experience where-with we will be fitted for our Master's service in the great Day of Salvation yet to come.

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## ISRAEL — FAITH BEFORE DELIVERANCE

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Among those who look for the restoration of Israel to the Holy Land at the end of the Age and the intervention of God to deliver them from their enemies and so usher in the Millennial Kingdom it is sometimes thought, and said, that Israel will enter the final crisis in a state of unbelief, of no-faith, and that the effect of God's intervention and deliverance will be their conversion and establishment of faith. There is no Scripture which so states or infers. Upon the contrary, every indication based on the principles of the Divine dealings with Israel in past history leads to the conclusion that until Israel is wholly converted and resting faith in God the deliverance will not come. It is agreed that the initial regathering to the land and the establishment of the national entity is at a time when Israel abides in unbelief, but this is only the physical preparation of the land and people for the crisis and not the crisis itself.

A vivid picture of this event is given in Ezek. chap. 38. Israel is restored to the Promised Land and is prospering. Various distant nations, jealous of that prosperity, determine to invade the land and take a great spoil for themselves. Israel is at rest and dwelling confidently in "unwalled villages, having neither bars nor gates"—in other words, in a state of complete disarmament. This is certainly not the position of Israel to-day; some great change in the national outlook must take place before this state of affairs can become a fact. The implication is that the people have eschewed material means of defence and view the alien threat with serenity because they have confidence that no harm will befall them. This in turn infers that they have faith that God will defend and deliver, and because of that faith God does defend and deliver. In the upshot the

alien invaders are put to confusion and the threat to Israel removed.

There is a parallel picture in Joel 2. 12-18. The whole of the Book of Joel is devoted to this same theme, the invasion of a relentless foe from afar, determined to ravage and despoil Israel in her undefended condition. In this particular passage the Lord calls to repentance and conversion, and follows with the promise "*then will the Lord be jealous for his land, and pity his people . . . I will remove far off from you the northern army.*" From there on, the prophecy goes on to the final scenes of the end of the Age and the introduction of the Messianic kingdom. But all this comes about because Israel came to God in faith for deliverance.

This principle is exemplified in the words of several of the prophets. When the building of the Second Temple languished in the days of the restoration from Babylon, due to the peoples' apostasy, and the land was beset by famine and pestilence, the twin prophets Haggai and Zechariah called for national repentance and faith as essential prerequisites to the Divine blessing. "*Thus saith the Lord of Hosts*" thundered Zechariah, "*turn ye unto me, and I will turn to you.*" (Zech. 1.3). The people heeded the exhortation, and in faith defied the enemies who had forced the cessation of their national activities. In consequence the opposition melted away and in an atmosphere of whole-hearted devotion to God the Temple was completed and dedicated. "*If ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings . . .*" said the Lord to Israel through Jeremiah "*then I will cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever*" (Jer. 7.5-7). The amendment of ways has to come first. Again, in Jeremiah's 29th

chapter, and speaking now of the promised deliverance from the Babylonian captivity, the Lord says *"ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart; and I will be found of you, saith the Lord, and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations."* True to this, it was only those who had faith in the promise of God who eventually returned to Judea under Ezra; an infinitely greater number remained behind in Babylon and never did experience deliverance. Jeremiah still further says (31.9) that at the end of the Age they will come with weeping and supplication, indicative of repentance. The Epistle to the Hebrews stresses the same principle when in its 3rd chapter the failure of Israel to enter into God's "rest" because of unbelief is laid down as a dogma; *"we see"* says the writer *"that they could not enter in because of unbelief"*. And the Psalmist applies this principle to the experiences of Israel in their early days in very dramatic fashion (Psa. 107); *"Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses"*. Four times does the Psalmist envisage sets of circumstances in which the people are broken down and helpless, and God intends all the time to save, but only after the cry of faith has ascended to him.

Perhaps the most telling argument is the manner in which God did deal with Israel through history. Time after time during the period of the Judges the people of Israel apostasised from allegiance to God and the penalties of the Covenant came upon them in consequence. Drought, famine, pestilence, subjection to enemies, all came upon them just as Moses had foretold. It was only when they became conscious of their shortcomings and returned to God in repentance and faith that He delivered. The formula is always the same; *"when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised them up a deliverer . . ."* and the result was that the enemy was repulsed, the land brought forth its fruit, and Israel knew peace and security whilst their reformation lasted. Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Balak, Gideon, Jephthah — all these and others were champions for God who wrought great deliverance in Israel, but only when the people had previously repented and come to God in faith and belief that He would save. The only Judge who did not give Israel any peace and safety, despite his twenty years' rule, was Samson, and there is no indication of national repentance in his case and not much consciousness of a Divine mission in the leader himself. Samuel, the last of the Judges, displays the most momentous example of them all. At the battle of

Aphek in the days of Eli, when Samuel was a young lad, there was no faith in Israel; they trusted superstitiously in the magic power of the Ark of the Covenant, carried before them into battle, to give them the victory. *"It"* said they *"may save us out of the hand of our enemies"*. The battle was lost, the sacred Ark fell into the hands of the enemy, and the Philistine yoke was fastened more firmly upon Israel than ever before. But twenty years later, when Samuel was a grown man and the acknowledged leader, there was manifested a very different attitude. At the great gathering at Mizpeh the people publicly recanted their past unbelief, admitted their sin, and put their trust in God. The Philistine forces advanced to quell this incipient rebellion; instead of flying to arms the people cried out to Samuel *"Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines . . . and Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel; and the Lord heard him."* So there came a great and supernatural thunder-storm which decimated the Philistines and enabled the Israelites to pursue them to their own land, and the Philistine power over Israel was effectively broken. *What all the martial ardour, linked with unbelief, of sixty years, had been unable to do, was accomplished in a few short hours by the power of faith and belief.*

The same thing happened in the days of good king Jehoshaphat. When the peoples of Moab and Ammon and Edom joined together in a grand coalition to invade and destroy Judah, the king, instead of marshalling his forces to meet them, convened a great assembly in the Temple and called upon God to deliver. *"We have no might against this great company that cometh against us"* he prayed *"neither know we what to do, but our eyes are upon thee"*. *"And all Judah"* it is said, *"stood before the Lord, with their little ones, their wives, and their children"*. Straightway the Spirit of God came upon Jahaziel the prophet and he declaimed before them all *"Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat. Thus saith the Lord unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's . . . ye shall not need to fight in this battle; stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord."* Thus the people went out to meet the invader, not with weapons in their hands, but singing the high praises of God with their lips—and as they began to sing and to praise up there on the heights, the armies massed in the valley below began most inexplicably to quarrel and fight with each other to such effect that in the end *"they were all dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped"*.

So it was with the most spectacular deliverance Judah ever knew, in the reign of Hezekiah when Sennacherib the Assyrian invested Jerusalem with his demand for unconditional surrender. Hezekiah took the insulting letter into the Temple and spread it before the Lord, declaring his faith that the Lord would deliver. The people had already demonstrated their like faith as they crowded the walls to hear the Assyrian commander's stentorian voice telling them of the evils that would befall them if they trusted in Hezekiah; but they were loyal to their king, and trusted in the Lord, nevertheless. "Now therefore, O Lord our God" prayed Hezekiah, as spokesman for the people "save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the Lord, and thou only". The people slept that night, confidently, heedless of the menacing hosts encamped outside the city, knowing that in his own way and time God would deliver. And in the darkness of that night came the angel of the Lord—whether that angel was the rapid pestilence which strikes and causes death within a few hours, or the dreaded *simoom* hot wind which dehydrates and kills a man in a few minutes, or some other and unknown agency, is of little consequence in the outcome — and when Judah awoke in the morning light, behold, those hundred and eighty-five thousand picked warriors were "all dead corpses". The boastful Sennacherib made his way back to Nineveh a

broken man, and never returned to do battle again with the people of the Lord.

In the face of all these examples, is it reasonable to think that in the greatest crisis of all which is to face Israel, when the nation is at last to be brought through the final fires to its great destiny, God would abandon this consistent principle and lower his standards for deliverance? If faith and belief were necessary prerequisites to deliverance in these relatively minor historical incidents, which in themselves, in some cases at least, prefigured the supreme deliverance at the end of the Age, it would appear to be demanded that the same principle should hold good. It should be expected, therefore, that when at the last the enemies of Israel close round the Holy Land intent on ravage and spoil and plunder, they will be met, not with weapons like unto their own, not with the defensive mechanisms which have been fashioned by the arts of men, but in quiet and confident faith that God will deliver. Like the men of Jehoshaphat's day, they will not need to fight in this battle, for the battle is not theirs', but God's. And in the outcome the glory will be the Lord's, for all the world will then realise, at last, that He is ruler of all things and his word will stand. In Ezekiel's narrative of the same great event (38.23) the Lord says "I will be known in the eyes of many nations and they shall know that I am the Lord".

