



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

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

Vol. 74, No. 1

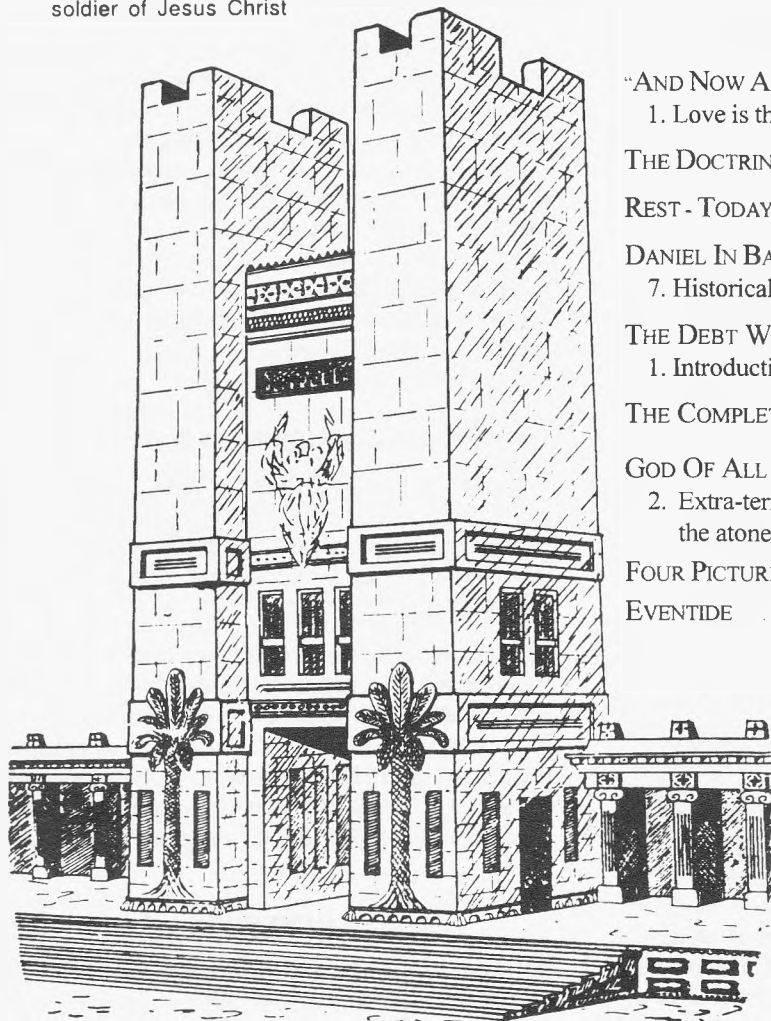
JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1997

Published January 1st

Next issue March 1st

CONTENTS

"AND NOW ABIDETH..."	
1. Love is the principle thing	3
THE DOCTRINE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD	5
REST - TODAY	8
DANIEL IN BABYLON	
7. Historical Interlude	11
THE DEBT WE OWE	
1. Introduction	13
THE COMPLETENESS OF THE BODY	16
GOD OF ALL SPACE	
2. Extra-terrestrial life and the atonement	17
FOUR PICTURES	21
EVENTIDE	23



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

*This Journal is sent free
of charge to all who are
genuinely interested, on
request renewable annually
and is supported by the
voluntary gifts of its readers*

Published by
Bible Fellowship Union
4 Manor Gardens, Barnstone,
Nottingham NG13 9JL, England

Bible Study Monthly

FOUNDED 1924

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

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

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

Chairman: A. O. HUDSON (Milborne Port)

Editor & Secretary: D. NADAL (Nottingham)

Treasurer: R. J. HAINES (Gloucester)

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

An Ebenezer Stone - "*Hitherto the Lord has helped us*" (1 Sam. 7.12).

It was a common theme among the prophets and poets of Israel that they looked back in their history to re-discover how God had forgiven and delivered them and how He continually protected and blessed them abundantly in past days. This could have been a depressing review because the people of Israel very frequently disobeyed God's laws and reaped the obvious consequences. It was not so but a joyful testimony to the compassion and goodness of God. His people let him down badly but He never let them down. Those same prophets and poets not only looked back but looked forward to a time when the people of Israel would be fully gathered in their own land, flourishing and prosperous; leading the nations in the worship of God. Neither the past nor the future was all 'gloom and doom'. Recognition and repentance of sin in the past and present were vital to progress in the future, but they could never be a cause for utter despair. There was reason for praise and thanksgiving not depression. That was a good reason for trusting God when all around seemed to be collapsing. When Jesus came into the world, outwardly it may not have seemed to be a very auspicious time to be born, least of all for one who was to be king and ruler of the nations. He came to very humble and insignificant surroundings without any worldly glamour and splendour. But quietly the great Creator of the Universe had everything under control working all things out for the destiny of his son, his people and all mankind. History has recorded the facts that reveal this to be so. Although fearful rulers tried to destroy him, faithful watchers waited and were ready to acknowledge him.

As we enter a New Year, we too must be among the faithful watchers. We too must sing praises to our God for the way He has led us in spite of our own weakness. We too must go forward with prophets and poets looking beyond the consequences of human selfishness and in-

competence into the Kingdom of God. He has always placed a limit on the downward trend in this world and there must come a time when He will speak peace and reconciliation to a creation destroying itself.

The laws of that Kingdom are clearly laid down in the Scriptures. It is our privilege to know them and practise them, now in 1997. It is our joy to show bewildered and shattered men and women, boys and girls around us, that compassion and righteousness, truth and beauty are not forgotten qualities of the past but part of the future starting now.

NOTICES

Gainsborough House, Milborne Port.

The Bible Fellowship Eventide Trust, a parallel organisation to the Bible Fellowship Union runs this Christian retirement centre, primarily for those sympathetic with the view expressed in this journal. It now has several vacancies.

Gainsborough House welcomes friends for country holidays and short stays in single and double guest rooms. It is situated on the west side of a delightful village, 100 miles south west of London. Readers considering moving to a retirement home are invited to write for details to the Secretary: Mr W. Simmons, 9 Green Hill Close, High Wycombe, Bucks. HP13 5QD Telephone: 01494 533237

RENEWALS

All readers from whom we have not heard since last July should have received a pink renewal notice in November/December issue. It will be appreciated if any who have not yet done so will let us know their wishes without delay. We are concerned to continue despatching the 'Monthly' to all who definitely wish to receive it but we do not want to incur the cost of sending it to anyone who is no longer interested.

T. Holmes

“AND NOW ABIDETH . . .”*A reflection of studies
in 1 Cor. 13***1. Love is the principal thing**

In a former series some attention was given to the significance of two Greek words *Agape* and *Phileo* — which in many modern versions are translated by our one word “Love”. It was therein sought to show that the early Church was compelled to give these two words specific definitions of their own. So much new light and understanding of the heavenly verities was breaking into their sanctified consciousness that the old words had to become the bearers of this wealth of truth, and do service for nobler purposes than they had served before.

To the Early Church the *Agape* was expressive of the Love of God, that mighty force which was putting through the great Redemptive and Restorational Plan for the recovery of man from sin and death. Meantime it was the power which enabled men of different races and temperaments to dwell together in unity — and to sink themselves and their varied interests into the preparatory stages of that Plan. It formed the bond of common citizenship in the heavenly polity, and the link of brotherhood in that wider family relationship. Under God this was yet to embrace heaven and earth. When the Love of God was thus shed abroad in their hearts they accounted it a spark from that same flame which, in a coming day, will consume all impurity and unrighteousness and refine all things that are refinable.

Similarly the word *Phileo* had taken on a wider meaning than the Greek classics had given it, and had come to stand for a brotherhood no longer circumscribed by blood relationship. The Apostles cut right through tribal and patriotic boundaries and gave to every believing man, regardless of ancestry, the right hand of fellowship in Christ.