### Eulogy on the Bible

Born in the East and clothed in Oriental form and imagery, the Bible walks the ways of all the world with familiar feet and enters land after land to find its own everywhere. It has learned to speak in hundreds of languages to the heart of man. It comes into the palace to tell the monarch that he is a servant of the Most High, and into the cottage to assure the peasant that he is a son of God. Children listen to its stories with wonder and delight, and wise men ponder them as parables of life. It has a word of peace for the time of peril, a word of comfort for the day of calamity, a word of light for the hour of darkness. Its oracles are repeated in the assembly of the people, and its counsels whispered in the ear of the lonely. The wicked and the proud tremble at its warning, but to the wounded and the penitent it has a mother's voice. The wilderness and the solitary place have been made glad by it, and the fire on the hearth has lit the reading of its well-worn page.

It has woven itself into our deepest affections and coloured our dearest dreams; so that love and

friendship, sympathy and devotion, memory and hope, put on the beautiful garments of its treasured speech, breathing of frankincense and myrrh. Above the cradle and beside the grave its great words come to us uncalled. They fill our prayers with power larger than we know, and the beauty of them lingers on our ear long after the sermons which they adorned have been forgotten. They return to us swiftly and quietly, like doves flying from far away. They surprise us with new meanings, like springs of water breaking forth from the mountain beside a long-trodden path. They grow richer, as pearls do when they are worn near the heart. No man is poor or desolate who has this treasure for his own. When the landscape darkens and the trembling pilgrim comes to the valley named of the shadow, he is not afraid to enter: he takes the rod and staff of Scripture in his hand; he says to friend and comrade, "Good-bye; we shall meet again" and comforted by that support, he goes toward the lonely pass as one who climbs through darkness into light. Prof. Henry Van Dyke c 1880.

## THE DEBT WE OWE

Part 2. Abraham to Abel

It is Abel, not Adam, who heads the line of the righteous, whose blood, spilled upon the ground by a brother's hand, revealed the type of character which was to pursue righteousness whatever the cost, not because God demanded it but because it was recognised as the perfection of the Divine nature, a justice, an uprightness, a purity of conduct to be practised in all dealings between man and God and between man and man. This standard, this measure, this yardstick, is not merely goodness. It is justice in the strictest and truest sense. Not what is due to self but what is due to God and to fellow creatures is its motivating force. It is unselfishness as opposite to that selfishness and self-righteousness which has been the bane of mankind.

Abel's attitude towards God cost him his life, revealing the hatred of the ungodly for the virtue which rebukes selfishness. His recognition of what God was, of what man should be, marks him as a man of evident intelligence and nobility. He was God's man and what he was mattered more than that what he looked like, although his confidence, his serious thoughtfulness, no doubt left their stamp upon his face. He was probably in his robust prime, only second in descent from Adam, that freshly minted man who made the first costly mistake.

He kept the sheep and in that pastoral occupation he foreshadowed other great shepherds who by their meditations and actions were to rivet history together in an irrevocable purpose. Moses in Midian and before Pharaoh, David in the sheepcote and upon the throne of Israel, Jesus the Good Shepherd, seeking the lost, the keeper of the fold, giving his life willingly for those human sheep committed to his care, were all inheritors of the faith of Abel. That great Shepherd of the sheep himself set righteous Abel at the head of all those who kept the faith. So we leave him, the vigorous, thoughtful, pastoral man, with the steadfast face and the brilliant eyes, whose first altar made him the first of many martyrs. Passing on to Enoch, the seventh from Adam, we find the man known to history as the one who walked with God so closely that he did not see death. With startling brevity his biographer says "He was not for God took him". What became of Enoch, or how or where he went is idle speculation. The outstanding features of his portrait is that of a man in close fellowship with God, so close that he was admitted to his ultimate purposes, given a look into the future which satisfied his sense of justice, a look he passed on, thereby

becoming the first of the prophets (Jude 14).

God had walked with Adam in Eden, seeking his company, but Enoch sought God and walked with him. He established God's standard as his standard, adhering to it during his long life among a people already heading for destruction under the curse of vices which inevitably destroy civilisations. This venerable man of faith, noble, saintly and without doubt beautiful in appearance with a holy beauty borrowed from his Divine friend and instructor, faded out from among his contemporaries. He was withdrawn by the love of God from a godless world but he lives on in the portrait gallery of the house of God as one separated from sin and its consequences.

Noah is the next arresting figure and in him is a strong resemblance to his illustrious ancestor. He was "a just man and perfect in his generation. Noah walked with God". By this time the first world was about to be written off as a loss. "All flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth" (Gen. 6.9). It is a sorry indictment of a vigorous race with all the wealth of time, health, beauty and treasure at their command, squandered in a careless and profligate abandonment to vice and violence. In this society of depraved men and voluptuous women Noah lived apart, steadfast in his resolution to uphold the standard of God's righteousness. His conduct and speech must have been in marked contrast to that of the evil world about him. In a corrupt system he could not be corrupted. Incorruptibility is not a future state only but a present condition, the hall-mark of those who love God. "*Be ye holy for I am holy.*" The holiness of God cannot be separated from his justice and mercy. Love, purity, justice and mercy commingle and intertwine, the very warp and woof of all true living. That Noah could demonstrate such character and quality in a godless world shows him a man of remarkable calibre.

In building the Ark for the saving of his household from the coming destruction he prepared with strong assurance for what seemed then an unlikely and highly improbable event. His separateness from the sins of his generation constituted a rebuke and a demonstration that there is an infinitely better way of living than by self-indulgence and lawlessness which leads to a polluted way of life unfit to be any longer continued. That he was a man of supreme faith and courage, a hero of the first order, is proved by his entry into the Ark, the committal of himself, his family and his collection of livestock to the care of God

while the avenging waters swept the inhabited earth clean of all it had previously contained.

He was the first shipbuilder, the first sea-captain; he was a patriarch who founded a new world, who headed a new dynasty of man and none need be ashamed to own him as ancestor. Brave, compassionate, stalwart, his determination softened by a touch of humour, a father and a prophet, he compels admiration and respect. In a sense he was king of a new world, its high priest offering up his tribute of praise and thanksgiving to God for preservation and deliverance. God made a covenant with him, binding himself once more to the interests of man.

While Adam heads the race and Abel the line of the righteous, while Abraham became the father of the faithful, a great deal is owed to Noah who brought a remnant of mankind, from whom all nations owe their descent, through the terrible Deluge which wrote itself into every language. On their behalf God made the first promise of mercy and forbearance with human frailty. *"It is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not."* Jeremiah remembered the kindness of God in the midst of trouble. Whatever provocation the human race has offered to God in its violent irruptions the promise to Noah has remained unbroken. The element of mercy has never been absent. Seed time and harvest, summer and winter have not ceased.

Shem, the second son of Noah, inherited the family trait of walking with God. The patriarch's inspired exclamation, "Blessed be the Lord God of Shem" (Gen. 9.26) carries with it the recognition of one head and shoulders above others in an intelligent, spiritual awareness of the Supreme Being, as well as a forecast of his place in the annals of the faith. Scholars have given the name Shemitic or Semitic to the nations descended from his sons, outstanding of which have been the Hebrews or nation of Israel whose impact upon the world has been like that of an electric current, stimulating thought and driving into action forces which will eventually reshape society into a new and finer pattern.

It was not merely faith which made these men extraordinary but their unfailing recognition of God's righteousness and the need to keep alive the standard of human dignity. The justice and judgment of God are forever to the fore, the indestructable measure of conduct of God and for man. When that is forsaken or ignored the dignity and sanctity of life declines, lost in a morass of ignorance, folly and delusion or destroyed by a petrifying indifference. These first keepers of the faith saw justice as an essential part of God's perfection, very necessary to society if every man was to have his due. It was the

golden rule further elaborated and simplified by teachers yet to come, obedience or non-obedience making all the difference between happiness and misery. Abraham interceding for Sodom at a later date held fast to this sense of God's justice; *"shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"* (Gen. 18.25).

How far these men of faith succeeded and how far the world has failed in upholding this standard, history is witness. All men of integrity acknowledge the standard of strict and impartial justice. That there are many living centuries later, who have the same standards, the same faith, who still endeavour amid the raucous clamour and opposition of a pleasure-loving money-mad age to walk as they walked, to uphold the same principles, to be separate and different to the easy going attitude of the multitudes, is proof that they passed on through the long line of descendants ineradicable family traits.

Shem, who grew up in the first world and survived its destruction, has about him a star-like quality. He shines in the firmament of the new world as a bright and guiding light, transmitting the glow of his faith and his insistence upon God's rightness and man's dignity through his children's children until they come out strongly in one who was named Abram, before whose striking portrait we again pause.

The world, what there was of it, was both pagan and profane. Again one family cherished the faith, an isolated unit in a city affluent, idolatrous and carelessly indifferent to a Divine Creator and his exalted standard of human conduct. The fiasco of Babel and the scattering of the tribes revealed a lamentable relapse into the old condition of dislike for God and his ways. To walk in the ways of sin and selfishness was a good deal easier and more attractive to these ancient builders than to walk with God, and then, as now, a great deal more popular.

Abram inherited the faith from Shem, Noah, Enoch and Abel. The citizens of Ur had little use for such a faith. Very likely the family who valued righteousness were ostracised by their neighbours and felt themselves outsiders. Like many more who have walked in that faith, Abram preferred isolation to compromise. Better to dwell in the wilderness with God, than in the midst of affluence without him. Better to walk out into the unknown, trusting in the unseen, than to endure the bondage of sin, the pleasures of a short and shallow life. So this man, who was born two years after the death of Noah, left the city of the moon worshippers for an unknown destination. He looked not for man-made towers which defied God but for a city whose foundations were justice and judgment.

This self-confessed pilgrim dared to walk alone

with God. He came apart from the unclean thing and "went out not knowing whither he went", obedient to the promptings of God and of his own conscience. He built no permanent residence for himself but became a tent dweller, having no fixed stake in a world that wilfully forgot God. Such a world was not his world any more than it was God's world. He looked for another, a better, whose builder and maker was God, unaware as yet of his own part in the building.

His name implied fatherhood but he was yet without children. Later his name was changed to mean "father of multitudes". While still without an heir he was made father of many nations, and the sire of kings. Yet later he received the promise of seed as numerous as the stars of heaven, as the sand of the sea-shore, and through this seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed. Although in the nature of things the promise looked impossible of fulfilment Abraham believed God. He was a man of vision and conviction. As were his ancestors so were his offspring, world forsakers who walked alone and separate, choosing isolation, the lonely wilderness or the solitary highlands, free to worship and serve in obscurity rather than cling to the doubtful companionship of the luxury-loving cities of the lush plain whose names became synonyms for vices of the worst kind. "I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness" wrote one of those famous kings who became heir of the faith he held at all odds. Forsaking all the treasures of Egypt for the rich fulness of a walk with God and the terrifying hazards of a great mission, Moses revealed in himself the same resolution, the same courage which limns the portrait of Abraham in whose pilgrim steps so many heirs and descendants have walked in the world but not of it,

obedient to the same clarion call to "come out of her my people".

Without the Bible, say his peevish critics, Abraham would never have been heard of. Without Abraham there would have been no Bible, for his was the safeguarded repository of knowledge of the first world of the faith and the lives of its first saints. His posterity lived and wrote the rest of it, preserved it and will yet justify its Divine testimony, for not one jot or tittle shall pass until all is fulfilled of its revelation. They are the People of the Book, the seed of Abraham, Jew and Christian through whom all the nations of the earth are to receive the blessings of that righteous government, the city of God, which Abraham saw with such unclouded vision, for which he patiently endured, so receiving from God a certain great promise, Divinely signed and sealed beyond all doubt or dispute.

Abraham was the man who had the promises, a precious legacy handed on to his son, his grandson and all future generations, until Christ. "If ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3.29).

By then the faith had taken a great leap forward, but to Abraham was given the title deeds of the Church, of Israel to the promised land, and to mankind its future blessings. His life was packed with striking events, as when the mysterious Melchizedec crossed his path, to whom he rendered tithes, acknowledging him a greater personality than himself. The friend of God, for all his wealth and privileges, remained a humble man. His faith is like the beams of a lighthouse shining across the stormy history of his people. His deeds bore the stamp of that justice he sought to emulate, and his spirit remained one of peace and humility walking with God to the end of a long and remarkable life.

*To be continued.*

### A word of caution . .

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

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

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

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

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## THE STORY OF THE DELUGE

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### 12. 20th Century search for the Ark.

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The story of Ararat investigation during this present century has two aspects. For the first two decades there was no systematic exploration but there is a crop of stories concerning individuals—mostly local natives—who claim to have seen the remains of the Ark, such as the Armenian emigrant to U.S.A. who claimed that as a boy in 1904 he was taken to a remote part of the mountain where he saw the Ark on the edge of a steep cliff; the story however only came to light in 1970. There is another Armenian who on his deathbed in 1917 declared that as a youth seventy years earlier he had helped guide three European scientists who wanted to disprove stories of the Ark's existence and were extremely discomfited to find it instead; this story appeared in 1952. These and other similar stories have been thoroughly investigated but from the very nature of the case no concrete evidence has or could emerge. In 1929 the Noah's Ark Exploration Association of Chicago made plans to explore the mountain, the leader, James Strong, claiming that they had the position of the Ark "approximately located", but this expedition never got started. In the 1930's a New Zealander, F. Hardwick Knight, explored the mountain and found a half-buried timber structure the significance of which he did not realise until Navarra's similar discoveries twenty-five years later. But the day of the great travellers was over and the present era of specific and scientific Christian interest had not yet dawned.

That interest was triggered by the "Roskovitsky story" of 1941. In that year, and for a number of years thereafter, there appeared in various Christian periodicals, who appeared in the main to have copied from one another, an account by one Vladimir Roskovitsky who claimed that as a Russian aeronaut during the first World War he flew over Ararat and saw the Ark lying half submerged in a lake. His discovery having been verified by his superior officer, a report was sent to the Czar who ordered an investigation. An exploring party entered the Ark and found hundreds of rooms, some with rows of cages fitted with wrought-iron bars. Unfortunately, a few days after the relevant documentary evidence was sent to the Czar, "*godless Bolshevism took over*" and all the evidence disappeared. The story was well written up and attracted considerable attention in Christian circles but when examined was found too full of anachronisms to be taken seriously. It was eventually discovered that the

original editor who published the story had "dressed up" a much more obscure account, received at third or fourth or fifth hand, of how an aeronaut had seen a wooden structure on the slopes of Ararat and, Russia being at war with Turkey at that time and Ararat being on the frontier, troops had been sent up to investigate. The truth of even this shred of detail was not established at the time and thereafter several of the journals which had featured the story published recantations.

This stage had hardly been reached, however, when in 1948 the Turkish Press published a statement by a Kurdish farmer named Reshit living near the mountain that he had discovered the Ark and that hundreds of local villagers had been up to see it. This, added to the Roskovitsky story, fired the imagination of a good many interested parties and before long plans were on foot for two expeditions, a British one under the leadership of Egerton Sykes, a retired Foreign Office official, and an American one under Dr. Aaron Smith. The immediate reaction from Russia was that these moves were cover for American spying activities on the mountain, which overlooks the Russian frontier, and this attitude was not helped by somewhat ill-informed items in the British Press to the effect that America was setting up a listening post on Ararat. Permission for the projected exploration was therefore refused by the Turkish Government. Perhaps they could hardly be blamed. They may have remembered that during the first World War that famous British agent, Lawrence of Arabia, was working with the archaeologist C. L. Woolley in the desert of Sinai, reputedly helping with his investigations into ancient remains, but actually, and secretly, reporting on Turkish army movements in the area. Eventually, however, they gave way and in 1949 Dr. Smith's party was busy on the mountain.

Sadly, they found nothing. Their search seems to have been confined mainly to the higher reaches on the assumption that the Ark landed on the peak. Some years later Dr. Smith was planning a helicopter search but this does not seem to have matured. He was followed in 1952 by the French business man Fernand Navarra who on his first visit met with no success. The Kurdish farmer Reshit who seems to have started all this could not be located—and despite many endeavours has never been found, nor yet any of the hundreds of villagers who supposedly saw the Ark with him in 1948!

After this things began to warm up. In 1954, an American, John Libi, made the first of six or seven ascents and searched the summit twice without finding anything. At about the same time Navarra was back and found a black shadow the shape of a ship under the ice, at 13,800 feet elevation. He paced out its length and found it to be three hundred cubits as in Genesis (without telling us which of the several cubits of antiquity he adopted.) The shape, he says, was "unmistakably that of a ship's hull". On a third visit, in 1955, he did make a concrete discovery—the first one of which tangible evidence has been brought away. He found quantities of large timber beams bearing evidence of hand-tooling, buried in the ice.

Lord James Bryce brought such a piece of hand-tooled timber home in 1876 and was laughed at for his pains, but Navarra had a tool that was not available in 1876. He submitted his piece of wood to the Carbon 14 test.

The Carbon 14 test is a means of determining the age of organic materials by measuring how much of a certain form of radio-active carbon, which is constantly diminishing since the death of the sample, still remains. The method was invented in 1958 and was hailed as infallible, although it is now known not to be so. At the time, however, it came just right for Navarra and the test showed that the wood was (he said), "exactly 4489 years old", which comfortably matches the date of the Flood according to Usher's chronology as given in English Bibles. That chronology is, however, woefully out-of-date; it is established that the Massoretic Hebrew text on which it is based was manipulated in early A.D. centuries; the Bible time periods and the demands of archaeological findings demand a date at least about 5300 years ago for the Flood. Subsequent tests by a number of research bodies, however, have given revised figures for the age of this timber ranging from B.C. 3000 to A.D. 560, so that one may be excused for attaching little importance to its alleged age. The validity of the Carbon 14 test depends upon the assumption that the intensity of cosmic rays reaching the earth has been constant throughout history and there is now considerable doubt whether this is so. The proximity of the timber to water, ice, and the sulphur compounds which are abundant on volcanic Ararat also affects the results so that the age of the sample is in considerable doubt.