But it is the wider conception of the *Agape* that is to be the theme of this present study.

The *Agape* has been compared with those various “other things” with which Paul contrasted it in the course of his argument — those various other ways of life — formulated and fostered by the philosophic minds of Greece and the Orient. Paul had set the *Agape* very deliberately over against the occult knowledge and the cultic mysteries of Greece and Babylonia, together with the Mithraism of Persia, and claimed for it that it was by far a more excellent way of life and happiness. He had also placed the *Agape* over against the *Charismata* endowments of the infant Church, and claimed for it superiority over

these, heaven-conferred though they were! To say the least, Paul proclaimed it to be the better way. Time, at last, will show it to be the only way.

This contrast with these “other things” provides a background for the present survey. When, therefore, we are considering the elements of which the *Agape* is composed, we can ask the question, “What place had the elements in the Grecian, the Persian, or the Christian way of life? How would they fit into the experience of those who pursued these ways of life?” We can also ask what place have these elements in the way of life of the saints who have received their spark of *Agape* from God? In this way we shall be able to place these seemingly simple graces over against the attitudes of heathen priests, of cultured philosophers, and the rulers of this present world, and learn how Heaven evaluates these things as of transcendently greater worth than all the thrones and crowns and religious privileges of which this world can boast.

More than that, in the universal scale of things the simple practice of Love will be found of greater potential worth than all the finely-phrased odes and plays of the Greek or any other Age. The simply-phrased but fervent exhortation of the Christian minister, beseeching his attentive hearers to put on love, will be found, when the tale is told, to have contributed more towards the moral cleansing of the world than all the fine-spun phrases of golden pens or silvery tongues the world has ever known. Even if not immediately effective it is a contribution positive in nature, in conformity with the outlines of the Great Plan of recovery, which can never fail.

Coming now to consideration of the text, it reads, “*But now abideth faith, hope, love; these three . . .*” “but now abideth . . .!” These three are to be placed in contrast with certain other things spoken of in the foregoing context. Paul has referred to things that would not “abide”: of these he says, “*they shall be done away . . . they shall cease . . . it shall be done away.*” Presumably the abiding things are intended to be set in contrast with the things that are to pass away. Because of this the Church’s future witness was to be affected by her growth in grace and not by demonstrations of her automatic *Charismata*. Thus, when these gifts of “prophesying” and of the immediate use of “tongues” etc., were withdrawn, the

Church's life would begin to express itself more naturally in the development of faith, hope and love; because of this, those who were drawn to her ranks by pursuits of the miraculous would tend to fall away, and in this way her assemblies would be purified, her true children edified and beautified by grace and truth.

Now it ought to be obvious that though Paul asserted that knowledge (of a kind) would pass away (verse 8) he did not intend his readers to understand that all knowledge would pass away, giving place to a state of general ignorance in the Church. Even the graces which were to abide require knowledge as their foundation-stones. There cannot be faith without knowledge, nor hope. And most certainly there cannot be any *Agape* without knowledge of the Divine intention to rescue the world from sin and death. Hence though Paul does not specifically mention knowledge of this kind as an abiding thing, it is obvious that it must abide, and abound also, as the groundwork of all "these three". We must therefore assume that an increasing measure of Christian knowledge, diligently sought by study of the Word, is pre-requisite and essential to continuance in faith, hope and love. In an illustrative sense knowledge is the soil of which — in part — the *Agape* must grow. The same is also true of faith and hope. But as faith and hope, in a certain sense, are both constituent elements of the *Agape* (see v. 7) it will not be necessary to discuss their outgrowth from the soil of knowledge separately. As for the all-embracing Master-grace, this is knowledge transmuted to maturity and fragrance of character through its relationship to every sub-ordinate grace of which Love is composed. In the same way that no floral fragrance or beauty can exist without the prior existence and use of soil, so also there can be no fragrance of Love without the existence and right use of sanctifying knowledge. Let us try to work this out.

Every constituent element of Love must express itself in some form of service or activity. They do not stand for mere abstractions or even states of mind alone. Even those which are set out from the negative point of view — "love envieth not" — have a positive aspect the opposite of that stated in the text. That being so, there must be some act in which each element of Love finds suitable expression. Behind every act accordant with Love, there must be motive and intent. Behind motive and intent there must be understanding and comprehension of the why and

wherefore of the act. That brings us right back to our antecedent state — our knowledge of the need for such an act.

In so far as the *Agape* is concerned God had stated why there is need for IT to act. Man is fallen under sin, and cannot extricate himself. Because God knows the need for help is great, He has made certain moves to meet that need. Behind all God's kindly acts are his gracious motives and intents; behind these motives and intents is the knowledge of the need. This same reasoning holds true in our own world, with all its happenings. To call forth a kindly act we must have come to sense a need, we do the kindly thing to meet that need, hence our knowledge of that need becomes the antecedent of the act. Were we to be questioned why we did the kindly thing we would say we knew the need and the opportunity was there. It would be quite enough to say we knew of that need, and how to meet the need.

In association with the Lord in things pertaining to his Father's Plan this relationship of prior knowledge to both motive and act holds good all the way. Jesus warned us what to expect from our contemporaries. The course of this present world being antagonistic to our own creates many needs, which means many opportunities to do the kindly thing. To have been fore-warned means that we have fore-knowledge of what to expect. Hence we are primed in advance, to be on the alert to see or sense another's need. In God's ordinance of affairs it is his desire that we do the kindly thing when we sense its need. There is here a two-fold reason for the kindly act. First, we know a need exists; next, we know it pleases God for us to meet that need. Now, if we are questioned why we do the deed, we have this two-fold reason to offer in reply. Furthermore, inasmuch as we have been taught that each kindly deed will react upon our own hearts and minds and leave behind a deepened impression of the Divine graving-tool there-on, we find yet another reason for our act. As we ponder on truth which we have learned, we see that our kindly act is a minor victory won for righteousness in the age-long conflict between right and wrong — evil and good — sin and righteousness, and is thus a contribution to the over-all effort required to overthrow the wrong.

It is because we have come to KNOW that these daily struggles and victories, with their resultant deepening of character, are the Divine means of preparing the instrument of mercy and righteousness,

by which He has proposed to bring in the *Agape* way of life in the coming Age, that these little happenings take on their measure of importance and value. It is because we have learned of the world's great need, and of the Divine intention to meet that need in this very particular way that we have been led to consecrate ourselves to the Divine Will, and submit ourselves daily to the pressure of the graving-tool in readiness for the day and hour when God will begin to use us to meet that need. Thus each degree of growth in this or that element of the *Agape* in the heart of any child of God is a contribution to the diffusion and establishment in the earth of the mighty motive force with which God intends to bring in the perfect way of life.

The knowledge we possess is thus the antecedent factor to everything we do and say in our service for the Lord, and this abides as the groundwork of our faith and hope and love. Only thus can faith be faith and not credulity; only thus can hope be hope, not wishful expectation; and only thus love can be love,

not mere sentimentality. A knowledge such as this, devoted to such ends, can never become "puffed up", nor inflated with a sense of its own importance. The objective before it is too big to gender pride. The very immensity of the conflict between Right and Wrong, and of the forces and powers engaged therein, is enough to make us realise that God also is equal to the task and that we need his constant care to help us in our way today.

It is knowledge such as this that make us long for the companionship of our Lord Jesus every day, and to find his resurrection power working in us all the time. Without this knowledge we would never yearn to share in His sufferings, nor long to participate in that special resurrection from the dead. Nor could we live in hope that the great oath-bound promise would ever be fulfilled or that the suffering nations would be blessed.

Our knowledge must abide, for out of it our faith and hope and love must grow.