Notwithstanding all this, the established fact of the presence of this buried timber above the Ararat snow-line does pose a problem. Someone has said "If it is not the Ark, what is it?". Navarra at first estimated there were fifty tons of timber lying beneath the ice; at a later visit he

advanced this to ninety. In 1974 Tom Crotser, leader of another series of expeditions, is reported as stating "*there's 70,000 tons of gopher wood up there*". If correctly reported, this is the kind of statement which does harm to the cause. 70,000 tons of timber would build at least ten Arks. The Navarra investigators have said that one of the beams is a hundred and fifty feet long. This, again if the statement is correct, should be a decided argument on the "pro" side of the case. A timber beam that length would have to be something like two feet square to allow reasonable handling without breakage and would then weigh something in the region of twelve tons. Such an object would be difficult enough to transport on level ground and the task of getting it up a 13,000 foot mountainside in one piece would seem about unsurmountable. The only practicable method of doing it would be to float it there, and M. Navarra would probably be the first to say that that is how it did get there. Trees capable of yielding such a single piece of timber are rare today; in the different climatic conditions obtaining before the Flood, they would have been much more common, and if the dimensions of this alleged super-beam could be reliably authenticated the explorers would have a definite point.

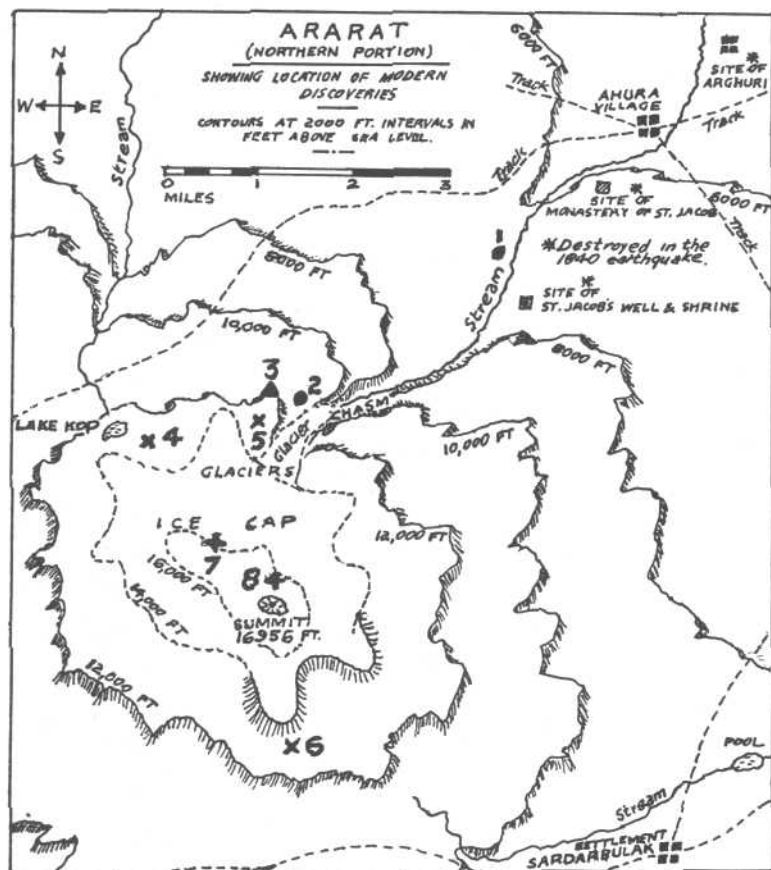
By 1969 Navarra, in conjunction with the American Ararat organisation known as Search Foundation Inc., had uncovered more timber and there were plans to melt many tons of glacial ice in order to reveal what really does lie below. (At a meeting of Turkish Government officials called to discuss this proposal, one remarked that if the Ark should actually be found to be there it would make Ararat the biggest tourist attraction in the world, at which a senior official shook his head and said "I'm worried it will lead to a spate of offences against the forestry laws. Once the locals start up their souvenir shops we won't have a tree left standing!) Up to the present this rather ambitious project has failed to mature but it has been established that the ship-like shadow below the ice which Navarra took to be the Ark is actually an area of black rock. But the buried timber remains an undisputed and unexplained fact.

John Libi, who made his first ascent in 1954, was still exploring in 1969 without finding anything spectacular. By then there were a baker's dozen of expeditions and explorers, almost exclusively American, and since the 1950's the mountain has hardly ever been free from climbing parties. From time to time the Turkish Government clamps down on operations for short periods for political reasons, but always the searchers return and take up the task with undiminished enthusiasm. At least five research

organisations have been set up, working more or less independently of each other, each with a substantial staff of experts, in addition to quite a few individuals working more or less on their own account. At times there have been as many as three distinct teams exploring the mountain, probably much to the satisfaction of the local Kurdish population who are called upon to supply guides, porters, beasts of burden and so on. Of the many names associated with all these efforts there can only be mentioned here those of Dr. Ralph

a complete and connected picture of what is going on, but it would appear that in the quarter century since 1949 there have been at least thirty or forty distinct searches and possibly more.

Towards the end of the 1960's a few more examples of the perhaps apocryphal stories came to light. An American newspaper published an account respecting a certain Russian major during World War 2, whose men flew over Ararat and re-discovered the ship reputedly found by Roskovitsky thirty years earlier. A few variant



#### KEY TO SITES

1. Lynch's boat-shaped area
2. " " "
3. The "Rock Ark"
4. Navarra's timber find 1955
5. Knight's timber find c. 1930
6. Bryce's timber find 1876
7. Parrot's large cross
8. Parrot's small cross

For 1, 2, 6, 7, 8 see Sept./Oct. issue.

For 3, 4, 5 see this issue.

For reference to Arghuri village, Monastery of St. Jacob, and St. Jacob's well, all destroyed 1840, see Sept./Oct. issue.

Modern Ahura village built subsequent to 1840 earthquake.

Crawford, minister; Dr. Clifford Burdick, geologist; Dr. L. Hewitt, botanist; Nicolas Van Arkle, climatologist; and Eryl Cummings, archaeologist. The latter has devoted more than thirty years to this investigation. This serves to show the wide range of technical endeavour that has been brought to bear on the search. The records of all these largely unconnected efforts are in no cohesive form, published in various books, periodicals and occasional notices in the world's Press so that it is virtually impossible to present

legends ascribe a similar discovery to U.S.A. pilots at much the same time. Still other narratives relate to alleged photos of the Ark taken at the time of the war and shown afterwards by, variously, Australians in England and Russians in Germany. Serious attempts have been made to trace these stories to their origins and ascertain what basis of truth, if any, lies behind them. Their net effect at present is to give fresh impetus to the search parties and ideas on where to look and for what to look.

During the 1970's the search has continued with unremitting vigour. It seems as if every nook and cranny of the huge waste of ice and volcanic rock is to be scrutinised for clues. The hardships of the task are immense; the devotion of so many to their ideal is only to be commended and the criticism that a great deal of money is being spent on this project which otherwise might be devoted to other very worthy Christian causes can quite reasonably be met with the reflection that a proved successful outcome would be a tremendous stimulant against current waning belief in the integrity of the Bible. Such an outcome might not and almost assuredly would not make much difference to modern irreligiousness; it is still true that "if they believe not Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe though one rose from the dead". And really to convince society at large it would be necessary to recover the Ark virtually intact and this after five thousand years is recognised by most of the search parties to be unlikely.

No useful purpose would be served at this juncture by more than a very brief survey of what has been established by these explorations. The work continues and no one can foretell what turn it will take in the future. Schliemann was ridiculed by all the world for his dogged belief that the legendary city of Troy had really existed and was not merely a Greek myth, but when after years of work he uncovered and revealed the ancient city as Homer had described it the ridicule suddenly ceased. There are many such instances in archaeological research. But it has to be admitted that so far the Ark has not been found.

Some of the alleged "sightings" have been shown to be due to natural features on the mountain. What appears to be the outline of a huge ship's hull has been seen from the air and photographed. As it appeared in the "Daily Telegraph" for 15th September, 1965, the "object", straddling the mountain side adjacent to a glacier-filled ravine, might very well have given rise to the various aeronauts' stories which have appeared during this century. It would appear that British geologists, upon critical examination of the photograph, have concluded that it is a freak of Nature produced on the rock surface by the abrasive action of ice. It is worthy of note in this connection that when Lynch explored the Great Chasm of Ararat in 1893 he found two similar areas, which he described as elliptical side valleys, measuring 350 by 200 yards, perfectly level, having a surface of sand and pebbles, lying parallel with the main ravine; he commented that they were evidently made by the erosive action of ice. This photograph might be one of them.

There is what has been called the "Rock Ark". From time immemorial it has been claimed that during fair weather the Ark could be seen at the top of the mountain and in past times the monks maintained a telescope in the plain below through which could be seen what appeared to be the bow of a ship projecting from the rocks. Present explorations have established that this object is in reality an outcrop of rock shaped, when seen from certain angles, very much like a ship. Without much doubt this piece of Nature's work has played its part in the local people's belief that the Ark survives at the top of the mountain.

The timber found by Bryce, Knight and Navarra is, however, real enough. The fact that these great beams are buried in the glacier means that they are old, but just how old is impossible to say with certainty. There are those who scoff at the idea that they could be as old as the Flood, but such scoffing is unwise. There is a submerged forest of ancient tree stumps in the shallow waters of Cardigan Bay, Wales, sometimes exposed at low water; it is calculated that these trees were living in 4000 B.C. nearly a thousand years before the Flood. But there could have been many much more recent activities on Ararat which could account for the presence of this timber. The descriptions given by the mountaineers who in 1883 and 1887, and early in this century, claimed to have seen and entered a great structure partially embedded in the glacier on Ararat, would be well satisfied by some kind of wooden building, and when one considers that this land has for centuries past been the scene of many wars and much fighting the idea of some kind of long deserted and forgotten fortress or lookout post cannot be ruled out.

But whether the Ark actually grounded on Ararat, Judi or Pir-Omar-Gudrun, or at some other place quite unsuspected and unknown, is of no real consequence. What does matter is the fact that the name "Mount Ararat" means something. It stands as a symbol of God's unshakable determination to preserve all which is good in the time when He rises up to destroy evil, and to bring that goodness forth into a new world where it may flourish and blossom and fruit. That is the lesson of the story of the Flood. The Divine Covenant with man, with the beasts and birds, with the earth itself, is a "covenant between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations." God has promised that the world shall not again be so devastated as to destroy all flesh, and that promise is our confidence in this modern day of apprehension and terror.

*To be concluded.*

## SIMON PETER — FISHER OF MEN

### 6. Pentecost

The room was very silent; they had been engaged in prayer for a long time and now they desisted, waiting quietly for they knew not what. They only knew that something momentous was about to happen. Peter had told them that; Peter, with his strangely new insight into the ways of their Lord, Peter, the new, calm, confident and resolute Peter, so unlike the old tempestuous and unpredictable fisherman they had known. He had reminded them of their departed Lord's words and he had said it would happen to-day. "*Tarry ye here at Jerusalem*" Jesus had enjoined them "*until ye be endued with power from on high*". So they had tarried; ten days it had been since the Lord left them to return to the heaven from which He had come, and now it was the Day of Pentecost, a Day of solemn religious observance. Jerusalem was full of Jews from all parts of the world, come to join in the ceremonies of this sacred time, for this was the Feast of Ingathering, when the first fruits of the harvest were ceremonially presented to God. It was also the day of the year when God gave the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai and Israel became the people of God, a first-fruits unto him. But now that Law had come to an end, for Christ had superseded it, "nailing it to his cross", and had formally rejected the people who for fifteen hundred years had been in training to receive him when He should come to them, and then, when He did come "knew not the time of their visitation", and rejected him. Where now were God's first-fruits, thought the disciples sadly as they sat in the quietude of that upper room, and what was to take the place of that dishonoured Law which had stood as the expression of God's covenant with his people through all their history and now was no more in his sight? Jesus at the Last Supper had spoken of a new covenant sealed by his own death for the remission of sins and He had also told the Pharisees that the Kingdom of God was being taken from them and given to a people who would bring forth its proper fruits. It was all very dark and mysterious but Peter had told them that to-day they would understand and the certainty in his tones carried conviction, so they waited in quietness.

A low whisper of sound, just perceptible against the stillness . . . the murmur of a summer breeze rustling the trees . . . the blowing of a strong wind around the house . . . the roar of a mighty tempest invading the room in which they were sitting and filling their ears with noise, yet

with no movement of their clothing nor feeling on their faces and hands. Instantly came to each mind words spoken to a teacher in Israel a long time ago; "*the wind bloweth where it listeth and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth. So is everyone that is born of the Spirit*". Were they even at this moment being born of the Spirit? Was this thing that was happening to them a manifestation of Divine power, fulfilling the promise Jesus so little a time ago made to them "*ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you*"?. Each head was bowed in reverence but each heart beat fast as they waited to experience the outcome of this wondrous thing.

The room was getting brighter; waves of light seemed to be impinging upon their closed eyelids. First one, and then another, looked up. A golden radiance, vibrating and pulsating as though it had life of its own, filled the room above their heads. Even as they watched in awe, the radiance seemed to reach down and rest upon each of them, a fiery aura joining each one to that dazzling light which blotted out the ceiling from their view. And with those rhythmic tongues of fire came power, a power that filled mind and body, enlightening them to understand things that had been so obscure and perplexing before, vitalising them so that they felt able to go out and dare all things for Jesus' sake. And when they lifted up their voices to praise God for what had happened they found that they were speaking words that they had never used before and talking of things that they had never understood before.

Peter, a transfigured Peter, was the first to grasp the practical implications of their experience. He led the little company, first in praise, next in prayer, and then, with something of his old impetuosity, motioned them to follow as he made for the street outside.

It was there, to the cosmopolitan crowd, drawn from "every nation under heaven", hasting to the Temple to play their part in the morning ritual of the Day of Pentecost, that the Christian Gospel was first preached. Those men stood and proclaimed the "wonderful works of God", not in their native Aramaic, but in the languages and dialects of all the people who were gathered to hear them. Many have been the discussions and arguments as to just what is implied by the power to "speak with other tongues" at this memorable

time, but the reaction of the hearers is enough to indicate the impression made upon them. "*Every man heard them speak in his own language*" "*how hear we every man in our own tongue wherein we were born?*" It is sometimes argued that since Greek was a well-nigh universal language throughout the Mediterranean countries at this time these statements have little or no meaning but this view does not take into account all the factors involved. Greek was certainly the customary language with the educated classes, and in the commercial, political, and "upper-class" social worlds, but among the peasantry and workers and slaves the native tongues were to a much greater extent in use. Thus Jesus and his disciples habitually spoke Aramaic and in the same way visitors from Egypt and Libya, and Roman Asia, would be more familiar with their own local patois. Those from Parthia and Elam and Arabia would speak entirely different and non-Greek languages. The conclusion is irresistible that the twelve disciples, on this occasion, whether they realised the matter or not, addressed the people in the tongues and dialects those people best understood. And the one who took the lead in all this was Peter.

The words attributed to the stalwart Galilean on this historic occasion have often been referred to as the first Christian sermon to be preached. It is certainly the first a synopsis of which has been placed on record. It is probable that Peter said a great deal more than is preserved in the second chapter of Acts, but what is preserved is full of significance. It is very possible that the other disciples said much the same as did Peter but in other tongues; an overruling guidance of the Holy Spirit in the choice of words cannot be ruled out here. Each overseas visitor would naturally gravitate to the speaker whose language he understood best. It might well be that Peter was the one out of all of them who did use his native tongue; in verse 14 he addresses the men of Judea and dwellers in Jerusalem, for whose benefit Aramaic would be the obvious choice. In masterly fashion he connected the phenomena they were witnessing with the words of the prophet Joel. In the last days, said Joel, God would pour out of his Spirit upon all flesh, and there would be prophecy and visions and dreams. Added to this there would be signs in the heavens, and the sun darkened. And salvation would be proclaimed for all who will. There is not much doubt that Peter saw in that day's happenings in the upper room the beginning of all that in history is to fulfil Joel's prophecy. He could not, at that moment, have any idea of the time that was to elapse before the words have their complete fulfilment, but he did see, as Paul saw later

on and so expressed himself to the men of Athens (Acts 17) that this Day of Pentecost was the beginning of all that was promised, that there and then God had begun to pour out of his Spirit, admittedly as yet to a strictly limited and small company, and they in consequence were now prophesying as was said of them. He might very reasonably have recalled the darkening of the sun which had occurred on the day of the crucifixion, the earthquake, the rending of the Temple Vail, the coming out of their tombs of certain holy men of old, as a fulfilment of the "signs from heaven" of Joel. With conviction, therefore, he could proclaim to the people of Jerusalem that the time had come for God to move towards the fulfilment of all that not only Joel, but other prophets as well, had predicted would take place at the appearance of Messiah. Even although it will not be until the coming Age of Christ's reign over the earth that all men without exception will experience their full and final opportunity to call upon the name of the Lord, in the light of full knowledge and understanding of what is involved, and so be saved, it is true, as Paul, again, said to those philosophers of Athens, that up to Pentecost God had suffered the times of man's ignorance, but from that moment calls upon all men everywhere to repent. So the pouring out of the Spirit and the consequent prophesying, and the outward signs accompanying these things, had a limited fulfilment and application back there in AD33, and will have a greater and universal one in the still future day when the Christ whom Peter preached takes to himself his great power and commences his reign over the nations.