(To be continued)

A. O. Hudson THE DOCTRINE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

In the wisdom of God men could not begin to understand His purpose for humanity until after the lapse of ages they looked back upon the course of history and related that to the revealed intentions of God. Although Abraham was given the Divine promise "In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed" there was little indication how and in what manner that promise would be fulfilled. It was not until the deepest thinkers of the Hebrew nation began to see for themselves the evil results of human rulership without God that they realised the inevitability of a Divine intrusion into human affairs in terms of a universal Kingdom which would rectify injustice, abolish evil, and bring in everlasting righteousness. That was the modest beginning from which our present understanding of the Kingdom of God has been developed.

The earliest definite view of this coming Kingdom was that of the eighth century B.C., when prophets like Isaiah foresaw a future Golden Age, in which "a King shall reign in righteousness and princes rule in judgement" (Isa. 32. 1), "The desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose" (Isa. 35. 1), "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb . . . and a little child shall lead them" (Isa. 11. 6), "Every man shall

dwell under his own vine and fig tree, and none shall make them afraid" (Mic. 4. 4). This transformation of the earth was to be achieved. Isaiah foretold, by the exaltation to power of a righteous people, purified through suffering and aflame with missionary ardour for the conversion of all nations. Two centuries later, Jeremiah and his fellow-seers stressed the need for individual repentance from sin and personal holiness of life as a necessary element in the ideal Divine Kingdom, and so laid the foundation for the much later preaching of Christ. Then during the Babylonian captivity Daniel spoke of a coming kingdom upon earth before which all the powers of this world would vanish away, and the "people of the saints of the Most High" would possess the kingdom "for ever and ever" (Dan. 7. 18). He pictured a time when Messiah would come, exalt His faithful people to association with Himself, raise the dead of past ages, and destroy all evil in a cataclysm likened to devouring fire.

So far the doctrine of the Kingdom of God had revolved around the chosen nation of Israel and was confined to the idea of a better and righteous administration of the world as it now is. Although the resurrection of the dead was expected there was no

clear understanding of God's purpose in introducing the kingdom upon earth or of its sequel in the extinguishing of sin and death. It was in the two or three centuries immediately preceding Christ's Advent that this deeper significance began to be appreciated and with it some understanding that the coming Messiah was to be, not merely a political and military leader who would deliver the Jews from their enemies and seat Himself for ever upon the restored throne of David, but a deliverer who was destined to reign until no trace of evil remained in the earth. "*For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea*" (Hab. 2. 14). This development in thought was the fruit of that period of intense religious experience through which the Jewish people passed after their return from Babylon, and it culminated at the time of Christ's birth in a very general belief that the time of deliverance was at hand.

In this time the Jews were disappointed. The hoped-for kingdom was not established, they were not delivered from the power of the Gentiles, and in fact their own national existence came to an end and they were dispersed among all nations. The age-old hope of Israel seemed doomed to frustration. The message of Jesus, however, opened a new avenue of thought — that the Kingdom, although it must surely eventually come to earth just as it was expected, is first of all to be realised in a spiritual sense in the hearts and lives of Christ's own followers, these latter becoming fitted by virtue of their lives' experiences in the Christian way to be God's "ministers of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5. 18-20) to all men when the earthly Kingdom eventually is introduced.

The Advent of Jesus, therefore, cast the hope and expectation of human reconciliation to God in an entirely new light. No longer was the Kingdom thought of as being an exclusively earthly one, and the scope of Divine salvation limited to this planet. Jesus Christ "*brought life and immortality to light through the gospel*" (2 Tim. 1. 10) and added to the age-old hope of an earthly Paradise the Christian realisation of a heavenly counterpart. Therefore in the writings of the New Testament, particularly in the theology of the Apostle Paul, we find that the great hope set before the Christian disciple of Christ is that of a resurrection to spiritual life like to that of Jesus Christ Himself, and eternal association with Him in His future activities, particularly in the education and conversion of the world of men when, at the Second Advent of Christ, the stage is set for world conversion.

This distinction between the heavenly and the earthly aspects of the Kingdom was obscured during the early centuries of the Christian era by developments of thought leading in other directions. The primitive Church expected that the Second Advent would take place in their own time, and with the recurrent disappointment of this hope, and an increasing realisation that in a spiritual sense the Kingdom of God was already come to the believer ("*The Kingdom of God is within you*" Luke 17. 21; "*God hath translated us into the Kingdom of His Son*" Col. 1. 13), the sharp outline of belief in the material Kingdom upon earth was lost. By the end of the fourth century the influence of philosophy and mystic methods of Scripture interpretation had — within the confines of organised ecclesiastical Christianity at any rate — superseded the old belief in the coming day of God's rising up to purify the earth from sin. The hope of heaven as a means of escape from the earth and all its wickedness was stressed as being the sole purpose of salvation. From this idea arose the now common belief that all probation ends at death and that the unbeliever, dying in his sins, is lost eternally.

At a later date it came to be thought that the Kingdom of God is to be realised in the gradual conversion of worldly powers and institutions to Christian ideals by the missionary endeavour of the Church, and that when this admittedly difficult task shall have been accomplished, Kingdom will have come. The modern trend of affairs in world government and organised Christianity alike has shaken faith in this dogma, and Christian thought is beginning, slowly but yet surely, to turn again in the direction of the original understanding.

The passage of fifteen centuries has seen a great advance in the perception of Divine principles relating to the Kingdom. The Scriptures teach that God purposes for all men a period of full and unhindered instruction in His way of life, and that all the dead will be restored from the grave to participate in this time of instruction. Under the spiritual administration of Christ and his Church, and the no less effective administration of stalwart men of God upon earth, the practice of evil and injustice toward others will be completely restrained and death — except as the natural and inevitable consequence of incorrigible sin — be no more. This is in fact the "Day of Judgement" of mediæval theology, the judgment (Greek "*krisis*" — crisis) to include a period of instruction and testing as well as the moment of final

decision. "*He hath appointed a day*" said Paul to the Athenians "*in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained*" (Acts 17. 31). The Psalmist declares that this day of judgement is to be a time of universal rejoicing (Psa. 96. 11-13). Jesus called the same period "the regeneration" (Matt. 19. 28) and Peter, "times of the restitution" (Acts 3. 21). In both the Old and the New Testaments it is spoken of as a "new heavens and new earth" (Isa. 65. 17, 2 Pet. 3. 13).

This Kingdom will be introduced when human efforts at self-government — without God — have demonstrably failed and the world is facing chaos. There will be a nucleus of people aware of the coming Kingdom and prepared to receive it but the majority of mankind will be unaware or heedless of the impending change. The new administration will call the world to order, and the powers of Heaven — spiritual forces at present unknown and unrecognised amongst men — will restrain the active prosecution of evil practices and set in authority men of unquestioned rectitude and integrity. Under their guidance wise and just measures for the conduct of society will be promulgated and enforced, and widespread educational activities lead men to a knowledge of the principles upon which human society must be based, leading them to face for themselves the issue of conversion to Christ.

It is during this period that the resurrection takes place, and all who have lived will be found again upon earth sharing in the opportunities and amenities of the Kingdom. The progressive elimination of sin from the bodies and minds of men will put an end to human death, for death is the result of sin and where there is no sin there will be no death. Voluntary and sincere acceptance of Jesus Christ and His way of righteousness, and reconciliation to God, will bring in their train perfection of human nature and a state of eternal sinlessness. Only those who intelligently and deliberately refuse to accept this way of life, and who choose sin for sin's sake, will reap the inevitable result of that course, the Divine withdrawal of the life that cannot be used aright.