But this was only the introduction to Peter's real thesis, the essential preliminary, the basis upon which his major message was to be built. Peter had something better than the prophets to talk about; he was going to preach Christ, and all that Christ was going to do for the sons of men. This reference back to the prophecy of Joel was for two reasons. First, it was to explain the enthusiastic fervour of the preachers and the fact that they were speaking in unusual tongues. Some of the bystanders had put that down to intoxication. Not so, said Peter, not so early in the morning; it was now only 9.0 a.m. and the sun had only been up three hours. This, he said, is a manifestation of the Holy Spirit and it is just what the prophet Joel said would happen. Second, it was to awaken the minds of those who listened to a consciousness of the fulfilment of Messianic prophecy in their own day. All the sons of Israel in those times were fully conversant with the predictions of the prophets and most of them believed that they would surely come to pass. What Peter had to insist now was that the day of

fulfilment had come and they themselves were the witnesses. There were none in Israel who did not long for deliverance, from the Roman yoke and from the power of Gentile nations, and to be once again a free theocratic nation as in the time of king David. Most of them believed in the coming Age when a son of David's line would sit on the throne of the Lord in Jerusalem and rule with justice and judgment for ever. So Peter took them through the magic words of the golden prophecy and brought them to its sublime culmination. *"It shall come to pass, that whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"*.

There he stopped, surveying the multitude for a moment the while his listeners waited, tense and expectant. So did he plunge into his real discourse. *"Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you... ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: WHOM GOD HATH RAISED UP...."*

The great truth was out! Peter had publicly proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus and made that great thing the central feature of all that he was going to say. He did not mince matters. *Ye crucified Christ; God hath raised him from the dead.* It says a great deal for Peter's manifest sincerity and the impression created by his blazing fervour that apparently no voices were raised in protest and the crowd continued to listen. They listened, while the supremely confident Apostle took them back again to their own Scriptures, our Old Testament, and reminded them of the prophetic words of David describing this very resurrection in all its details. David prophesied of Christ's resurrection; they all knew that well: in a swift transition back to the present Peter connected that prophetic insight with the One of whom he was now talking. *"This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses"*. And now, exalted to the heavens, and seated at the right hand of God the Father, He by his power has sent this manifestation of the Holy Spirit upon his followers in the sight of all men as a sign and a witness. The outward evidence to all Israel that Jesus of Nazareth had indeed survived death, had risen from the grave and was now possessed of all power in heaven and earth, resided in what they could see and hear in the faces and words of this band of men who had followed Jesus in life, had dispersed, panic-stricken, into hiding at the time of his arrest and execution, and had now come out boldly to proclaim *"He lives—we have seen and conversed with him"*. No wonder Peter concluded this appeal to his fellow-countrymen on that memorable day with the stirring assertion *"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that*

*God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ"*.

There is perhaps no wonder, either, that his hearers, or at least a great proportion of them, were convinced and conscience-stricken. *"Men and brethren"* they cried *"what shall we do?"* That expression "men and brethren" meant that they invoked the close relationship in which they all, people and Apostles alike, stood as fellow-heirs of the Law Covenant and joint-participants in the commonwealth of Israel. There was no animosity or resentment for the blunt manner in which Peter laid the blame for the death of Jesus at their doors. They accepted their guilt and by implication assented to the truth of the Apostle's exegesis of their ancient Scriptures. They put themselves unreservedly into the disciples' hands. *"Men and brethren, what shall we do?"*

The answer, of course, was what it has always been since in similar circumstances. *"Repent, and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ"*. That was all. There was to be no exacting of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth as was the standard laid down by their own Law, given by the hand of Moses at Sinai. God asked only repentance and conversion, and the slate was wiped clean. Of course that repentance and conversion involved the acceptance of Jesus Christ as Messiah, as the One that should come to bring righteousness and peace to a troubled world. It meant interpreting the prophecies in a new and clearer light. No longer were they to think of his coming in terms of a military conqueror who would drive out the Romans and restore Israel to her ancient glory without any thought of what was to happen to anybody else. They were now to think in terms of a world-wide redemptive plan under which the Messiah would eventually come to all men in the endeavour to save as many as could be or willed to be saved. Not only the living, but the long-past dead, were to have a place in this fruit of the Resurrection. *"The promise"* Peter told them *"is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call"* and that covers, according to Paul, all men, for God, he says *"now calleth all men everywhere to repent"*. For perhaps the first time in their lives those Jews standing there in Jerusalem, listening to the first Christian preacher and first Christian sermon, understood what their own prophet Isaiah had meant when he told their fathers that they as a nation were destined to become a light to the nations, to declare the salvation of God to the ends of the earth.

There were three thousand converts. It was a marvellous sequel to a wonderful day. Many of them must have returned to their home countries

during the next few weeks, their Pentecost pilgrimage ended, and that fact may have something to do with the admitted very early establishment of Christianity in so many parts of the Empire. In the meantime, and until they departed from Jerusalem, they, with the native converts, "continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and of prayers". Peter found himself at once, as it were,

at the head of a Christian community several thousand strong, a community exhibiting all the zeal and enthusiasm of the newly-converted, and all the necessity of instruction in the faith which that same newly-converted situation involved. In addition to the spirit of prophecy Peter undoubtedly had great need of the spirit of wisdom during the strenuous days which lay immediately ahead.

*To be continued.*

## ? THE QUESTION BOX ?

*"The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth to a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment; for all that do so are an abomination to the Lord"* (Deut. 22.5).

The question is asked whether the wearing of "slacks" by women in this modern day contravenes this prohibition, or should changed social customs be considered justification for ignoring it.

One or two relevant factors must be brought into focus at the outset. This prohibition was part of the Mosaic Law which was binding upon Israel but never upon any other nation and came to an end at the Cross so that it is certainly not binding upon Christians, as St. Paul has made clear. This however does not dispose of any moral content in the matter. If the practice was abominable in the Lord's sight in Moses' time then it must be equally abominable to-day, Mosaic Law or no Mosaic Law.

If the text is to be taken at its face value then the apparent reason for the prohibition would be the element of deception involved, the implication being that an ulterior and evil motive prompted the practice. Against this must be set the fact that at the time concerned there was very little difference between the outer garments of the two sexes and it is rather difficult to perceive any force in the text.

From a common-sense point of view it is hard to understand why this particular "crime" should be singled out as an abomination to the Lord when many far more heinous sins are left unmentioned. So far as modern customs go it is certain that the Lord is far more concerned with the inward condition of the heart than He is with the particular vagaries of current fashions adopted by the individual.

Looking at the text critically, it is observed

that the first clause does not specify a man's garments, but "*that which pertaineth*" to a man. The Hebrew word is *keli*, which is used many times in the O.T., rendered instrument, armour, vessel, bag, jewel, stuff, weapon; in general it denotes the appendages or ornaments of a man but never a garment. There is hardly room for any kind of deception here. Another material point is that although in the second clause the word for "woman" is the normal, *ishshah*, that for "woman" in the first clause is *ishsheh*, which does not mean "woman"; its significance is a sacrifice or offering made by fire. The word rendered "wear" is the verb "to be", "to exist", and quite different words are used for "wear" in the rest of the O.T. On this basis the verse might well be translated "A man's vessels (armour, instruments, ornaments, weapons) are not to be put upon a sacrifice, and a man shall not clothe himself in a woman's garment". This does not make much sense and it might well be that there is an allusion here to some ancient custom or practice of which the memory has not been preserved. One old commentator remarks that Maimonides, the famous 12th century Jewish scholar, said that the verse referred to certain idolatrous ceremonies practiced by the surrounding peoples and against which Israel was warned. If this be so it would give some meaning to the above translation and render the Divine prohibition more understandable. Any form of idolatry is an abomination to the Lord. And in such case the text would have no application to the present day and the Lord's attitude to current feminine fashion would remain unexpressed, except perhaps through the words of the Apostle Peter when he pointed out that the "imperishable jewel of a gentle and quiet spirit" is of much more importance to God than the particular style of outward adornment.

## THE SPIRIT OF FEAR

Practical dissertation  
on a well-known text

*"God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power and of love and of a sound mind"* (2 Tim. 1.7).

The apostle Paul was one of the greatest exponents of the Christian religion. Born a Jew, of the strictest sect of the Pharisees, instructed by the famous teacher Gamaliel, he was meticulous in the observance of the Jewish faith ("as touching the Law, blameless") and most zealous in the persecution of the first Christians, being an accessory at the martyrdom of Stephen. But when Christ appeared to him in a miraculous blaze of light on the Damascus Road, he did a complete volte-face. Never was there a more dramatic conversion. From that moment he served the Lord Jesus Christ and devoted his life entirely to the preaching of the Gospel and the upbuilding of the Christian church. Moreover, the man who was famous for his own spirit of dedication taught that this is the only way to serve God. He exhorted the brethren at Rome, (and we know the message is also for us,) to present their bodies "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God" (Rom. 12.1). This dedication would lead to that union with Christ which provides the answer to all man's needs of mind and spirit.

One of the most serious problems in the world today is mental illness. A third of all hospital patients in this country are psychiatric cases. Social reformers would have us believe that better social conditions mean happiness and mental stability but a few years ago it was reported that the country with the highest standard of living, Sweden, had also the highest suicide rate.

At times we all feel depressed. Life has its stresses and strains and it is to be expected that bereavement, illness, fatigue and the troubles of those near and dear to us may make us low-spirited, if only temporarily. But the more lasting, pathological depression—can a Christian really be overtaken by this? What has the word of God to say about its avoidance or cure?

It is generally accepted that the main causes of depression are guilt, fear, frustration and anxiety, leading to a sense of inadequacy and hopelessness. But why does man feel guilty, fearful, frustrated, anxious.

As soon as Adam sinned he was aware that he had done wrong. This is proved by his attempt to hide from God and then to blame Eve for his sin. Eve reacted in the same way and blamed the serpent. Even non-Christians know when they have done wrong and it is the attempt to push

this voice of conscience into the sub-conscious which often contributes to mental breakdown.

Fear, under control, is a good thing, as a warning of danger. But when it is unnecessary or exaggerated it is one of the most destructive forces in the world. People are fearful of so many things, of death, of want, of pain, of the loss of loved ones, of the hereafter. Many are afraid of fear itself, that they may be found to be cowards in the face of danger. Some are afraid of the supernatural, especially in these days when witchcraft is so widely practised.

Why do men feel frustrated? Mainly because they desire to do so many things which they cannot accomplish. They work long hours, only to find their hard earned money depleted by heavy taxes and inflation. They are ambitious and find that younger men are promoted before them. They want, perhaps, to do good and noble things to help their fellow men and are frustrated by bureaucracy, lack of funds, etc.

Anxiety results from any or all of the other causes of depression. The occasional anxious feeling due to immediate circumstances is the experience of everyone, but anxiety in medical terms lasts much longer and goes much deeper. If it is unchecked it can lead to the loss of that hope which is so necessary for man's well being. Only in the Scriptures, however, do we find a positive foundation for hope, whatever our condition. The psychoanalyst Jung has said "Among all my patients in the second half of life, there has not been one whose problem in the last resort was not that of finding a religious outlook on life".

The very antithesis of the state of disintegration above described is that peace of heart which is the gift of our Lord to his disciples. "*Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you . . . let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid*" (John 16.27).

Paul starts his letter to the Romans by proving that man had good reason to feel guilty. Very much to the point here is a recent remark in the Press that it is not guilt feelings but guilt itself which is the cause of the trouble. "*For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.*" The Jews had been given God's Law and the Gentiles had been given a conscience and the evidences of God in creation, but man did not wish to retain God in his image and the Jews, knowing the Law, continued to break it (Rom. Chs. 1 & 2). But Paul goes on to show that if one recognizes and confesses this guilt, help is at hand. All sin

is primarily against a Holy God, and as this God is all loving He has himself provided the remedy by sending his Son as an atonement. So the only way to be rid of these guilt feelings is to accept the truth of Paul's words "*There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus*" and "*being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus*" (Rom. 8.1 & 5.1). Peace within our hearts leads to a peaceful attitude towards others and the effects of this change of outlook are incalculable. When we feel guilty we endeavour, unsuccessfully, to justify ourselves, but an acceptance of the simple fact that through our faith in Jesus, God, the only true Judge, no longer holds us guilty, brings a psychological release which is creative instead of destructive.

The Apostle has a great deal to say about the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome sin. If we have really committed our way to the Lord we are promised "*Sin shall not have dominion over you*", and "*Now, being made free from sin and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness and the end everlasting life*" (Rom. 6.14 & 7.22). The Christian has the joy of knowing that Christ has overcome the Adversary and he can, by faith, enter into that victory.

Fear attacks all men. Many would not admit that they are afraid of death, but it is, after all, so final in the mind of the unbeliever. Because of this the writer to the Hebrews says that men are "*all their lifetime subject to bondage*" (Heb. 2.15). But to accept Paul's teaching of the continuing life of the Christian is to nullify such a fear. So, in accordance with the words of Jesus, "*Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die*", the Apostle speaks of a spiritual life which begins with one's consecration and will never end (John 11.26, Rom. Ch. 8). Physical death is experienced as a momentary loss of consciousness before the Christian's full hopes are realised. So, according to Paul, fear of death no longer exists for the Christian.

What about the fear of pain? Pain is always unpleasant and unnatural but one of the hardest things to bear is that it seems to be purposeless. But for the child of God all things have a purpose and strength is given for every trial. Suffering produces character and sympathy for others and, if endured joyfully as permitted by God for our spiritual welfare it brings us nearer to the Lord who "*learned obedience by the things which He suffered*" (Heb. 5.8). This must be very important when we notice that the Apostle expressed his desire for this fellowship of suffering in the same sentence in which he said he wanted to "*know the power of his resurrection*" (Phil. 3.10). If we suffer with him we shall also reign with him. He

who has presented his body a living sacrifice will rejoice in this opportunity to demonstrate his faithfulness and while this does not diminish the pain it leaves the mind in a state of peace. Paul, who experienced more suffering than most of us are asked to undergo sums up the position by saying "*I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us*" (Rom. 8.18). Above all we have the example of our Beloved Lord "*Who for the joy that was set before him endured the Cross*" (Heb. 12.2).

We have many Scriptural answers to the fear of want. "*Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before you ask him*" (Matt. 6.8), and Paul, who knew how to abound and to suffer need, wrote "*My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus*" (Phil. 4.19). If we seek first the Kingdom of God all these things will be added unto us.

We may fear the loss of loved ones. This is a very natural fear but God has promised to care for the widows and the fatherless and our knowledge of God's plan, not only for the Church but for all men, reassure us. He has promised to be with us to the end of the way and we can safely trust him, whatever the future may hold.

Thank God we have no dread of the next life, which promises nothing but joy as we look forward to the time when we shall sin no more, when we shall be used in the work of the New Age and we shall see our Father face to face.

Need we be afraid of being afraid? Remember the timid disciples cowering in secret for fear of the Jews and suddenly finding the courage through the power of the Holy Spirit to face even martyrdom. To quote Paul again, "*I can do (endure) all things through Christ who strengthens me*" (Phil. 4.13).

The forces of evil, whatever form they take, hold no terrors for the Christian who is equipped with the whole armour of God. We are told that we shall be able to stand against all the wiles of the Adversary because Christ was manifested to destroy the works of the Devil.

Romans 8.28 is surely the answer to any sense of frustration. If all things are working together for good, then "*whatever is, is best*". The Christian has committed his life to an all wise, all loving Creator and his only desire is to please him. Therefore he has no wishes of his own to be frustrated. Selfish desires and ambitions are put to death as he accepts the will of the Lord.

Any feeling of inadequacy or inferiority is also excluded since the Christian has confessed his frail nature and knows that God does not condemn him but has accepted his sincere devotion. How can one feel inferior when he has the assur-

ance of John "Now are we the sons of God"? Yes! in spite of the sin which so easily besets us. (because of the weakness of our faith), in God's sight we are his sons and we can humbly claim this relationship now.

If we accept the Scriptural antidote for guilt, fear and frustration there is no opportunity for that deep underlying anxiety to develop. Every day is lived in a spirit of peace, accepting all things as God's perfect will, casting all our care upon him for He careth for us.

The very necessary condition for a faith like

Paul's is a commitment like Paul's: — "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind . . . I press toward the mark for the prize of the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3.14).

It is illuminating that the words holy, whole and health are very closely allied in derivation. Therefore a holy (dedicated) man may enjoy a whole (integrated) and healthy mental, moral and spiritual life.

Let us thank God that we have "the mind of Christ".

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## SAVIOURS ON MOUNT ZION Exposition of prophecy

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*"And saviours shall come up on Mount Zion to judge (rule) the mount of Esau: and the kingdom shall be the Lord's" (Obad. 21).*

Who are these "saviours", and to what phase of the Divine Plan does this foreview of the prophet Obadiah refer? A brief look at the background of his book is necessary before essaying an answer.

Obadiah lived at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians and the beginning of the Captivity, and was contemporary with Jeremiah. The people of Edom, descendants of Esau and therefore of kindred race to the Jews, had actively assisted the Babylonians in their offensive against Judea, and the theme of Obadiah's prophecy is the certainty of Divine judgment upon Edom for this treacherous breach of the relationship. The first sixteen verses of this short book consist of a passionate denunciation of Edom and an assurance that the day of the Lord would certainly come, when retribution would be exacted. In vs. 17-21 the mood changes; the prophet turns his eyes as it were upon Jerusalem and Judea, ruined and desolate, and proclaims his conviction that deliverance will surely come; "*Upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness . . . and the house of Jacob shall be a fire . . . and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau*". Verses 19-20 give a geographical summary of the territories which shall be gained and possessed in consequence of this deliverance and the whole account is quite reminiscent of the victorious position of restored Israel at the end of this world-age when God moves in to establish the purified and converted nation in its own land for ever.

Before considering to what extent the events of the end of the Age do figure, if at all, in Obadiah's vision, the basic reality has first to be considered. Does history show that this threatened doom has fallen upon the Edomites and did Jerusalem become the kingdom of the Lord in consequence? If this can be shown measurably to have been the case and yet some features of the foreview unmistakably wait for a final fulfilment then it is with confidence that a reasoned second and greater application can be made. In such case the details of the historical event are properly used to foreshadow the more momentous details of the fulfilment to come.