Those — and there will be many such — who hail with enthusiasm this revolution in world affairs will naturally set to work to persuade and convert their neighbours, and the result will be a period of worldwide missionary endeavour. The planning of the world's resources to meet all needs will become a simple matter when selflessness has replaced self-

ishness as the dominant motive. Scientific knowledge will be applied to the harnessing of natural forces for the benefit of humankind, and the creative and artistic instincts of men applied to the beautifying of the earth and everything that is upon it. The willing acceptance, by each citizen, of the obligations and duties properly devolving upon him will make for a peace and order in human society which has not before been known in earthly history.

The whole world will thus be brought into proper relation with God. In Him will all men live, and move, and have their being (Acts 17. 28). Sin will have been vanquished, death will be no more, and man, having entered fully and voluntarily into the full acceptance of God's way of life will not again become subject to sin and that which sin entails. Hence those disciplinary restraints upon the outward practice of evil which are necessary during the time of Christ's kingdom can and will be removed. Men will be perfectly free to order their own lives in their own ways, and there will be no question but that they will do so always in fullest harmony with the principles of love and justice.

Farther than this the Bible does not take us. We have only the bare statement "*Then cometh the end, when He (Christ) shall have delivered up the Kingdom of God, even the Father . . . that God may be all in all*" (1 Cor. 15. 24). This is after the vanquishing of sin and the destruction of the last enemy — death (1 Cor. 15. 26). We are left with the vision of a dual creation, a spiritual world to which the closest followers of Christ during this present Age have succeeded, and a material world restored to Edenic conditions and inhabited by a race of sinless undying human beings fulfilling to the full all for which their Creator intended them.

A fitting climax to the Bible story — the fall into, and the deliverance from, sin! For the details of those ages of glory that lie beyond the close of Christ's reign over the earth we can well afford to wait.

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away . . . and I heard a voice from heaven, saying, Behold, the dwelling place of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and he shall be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away. And He that sitteth on the Throne saith, Behold, I make all things new."

D. Nadal

REST — TODAY*Christian inheritance
now*

Many Christians think of the Israelites' journey from the Exodus to the River Jordan as a picture of the Christian life, judging from well known hymns and songs. Hebrews chapters 3 and 4 show that the believer's experience is illustrated by the conquest of Canaan and should include the 'rest' which Israel could have enjoyed as they had settled into the land. Psalm 95 is quoted in those chapters and it refers to Israel's wanderings in the wilderness. That is where the restlessness began. Israel challenged God about the conditions of the journey and the spirit of rebellion continued into the Promised Land. They were never able to conquer all their enemies or bring their conflicts to an end.

The problem arose at Rephidim as the Israelites' route left the eastern fork of the Red Sea. Until this point Moses had enjoyed their confidence and difficulties had been overcome. Now Moses faced a large company of people, in desert conditions and with little prospect of getting any water.

In Egypt they always had a supply of water from the Nile and sufficient food. Now they saw the danger of being without these things and their faith failed the test. Moses "*called the place Massah and Meribah because the Israelites quarrelled and because they tested the Lord saying, 'Is the Lord among us or not.'*" (Exodus 17. 1-7).

A similar incident occurred towards the end of their journey through the desert recorded in Numbers 20. 2-13. Again the place was called Meribah because of the attitude of the people of Israel. They felt that they had been forced out of Egypt and betrayed. Their memories of the marvellous signs which the Lord had done to deliver them from Pharaoh had faded, yet the recollection of the material good things of Egypt remained strong and distorted. In spite of the fact that when Joshua's farewell speech to the leaders of Israel was preceded by the statement "the Lord had given Israel rest from all their enemies around them", many of the Canaanite people remained among them and the Philistines gave them no rest.

Psalm 95 ends emphatically with the words "*So I declared on oath in my anger, They shall never enter my rest.*" This is an interesting psalm which begins with a beautiful call to worship. Spurgeon suggests that the early verses of the psalm bring to mind the worship in the wilderness. It ends with a

reminder of the unholy condition of the people who made promises to God at Sinai. Later they made a golden calf and worshipped it.

They disobeyed God's law and rebelled against his appointed leader. But Moses experienced God's rest because the Almighty was close to him throughout the long and sometimes bitter events of the journey. Moses ascended the holy mount and talked face to face with God. There in Horeb Moses learned much of the loving character of the God he served. Thus it was recorded in Exodus 33. 14 "*My presence will go with you and I will give you rest*" and that promise holds the key to an understanding of Hebrews 3. 12 where the writer exhorts the brethren to be sure that "*none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God*". The first ten chapters of Hebrews show the way in which Jesus is so much better, so much more effective than the leaders of the past. They were illustrations of what he was to be. Angels and prophets had spoken the Word of the Lord but never like the Son of God. Moses had been a remarkable leader and mediator of the covenant but his work was but a shadow of what Christ would do. Aaron had been a model High Priest but he had not been able to deliver Israel from sin for only Jesus could do that. Joshua was a great general who led the hosts of Israel into battle against the Canaanites and did so well. Yet when he laid down his sword and fell asleep, the conflicts went on and Israel as a nation never experienced the 'rest' which God had promised to them. The reason was quite simply that as a people, they had not really experienced the presence of a holy God. The writer to the Hebrews feared lest believers in Christ should experience the release from sin and begin to enjoy the providential love of their God, but never fully grasp the promises. Like Israel they still had conflicts with their enemies. This 'rest' is not a condition for which the children of God wait to receive in heaven; this is a part of their experience **TODAY** and if it is not part of today's experience there is something wrong which needs attention **NOW**.

In Hebrew 4. 9 the writer refers to a 'Sabbath-rest'. Why should Christians be concerned about something specified in the Law of Moses? Paul made it clear, particularly in his letter to the Galatians that Christ's followers are not under the Law. If we go

back to Creation where the Sabbath is first mentioned God rested but not because of weariness after creating such a wonderful universe. When Jesus discussed the Sabbath with the Jews in Jerusalem he said, "*My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working.*" (John 5. 17). The Creator had completed his work in creation but the Universe needed his sustaining power. The galaxies of stars and the atoms from which all matter is made operate by his law and under his watchful care. After sin entered the world, God set about his redemptive work and that has never stopped. Kidner commenting on Genesis 2. 2 says that this word *sabat* from which we get our word 'Sabbath' it is not a rest of inactivity but a rest of achievement. It is similar to Jesus being seated "*at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven*" (Heb. 8. 1) having accomplished redemption He is now ready to administer it. God's rest is full of promise to believers who share it with him.

Israel's Sabbath had a double blessing. First in those hard days of bitter toil, when so many ordinary people were slaves of a master and of a system which ground the faces of the poor, one day off in seven was a wonderful blessing. It was also a real need in order to maintain full health and the fourth commandment displays the humane treatment which working folk obtained for the first time under the Mosaic Law. Much more than this, Israel were being taught to focus their minds upon God, if only for one day. It was an opportunity to break from the mundane round of hard duty in the effort to obtain material wealth and comfort. Israel's Sabbath was a day of worship when they would approach with greater consciousness the holy presence of God who cared so much about their welfare. This was the day when they could put aside the hard facts of scraping a living together; when they could forget for a moment a hard master who drove them to distraction and focus their minds upon the great Almighty who was so compassionate. Here too the responsibilities of royalty and leadership could be laid down for a moment to think and read and study about the One who rules all things. The Sabbath was never intended to be a burden which drove men and women away from God but rather a day of rich, sweet fellowship with One who knew all about their real burdens. It was a day of true Sabbath-rest and the principles which governed it are still valid for Christians to whom the invitation still comes, "*Come near*

to God and he will come near to you." But however hard the way, and however frequently we stumble in disobedience and rebellion, coming to a loving Father should be one of relaxed joy. Methods of worship, understanding the finer details about God and his purpose and what we wear when Christians assemble are not the things which matter most. What is important is wanting to approach God himself, preferably with other believers who appreciate the great privilege which He offers to his people.

There are aspects of our lives which can prevent us entering the presence of our loving God and therefore prevent us from enjoying his 'rest'. Like Israel of old, that rest is not ours if we have conflicts within and without. Among those who signally failed to enjoy the rest that he should have done was Saul of Benjamin, the first king of Israel. There is an interesting parallel between the lives of Saul and David. They began their walk with God in triumph, full of his spirit. Both were skilful and had the same resources on offer from God. Both were shy yet stood out above their fellows in the public eye. But how different the course of their lives. David nourished himself in God and in spite of great failures he conquered. Saul failed to trust God and was impatient to get his own will done. He took the worship of God into his own hands and despised the arrangements which God had specifically made to keep royalty and priesthood separate. This led to disobedience and rebellion which made him a very restless person. He had long departed from the way of the Lord and from being motivated by his spirit when a young, godly and successful son-in-law came on the scene. Saul's attitude made him full of envy and hatred. Within his heart was conflict and bitterness and these things were the enemies of his rest. Instead of conquest we see him in spiritual decline in 1 Samuel chapters 13-31, with bad temper in chapter 18, total loss of principle in chapter 28 and finally loss of life in chapter 31. It all happened because Saul slowly drew away from the presence of God. It is easy to make judgements about a tragedy of the Old Testament, far away in time from the period of the Christian church. But the Scriptures must challenge us daily if we are to avoid Saul's attitude. Israel could not find its rest in God. Has the Church done any better?

Outwardly, at least, it would seem not. Two thousand years of conflict about how Christians should think and how they should act had brought a torrent

of words, in speech and print which give little evidence that those who follow Christ have received the Father's rest. Individuals, nations and denominations have all added their quota to the restlessness, symptoms of which have smeared the pages of history in disobedience, envy, hatred and open violence. Inwardly, the matter is between ourselves and our Heavenly Father. As with Moses, so it is with us; if God's presence goes with us then we have rest. The nearer we approach him and the more we are conscious of his presence, the deeper, the richer and the sweeter becomes our rest. It does not result from frantic endeavours to serve God, nor is it expressed in panic measures to discover his will. It can only be fully experienced when the power and glory of the Almighty Father is demonstrated every moment of every day, in every thought, word and action.

It can be achieved, by the grace of God, by bringing every form of human stress to the foot of the cross. At the beginning our Christian life we come to the cross for removal of all our sin with its guilt and shame. Then it is that we are born into the Divine family with new life as a new creature. It is clear from the New Testament that sin remains with us and we need to admit it; "*the blood of Jesus, his Son purifies us from all sin.*" (1 John 1. 7-9). Jesus is our mercy seat and we enter the presence of God because of his atoning work. We take our sins to this holy place and know that we are forgiven. It is to him that we bring our fears and worries and everything which hinders us from entering "into rest".

Closely allied to rest is the peace which Christ himself gives to each of his followers, as he gave it on the night he was betrayed. He had already overcome conflicts and distresses in the years of his ministry as his opponents tried to unsettle him. Now before him lay his greatest suffering yet he had peace. And this peace which he experienced through all his many sorrows, he gave to his disciples (John 14. 27). This was peace which the world could not give or experience. Peace had been lost in Eden because of

disobedience to God but even that was not like the peace which Jesus gave. His peace could surmount the greatest disasters and conquer in the bitterest conflicts. He had peace when all around him was turmoil and strife. This was his great legacy to his disciples as he went to his death.

After his resurrection, three times he said to those same followers "*Peace be with you*" (John 20. 19, 21, 26). He said it as He stood among them, while they still smarted from grief and seeming defeat. So at the end each day, when we have passed through harrowing experiences, our Master comes to us and says "Peace to you". No matter what we have suffered or however hard we have worked, we should experience his peace in our hearts. Jesus again used those words as he said "*I am sending you*". Each day should begin with this challenge that He sends us forth in his service. But we cannot go forth in peace, whatever the day holds for us, unless we have spent time with him. His words should challenge us and his strength will enable us to be obedient to his will. Finally he used the same greeting to Thomas, the one who could not believe without seeing the print of the nails and the gash of the spear. However great the sense of failure and shame, his peace awaits us if we will receive it, in penitent humility. Like our Father, he dwells with the contrite.

The rest is to be the ultimate joy of all nations. The restless peoples of the Earth, dissatisfied with the Kingdom of Satan, will turn to Jesus for peace in his Kingdom. What joy that will bring to the Father's great heart of love. Naught but turmoil had punctuated the pages of human history. Wars are to cease and nation shall speak peace to nation because they will be ruled by the Prince of Peace. We should now live in the spirit of that Kingdom. We may possess the land now — we may enter into **REST TODAY**, but it must be by way of the cross into the presence of our God and Father in Heaven. We must live every moment of every day in that presence. Nothing else will give us rest.

Father, let me dedicate
All this year to Thee.
In whatever wordly state
Thou wilt have me be:

Not from sorrow, pain or care,
Freedom dare I claim;
This alone shall be my prayer:
Glorify Thy name.

A. O. Hudson

DANIEL IN BABYLON*The story of a great
man's faith***7. Historical Interlude**

Three years after Nebuchadnezzar's recovery from his seven years' insanity, his long reign of forty-three years reached its end. He died at probably about seventy-five years of age, and with his death came the change in Daniel's circumstances which marks the division in the narrative. Up to Chapter 4 the story is set entirely in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, during which time Daniel was Chief man in the kingdom. Now, at about sixty-three years of age, Daniel stood by while his royal master's son, Avil-Marduk, ascended the throne, and from that point until the accession of Belshazzar, the last king of Babylon, the Book of Daniel is silent. When the narrative is resumed, in the first year of Belshazzar, with Daniel's dream of the four great beasts and the coming of the Ancient of Days in Judgment (Daniel Chap. 7) the prophet is no longer chief political Minister of State. He is a private citizen and, as evidenced by the story of Belshazzar's feast, practically unknown to the king and probably to the leading men of the realm. Daniel spent forty years in the limelight, ruling the affairs of the empire of Babylon; then he spent nearly forty years more in measurable obscurity, his good works for the nation forgotten, his wisdom and counsel ignored. But it was during that latter forty years that he had those wonderful revelations from on high which have given the book which bears his name the title of "the Revelation of the Old Testament". The second half of Daniel's life, spent in obscurity, has meant far more to succeeding generations than the first half, stirring though the events of those earlier days are to us as we read them.

In order to fill in this gap in the Biblical narrative we turn for a moment to the records of the tablets. So many thousands of these tablets have been unearthed, many of them dated, that the history of Daniel's Babylon is better known to scholars than that of England in the days of King Alfred. There are dated tablets in the British Museum for every year of the reigns of every king from Nebuchadnezzar to Belshazzar so that the chronology of the period is no longer a matter of dispute.

The great king's son, Avil-Marduk, by all accounts a weak-willed man of no principles, reigned only two years, his reign being characterised by lawlessness and impiety. Jeremiah mentions him once, when in Jer. 52. 31-34 he says in the thirty-seventh year of

King Jehoiachin's captivity, "Evil-Merodach (the Hebrew form of Avil-Marduk) King of Babylon in the first year of his reign" released him from prison and dealt kindly with him. But at the end of two years, one of Nebuchadnezzar's military commanders, Neriglissar, husband of Nebuchadnezzar's eldest daughter, murdered Avil-Marduk and on the basis of his own royal marriage ascended the throne.