The central factor is the coming of "saviours" to Mount Zion. These are to rule Esau, to administer the kingdom of the Lord, and restore the territorial integrity and power of Israel. This word "saviours" (*shaphat*) is the term used to describe the "judges" who ruled Israel before the days of the monarchy, men who rose up in the power of the Spirit of God, who by reason of faith in God were able to deliver Israel from her enemies. Only when Israel was in a contrite and repentant attitude of heart were such men raised up and only in the power of national faith did they achieve their victories. This then is the principle to be looked for in the application of this prophecy.

There is one period in the later history of the Jews when these conditions could be said to obtain. When the people returned from Babylon with Ezra to restore their homeland as a vassal province under Persia they found that the Edomites had begun to infiltrate into the southern areas of Judea on account of increasing pressure from an immigrant people, the Nabatheans, who were occupying Edom proper. (The Nabatheans

survived there until Roman times.) The old enmity persisted but Judea was subject to Persia and for a long while there were no signs of any realisation of Obadiah's prediction. The dominion of Persia gave way to that of Greece, and under the Syrian-Greek oppression the lot of Jewry grew steadily worse. Until, in the year 168 B.C., nearly four centuries after the Restoration from Babylon, the cruelties of the infamous Antiochus Epiphanes sparked off the patriotic uprising known as the Maccabean revolt. One fiercely nationalistic family, of five brothers, with their father, Mattathias the Hasmonean, raised the standard of liberty in the name and strength of the God of Israel. Their initial successes brought a Syro-Greek army of 50,000 warriors against 3,000 Jews. The Syrians were defeated and decimated. Next came another army of 65,000 including a large contingent of Edomites and these too were completely routed by the Maccabean force of 10,000 men. Five years after the initial revolt Judas Maccabeus found himself at the head of an independent Jewish State.

His first act was to rebuild, purify and reconsecrate the Temple, which had been defiled and ruined by their Syrian overlords. His next was to annex by conquest those outlying lands which had once belonged to Israel and which are just those specified by Obadiah—Edom (Esau) in the south, the coastlands to the east held by the Philistines, Samaria, Ephraim, and Galilee to the north and Gilead to the east. Vss. 19-20 of Obadiah's foreview had at least one fulfilment in the successes of those stirring days.

Although now a sovereign State, Judea had no king. The Maccabeans were of the priestly line, of the tribe of Levi, and at the first they would not arrogate to themselves the title of king. The Lord, they said, was Israel's king. For sixty years or so the Jewish State was a theocracy and the High Priest was the virtual ruler of the land. The Law of Moses was upheld and men began to speak anew of the coming of Messiah and the day of Israel's triumph. Saviours, judges, indeed had come up on Mount Zion and it looked that the kingdom was indeed going to be the Lord's. And Edom had been absorbed into Judea; there was no more a nation of Edom. Up to this point the prophecy of Obad. 17.21 had been literally fulfilled.

Sadly, Judas made one big mistake. In the effort to insure against further attacks, he concluded a treaty of mutual assistance against aggression with Rome, which at that time had no particular interests in the Middle East. It was a treaty as between equal partners; Rome was astute enough to realise that it might be as well that fighting men of the Jews' calibre were better

on their side than against them. So Jewish ambassadors accredited to the Court at Rome represented Judea in the capital of the Roman empire. But this involvement with the kingdoms of this world led in time to increasing trouble at home. The first high devotion to God and reliance upon God began to be sullied by intrigue and counter-intrigue, plotting and self-seeking, until the fifth Maccabean leader in the succession, Aristobulus, renounced the theocratic basis of the State and proclaimed himself King of Judea. For forty years Judea was ruled by kings—and one queen, Alexandra, for a short time—and then the Romans came and annexed the entire country to the Empire.

So Obadiah's prophecy was fulfilled in the letter but not in the spirit. Saviours had certainly appeared in Zion and for a short time the kingdom was the Lord's. Edom had been destroyed. There was holiness in Jerusalem—a ritual holiness in conformity with the Mosaic Law. But these things did not endure. The "saviours" did not save finally and permanently; within a century Jewry was as much in bondage to the Gentiles as ever. Jerusalem did not become holy in the sense that Joel had foreseen when he said "*then shall Jerusalem be holy and there shall no alien pass through her any more*" (Joel 3.17). The kingdom was not really that kingdom of God which Daniel declared would never pass away (Dan. 7.14). And because there are these manifest deficiencies in the primary fulfilment we are justified in looking for another fulfilment in a yet future day when all these things will be true. The historical reality of Obadiah's foreview thus becomes a picture-analogy to provide a set of guide-lines for this greater and more important fulfilment at the end of the Age.

Jerusalem becomes all Israel, restored to the land and struggling to maintain a precarious existence in the midst of hostile nations. To this "Mount Zion" come the "Saviours", men who, like the judges of olden time following the Exodus and entry into the Land, have been raised up by God to lead and defend the nation. Those judges of old only appeared when the nation had repented of apostasy and returned to God. So now; these modern-day leaders of Israel will come forth when Israel is in the mood to abandon the policies of this world and come to God in humble reliance that He will defend. "*I will restore thy judges as at the first*" He says through Isaiah (Isa. 1.26) and, more vitally, by Zechariah "*the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the Lord of Hosts their God. 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" (Zech. 12.5-6). This word "governor" (*alluph*) means a leader consecrated to his mission by an anointing. It fits well the Scriptural intimation that in the end of this Age the old "heroes of faith" of Old Testament days will appear again on earth to guide their nation through its final ordeal of faith. They are not kings, for the Lord alone will be "king over all the earth in that day" (Zech. 14.9), but they will be saviours, deliverers, national leaders as the Maccabean patriots were saviours and deliverers, and, like them, but in a far greater and in a permanent sense, will bring deliverance to the nation and institute a condition of perpetual holiness.

What about the Edomites? Judas Maccabeus and his fellows destroyed the Edomite nation as such and absorbed the remnants of its people into the Jewish polity. Edom as a nation dropped out of history after that. The other equally hostile nations were defeated by the Maccabeans and rendered powerless to interfere with the new sovereign State, but, unlike Edom, they continued as nations. What is the corresponding factor at the end of this Age?

One of the remarkable aspects of all Old Testament presentations regarding the final gathering of enemies against restored Israel at the end of the Age, an enmity which is resolved by the direct intervention of God for the deliverance of his ancient people, is that although many varied nations and peoples are named, the Semitic Arabs are conspicuous by their absence. Thus in Ezek. 38/39, the most noteworthy of these prophecies, virtually the whole of the world, as represented by the total of nations near and far then known, is included in the list, but not the Arab peoples. In the light of the existing modern political position one would have expected them to be in the forefront, but it is not so. God promised Abraham that the descendants of his son Ishmael would not be forgotten in the final disposition of things; they also were to be blessed and become a great nation. Esau received as part of his father's patriarchal blessing the assurance that a time would come when the yoke of Jacob would be removed from his neck, (Gen. 27.40), and that has not happened yet; neither, with the present extinction of his people, can it happen until the end of

time when the Divine kingdom is established upon earth. The territories occupied by the immediate descendants of these two men of Abrahamic stock are among those defined in the promises to Abraham as coming within the boundaries of the land promised to him and his seed after him for an everlasting possession, another promise which cannot be fulfilled until the end of the Age when the "saviours" appear to lead Israel to her destiny. In the light of all this is it feasible to think that, despite the present political situation which points so strongly to the contrary, these blood-brothers of Israel might yet come to some form of understanding and union which will both honour the promises of God and at the same time explain their apparent absence from the scene of conflict when the forces of world evil unite to oppose both Israel and the incoming kingdom of God. It might well be the first work of the "saviours" to bring about such an alliance in the same way that the Maccabean saviours brought the enmity of Edom to an end by fusing the remnant of the Edomites with the polity of Jewry.

If this be so, the prophetic analogy is complete. It only remains to wait for the passage of time and events to demonstrate whether the supposition is well founded. The present enmity between Jew and Arab is only a modern development. For many centuries during the Early and Middle Ages of this era the two races lived and intermingled together in perfect amity and between them were responsible for many of the trappings of civilisation which, coming from them into Europe, are now taken by Western peoples as a matter of course. What happened once could happen again. The Jewish and Moslem faiths are both rooted in the same historical foundation; they both worship the same God and revere the same ancestors. It may well be that the re-appearance on earth of those ancestors to administer the Kingdom of God upon earth is the catalyst that is wanted to reconcile these peoples' differences and effect a peace that at present is manifestly beyond the powers of the wisest of earth's politicians. Perhaps that is why Obadiah says that saviours will come to Mount Zion to rule the Mount of Esau—that is the true meaning of the word the A.V. renders "judge"—so that both peoples come under the beneficent sway of the "governors of Judah".

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Man is created for union with the living Word, and except in union with him he is not in a true living state.

F. D. Maurice 1805-1872.

"Seeing that we are all ordained to be citizens of the one Everlasting City, let us begin to enter into that way here already by mutual love."—*Old Elizabethan prayer.*

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