Neriglissar (a Greek form of the name) is mentioned in Jer. 39 under the native spelling, Nergal-Sharezer, as having been present at the siege and destruction of Jerusalem in the days of Zedekiah. At that time, according to the Jeremiah account, he occupied the position of Rab-Mag, or master of the magicians, a title which the Book of Daniel indicates afterwards passed to Daniel. Neriglissar reigned three years only, was not particularly conspicuous, and died peacefully at Babylon. He left one daughter, Gigitum, whose marriage contract to a high Court official, Nabushum-ukin, now reposes in a glass case at the British Museum, and a youthful son, Labasi-Marduk, who succeeded him on the throne and after nine months was killed in a palace insurrection.

By this time it is probable that Jehoiachin was dead, but somewhere in Babylon there must have lived his grandson Zerubbabel, the child who at the time of the Return from Exile, now only about twenty years distant, was destined to be the officially appointed Governor of the new Judean state. Zerubbabel figures prominently in the books of Ezra and Zechariah. He was the man who wielded civil power among the people re-gathered to Zion without a king. And somewhere in Babylon there played also another child, Joshua the son of Jehozadek, the legal High Priest of Israel during the captivity, a High Priest without sacrifices, for the sacrifices could be offered only at Jerusalem. Joshua became the first High Priest of regathered Israel, and he too figures prominently in the books of Ezra and Zechariah. So in the time of obscurity which lies between the early and the latter parts of the Captivity, between Daniel the Statesman and Daniel the Seer, we discern dim shadows of those who were to lead God's people after Daniel and all his generation had passed away. That of itself ought to be a sobering thought to us. We experience our own day of service for God and

a half a millennium later, he saw and recorded "things which must shortly come to pass" to the abidi-

ing blessing of all who were to come after.

(To be continued)

F. A. Shuttleworth

THE DEBT WE OWE

Introduction

"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 out-growth 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 the 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 com-

pared to that of those who were in 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 name and study had 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

serve with our might while we have strength and opportunity, and then sometimes make frantic efforts to perpetuate the work we have commenced. All the time there is no need; God makes his own arrangements for the continuation of his work, and while our own generation is beginning to lower the torch He is already preparing, perhaps in another place that we wot not of, those who are to do his work in the next generation.

That of itself does not justify our relaxing our efforts in the vineyard we have tended maybe all our lives. Sometimes the new work and old work must progress side by side for a space. "He must increase, but I must decrease" said John the Baptist, speaking of Jesus and the new, greater work he was to do. A goodly company of God's stalwarts have seen their sphere of activity diminish as life draws on, and happy are those who can continue in unabated certainty and confidence despite the decreasing response, all the time that they can find a hearing ear or reverent heart anywhere. Daniel stayed in Babylon and saw visions which have enlightened every generation of the Church, even whilst his younger compatriots, Zerubbabel and Joshua, were actively engaged, away in Jerusalem, laying the foundations of the restored Jewish state.

Returning to Babylon and its Palace intrigues, so like those of any court in any country, then or since; the death of Labasi-Marduk left the way to the throne open to Nabonidus the husband of Nebuchadnezzar's younger daughter Nitocris. Nabonidus was a son of the High Priest of the Moon-god at Haran, the city in the north to which Terah emigrated with his family from Ur of the Chaldees, and from which Abraham set out "not knowing whither he went" to go to Canaan. Nabonidus as a youth had been brought to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar at about the same time as Daniel himself, and was one of those with Daniel intended to be trained in the wisdom of the Chaldeans. As such he would be included in the young men mentioned in the first chapter of Daniel. The two must have been well acquainted at the start and must have been well known to each other throughout life. When one remembers the high favour in which Daniel had stood with the great king, the fact that his fellow-exile Nabonidus married into the king's family evokes the surmise that Daniel himself might quite likely have had the opportunity, in earlier years, of becoming joined to the royal family by marriage and so eventually ascending the throne

of Babylon. He would obviously have been the king's first choice in preference to Nabonidus. If such a proposal ever was made in fact, another evidence of Daniel's sterling allegiance to God is afforded. He would serve faithfully in the place where God had placed him but he would make no alliance with the "people of the land". We can well imagine that to be his attitude.

Nabonidus was a better archaeologist than king; his devouring passion was the collecting of relics of the civilisations that were as much older than his own time as his time is older than ours. After reigning five years, the growing aggressiveness of the Persians under Cyrus demanded a younger man — Nabonidus, like Daniel, was about seventy-five years old by now — and that led him to associate with himself his son Belshazzar as joint king. This event marks what the Book of Daniel calls "first year of Belshazzar the King". Nabonidus retired to his museums and archaeologist studies, his daughter Belshaltinannar was appointed High Priestess of the Moon-god's Temple at Ur of the Chaldees, Abraham's birthplace, and Belshazzar, at probably little more than twenty years of age, became the real ruler of Babylon. At the point the Book of Daniel takes up the story again, after a silence of some twenty-five years.

No longer, though, so we see the stage set with the glory and pomp of the royal court. Daniel, the statesman, the king's right hand man, administering and ruling the kingdom. No longer so we hear of mighty acts of faith and noteworthy miracles attesting to all beholders the all-powerful sovereignty of God. There is a difference. We see a darkened stage, the serene light of the moon shining through a window on the form of an old man, head buried in prayer, eyes poring over books, a recumbent form in the quietude of sleep seeing visions of God. We hear messages from another world telling of great events yet to transpire. We glimpse angels coming and going, bearing revelations and mysteries which that same old man is to be the means of leaving on record for all those who in after days would know the things which God is planning to do in the world of men. So it came about that in the first year of Belshazzar, king of Babylon, fifty-six years after Daniel first entered the city in which he was to spend his life-time of exile, this faithful servant of God, who had walked step-by-step with God during all those fifty-six years, began to experience the series of revelations which crowned his life's work. Like John on Patmos

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 successive 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. 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. They may contemplate 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 fullness. 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 unob-servant 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"* (Matt. 20. 25-28). To serve others and to give is the spirit of the 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, and 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)

I have a friend so precious,
So very dear to me,
He loves me with such tender love,
He loves so faithfully;
I could not live apart from Him
I love to feel Him nigh,
And so we dwell together,
My Lord and I.

Sometimes
I'm faint and weary,
He knows that I am weak,
And as He bids me lean on Him,
His help I gladly seek;
He leads me in the paths of light
Beneath a sunny sky,
And so we walk together,
My Lord and I.

He knows how much I love Him
He knows I love Him well;
But with what love He loveth me
My tongue can never tell;
It is an everlasting love,
In ever rich supply,
And so we love each other,
My Lord and I.

I tell Him all my sorrows,
I tell Him all my joys
I tell Him all that pleases me,
I tell Him what annoys;
He tells me what I ought to do,
He tells me what to try,
And so we walk together,
My Lord and I.

THE COMPLETENESS OF THE BODY

The Church is the "one body" of Christ, and all Christians are individual members of that body. No one liveth to himself, no one dieth to himself: when one member suffers all members suffer with it. It is one of the sins of a self-sufficient age to deny the unity and completeness of Christ's body, and to set up tests of unity other than those which He has appointed. In the natural body each member united with the head has vital union with every other member connected with the same head.

The basis of true Christian unity is union with Jesus Christ who is the Head of the body. Men lay down as the basis of their unity, union with some human leader through the doctrines which he has proclaimed or the forms which he has instituted. They are united by external observances, by laws, forms, rites, and bands. Their union is the union of staves in a barrel; Christ's union is the union of branches in a vine. Their union is that of bones in a skeleton, joined together, but destitute of vital energy; the union of Christ and his people is the union of the members of a body, joined together by those ligaments which every joint supplieth, and pervaded by the energy of a common life.

The unity which Christ inaugurated embraces the whole family of God. It includes every one who has vital connection with the great Head of the Church. Men's schemes are too narrow for this, and include only those persons who coincide in opinions, who agree in forms; who are trimmed according to a certain pattern, or shaped in conformity to certain human standards. Christ bids us to receive one another as He received us. The fact that we have passed from death unto life, and we are united to Christ the living Head, is proof that we are united to His people.

If our fellowship is with the Father and with the Son Jesus Christ, it is also with one another. Men, however, restrict their fellowship; and hence, while Christ's Church is inclusive and wide reaching, their churches are narrow, and shut out more Christians than they shut in. The results of this are grievous to God's people who are thus excluded from union with saints, but still more grievous to those who exclude them.

How often we see churches crippled and helpless for lack of the labour and sympathy of Christian brethren who stand by their side ready and willing to be helpers in their toils, but are excluded by some partly Shibboleth, or by some unscriptural name or

form. How often we see men and women shut away from their proper field of Christian effort, simply because they cannot accept the unscriptural statements and arrangements, which others presume to impose before they receive them to their fellowship. Some toil in weariness, and bring themselves to the borders of the grave, that they may do work which others would willingly and wisely do, who are not permitted to participate in the labour. Thus they virtually say to God's children: "You may be members of Christ's body, but we have no need of you or your services."

The Apostle has taught us that no member of the body can be spared from its place and its proper work, without serious injury. No one can separate himself or herself from the body of Christ without harm; nor can any portion of Christians separate themselves from others who love the Lord, or exclude other Christians from their fellowship, without doing themselves great injury.

The union of true Christians springs from a higher than human source; and their adaptation to each other for mutual helpfulness is so complete and perfect that any separation must work harm both to those who cause it and to those who endure it. The feet may say, We are strong we have no need of the eyes, we carry the body, and the eyes are mere useless gazers. But when the eyes are gone, and the feet are groping and floundering in the ditch, the folly of this decision in most manifest.

So whenever any of the Lord's children in their inexperience and self-sufficiency think themselves able to dispense with the presence, the service, and the loving fellowship of others of the children of the Lord, they may find sooner or later, by their weakness, inefficiency, and a thousand calamities and troubles that may come upon them, they have overestimated their own powers, and have put away from them those members which God hath set in the body, that they might abide together in the unity of love and in mutual helpfulness.

All down through the age comes our Saviour's parting prayer for His disciples, that "they all may be one," and the hearts of the truly regenerate yearn and long for this unity. Deeper than the names and forms and creeds of men, throbs that inward, divine and universal life which Christ imparted, and which makes His children one. — *From "Peoples Paper and Herald of Christ's Kingdom" — Melbourne, Australia.*

A. O. Hudson

GOD OF ALL SPACE

2. Extra-terrestrial life and the Atonement

*Impact of space science
upon Christian belief*

The possibility of there being intelligent creatures in other parts of the universe is now generally accepted by scientists and the idea is familiar to nearly everyone through the twin media of serious literature and "space fiction". On the basis of the popular scientific view that life arose on this earth, not by creative act of God, but by the chemical action of lightning and ultra-violet light on basic earthly substances, converting them into amino acids which eventually developed into living cells, it is unreasonable to think that life must not have appeared similarly on many other planets, and this is the prevalent view today. If, however, it is held, with the Genesis account, that life appeared by direct creative act of God — irrespective of the physical forces employed — this reasoning does not necessarily hold good; the principles of Divine working "*first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear*" (Mark 4. 28) conceivably allow for a sequence of creation of life so that one particular planet is the first thus concerned. Since men cannot at present reach any other likely planet it is not possible dogmatically either to deny or affirm that extra-terrestrial life exists. From the purely scientific point of view it might be considered almost certain; from the Christian point of view its probability must also depend upon our knowledge of the revealed purpose of God, not for this earth and the human race only, but for His whole creation. But even so, the very existence of the wider universe pre-supposes that God has created it to be, at least eventually, the home of superabundant life. A telling point in this connection has been made by Hebwynd, who says, in "*The Living Universe*", "*It was once thought that the earth was divinely created and that life here was divinely inspired. Whether this is the case not, it is still the height of conceit to suppose that a Deity would create life upon one insignificant planet and leave all the hosts of others barren and sterile. Such a view is, in fact, highly irreligious. It has always been said by the Church that all possible use, in the best way, must be made of existing materials. The planets are existing materials; to neglect them would be wasteful.*"

The question is of more than academic interest to thoughtful Christians for the central principle of the Christian faith is directly involved; "*Christ Jesus*

came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. 1. 15). If men of this world are not the only men, so runs the argument, then what of the others? Does Christ come again and again, repeatedly into the unsearchable future, dying time and again for the sins of successive races of sinful beings? And if not, why must He needs have come to us? Or is it conceivable that such other races as may exist have never sinned and therefore not needed a Saviour? In which case why could we on earth not have enjoyed the same happy state and never known the misery and pain which is associated with man's present not altogether satisfactory existence? Is the eternal destiny of such other creatures to be similar to that which is promised the sons of men? Are they also made in the image and likeness of God as was Adam and is Satan the god of those worlds in the sense that he is now the "*god of this world?*" (2 Cor. 4. 4)? It is easy to shrug off such questions by saying that our personal relationship to Christ is the really important matter and the relation of possible other forms of life to our understanding of God's plans and principles is of no moment to us, but one must reflect that in the past the Christian faith has suffered through not keeping pace with the march of human knowledge; unless a reasoned and reasonable reply to such questions can be given, history is likely to repeat itself.

An enquiry of this nature and into such a subject cannot be expected to yield a comprehensive and detailed exposition of the Divine intentions respecting possible other related spheres of life; our ignorance of the nature and characteristics of such possible life must necessarily inhibit our understanding of the exposition if we had it, and in any case the Bible, which is the only guide-book to the things of God, is primarily concerned with man, his present life and his destiny. It only drops casual hints as to possibilities which lie outside the terrestrial sphere. But just as astronomers and physicists have found that the laws of Nature which hold good on earth are equally true throughout the universe so we may be sure that the principles of Divine law, Divine government, Divine purpose, are equally valid in all God's creation. Those principles can be applied and should be applied to whatever may appear to be the implication of such discoveries in space as have been made or may yet be made. The laws of God are as

true at the extremities of the universe as they are upon earth.

The story of the creation of man as related in the Bible enshrines certain of these fundamentals. Whether the narrative of the Garden of Eden is considered a literal or a metaphorical account makes no difference to the underlying principle. Man first appeared upon earth, fresh from the hand of God, perfect and sinless. Admirably and completely adapted to his environment, he was commissioned to exploit, administer and maintain his home, and live his life in loyalty to, and reverence for, God. The implication is that whilst he remained in this happy state he would not be subject to death: the natural processes of waste and repair, of output and intake of energy would balance, and the human organism continue indefinitely. The man, as a vehicle of Divinely-given life, would continue living, in harmony with his environment, as an orderly element in God's overall creative scheme. Whether this involved an everlasting attachment to this terrestrial earth or a later transfer to some other sphere of Divine creation does not affect that fact. Nevertheless it was intimated to man that failure to discharge his commission or retain his loyalty to God, any digression into disloyalty and rebellion and repudiation of his place in God's purpose, would of itself involve death — the loss of this newly-conferred life. Man did thus apostasise, and according to the Bible that apostacy, continued, has resulted in the presence of sin, evil and death, so evident a fact in the world. But this had not frustrated the Divine purpose for man. In "the fullness of time" Christ came from God to challenge the world's sin by allowing Himself to be put to death by evil men. Having then risen in his Divine glory and power, He comes again to abolish sin and evil and win men — those who can be won — back to God in a loyalty and love which, by reason of these very experiences, will not again be repudiated. This latter part of the programme has not yet materialised; it depends upon the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom which itself waits for the final ruin of this present world-order consequent upon mismanagement by incapable, selfish and evil men. The philosophy of the Atonement cannot be expounded in full in this treatise; only the bare facts can be stated, but from these it should readily be seen that there is an allotted span of time, a historical period during which this planet earth is the scene of the birth and devel-

opment of a race of terrestrial creatures, passing through a direct and personal experience of the effects of sin from which all who so choose are ultimately recovered and rendered fitted for their future intended place in the Divine purpose. The extent of their further development, achievement and progress after that goal is attained does not at present appear, but one fixed principle emerges. Sin and evil will not again sully their lives, and life will be unending; this is eloquently expressed in the colourful vision of the New Jerusalem "*and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away*" (Rev. 21. 4).

Now this related only to this earth and the human race. It has nothing to do with the affairs of any possible extra-terrestrial peoples whether in past, present or future time. It becomes a logical question whether such other animate creations, if they so now or will yet exist, must pass through the same sequence of a fall into sin and recovery therefrom before being admitted in their turn into the exalted fellowship of the sons of God. If earthly man at the beginning, pronounced in his perfection by his Creator as "very good", involved himself in the tragic history of sin and death which is familiar to all men, is it not to be expected that other creations, or at least some of them, would have behaved similarly? It is this kind of reasoning which has led some to conclude that in some mysterious fashion the actual experience of sin and subjection to evil is an essential factor in the development of any intelligent creature to the Divine ideal, so that God deliberately subjects all to its power that He might eventually save all; this logically leads to the belief that God is the instigator of evil. That might be good philosophy but it is bad theology, for it makes God responsible for man's bondage to sin which the Bible ascribes to the Devil, and it implies that evil must subsist to all eternity; both ideas are foreign to Bible teaching and must be objectionable to any thoughtful Christian, so that obviously there is another view of the matter which has to be sought.

The principle upon which that other view is founded is the clear teaching of Scripture that a time is coming when "*at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*" (Phil. 2. 10-11). The Lord Christ is "*ascended far above all the heavens that he might fill all things*" (Eph. 4. 10);

this means that after bringing the practice of evil to an end He does in a manner completely inexplicable to us fill the entire creation with His presence and power. There is no opposing voice, no alien soul. All are one in him, and He in them. Through Christ, we are told in the Epistle to the Colossians (1. 20) God will reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of the cross. This kind of language expressly forbids any idea of repeated atonement for sins, of Christ dying as it were a second time and a third time and so on for successive sinful creations. "*This he did once*" says the writer to the Hebrews, indicating in his argument that it was once for all — Christ does not offer himself again (Heb. 7. 27). And since the history of the human race proves that no sinful creature is able to save himself, and only by the intervention and work of Christ can he be saved, it necessarily follows, so as far our reasoning on the basis of Scriptural revelation permits, that the influence and practice of evil is confined to this earth and its affairs and the time-span displayed in the Bible, from creation in Genesis to the consummation in Revelation.

Relevant to this it might be objected that the Bible itself indicated there has been sin amongst the angels, that there are "fallen angels" who, like fallen men, stand in need of reconciliation or judgment. Whilst this thesis is not universally accepted by all theologians or students of the Bible it is certainly true that the New Testament alludes several times to the angels that sinned (1 Pet. 3. 19, 20; 2 Pet. 2. 4 and Jude 6), who now await judgment (1 Cor. 6. 3; Mark 1. 24; Luke 4. 34, Matt. 8. 29). All these references hark back to the historical event narrated in the sixth chapter of Genesis, where the implication is that in the days before the Flood certain angels from the celestial world "*forsook their own proper world*" as Jude puts it, took upon themselves human form and lived upon earth as human beings in a state of rebellion against God, in consequence of which they were banished from the celestial world and placed under some condition of restraint rather obscurely described as "*enduring chains of darkness*" "*until the judgment of the great day*". The details of this subject and the true nature of this irruption of celestial beings into the terrestrial sphere are not relevant here; what is relevant is the fact that upon the Scriptural showing of the matter the sin of these celestials was enacted while they masqueraded

as human beings on this earth and there is no suggestion that the sphere defiled by sin and evil, so to speak, extended beyond the earth and into heaven. St. Paul makes it plain in his doctrinal teaching that both fallen men and fallen angels enter into judgment together at one and the same time, and have the opportunity of reconciliation with God and restoration to the sinless state by one and the same redemptive act of Christ. (1 Col. 1. 20).

Now if this reasoning be well founded and in harmony with the Scripture — which is the only written authority on the subject of sin anyway — then, presumptuous as the idea may seem, it would follow that the two worlds of intelligent life of which we do know, one affected wholly and the other in part by sin, so constitute the first living creatures from the creator's hand. There are Biblical indications such as Job 38. 7 which tend to show that the celestial world already existed when the earth came into being but so far as the story of evil is concerned they run in parallel, and that story is worked out for both worlds on the stage of this earth. The nature of the celestial world is discussed later; it is not to be looked for in the terrestrial universe and none of those six hundred millions of inhabitable planets can be the home of the angels. Unless, despite all that has been said above, it is conceivable that other man-like creations have escaped the descent into sin which is pictured for us in the early chapters of Genesis, and have retained their pristine perfection before God, then those planets must still be empty, awaiting the life-giving power of the Divine Spirit "in due time".

One apparently practical objection to this view that may be urged is the fact that the creation has existed for untold ages past. How is it, the questioner may ask, that having prepared the scene for life, God waited so long before creating life? Here we enter strange and untrodden ground, for no one knows how long the universe has existed nor just how it came into existence. On the basis of known physical laws and the results of astronomical observations sundry abstruse mathematical calculations have led to estimates of the age of the universe ranging from ten to twenty thousand million years. Our sun and this earth are thought to be only some five thousand million years old so that the universe had been running quite a time before our solar system came into existence. Compared with man's normal life-span of under a hundred years these enormous figures are difficult to comprehend and in fact mean very little.

Our appreciation of time is bound up with our earthly lives and actions, the events that happen to us, and our biological mechanism. If our bodily operations, breathing, heart-beats, thoughts, were all reduced to one-tenth their present rate, natural forces such as the fall of rain-drops and the speed of wind all reduced to one-tenth also, then what we could accomplish now in twenty years would then take two hundred but we would not be conscious of any difference. It must be that time to the Almighty does not mean the same thing as it does to human beings on earth; this in fact must have been in the mind of Peter when, talking about the certainty of God's purposes despite His apparent tardiness in achieving them he said that one day and a thousand years are alike to God (2 Pet. 3. 8). The vast scale upon which He works dwarfs such small spans of time into insignificance although to man a thousand years is not at all the same thing as one day. We are already well accustomed to the fact that the period man has been on this earth is infinitesimal compared with the age of the earth; on the same basis it need not be considered illogical for the universe to have existed so long before the first signs of life appeared. Although the spirit or power of life comes from God himself, it is manifested in this universe in fleshly bodies, which so far as man is concerned are made from the chemical elements of the universe, principally from carbon,

oxygen and hydrogen. If present understanding is correct, all the carbon and oxygen in creation has been synthesised in the stars from hydrogen, which is the basic material substance, and dispersed throughout space. It would be quite in keeping with the orderly progress of creation for God first to set in motion the forces of Nature and allow time for these elements to be manufactured, as it were, before proceeding to introduce life, which depends upon them, just as in the first two chapters of Genesis we have the orderly development of this planet into a suitable home for man before God uttered those significant words "*Let us make man . . .*"

Therefore, unless evil is not the disruptive and disorderly force in creation that we think it is, unless the prophet was mistaken when he said of God "*Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil*" (Hab. 1. 13), we are bound to believe that the end of evil amongst men means the end of evil for all time and in consequence the end of sin. That would seem to imply that we are first in this widely spread universe and that in some wonderful fashion at present quite incomprehensible to us the history and experience of sin and evil upon earth will become the means of ensuring the development of future creations to maturity without any repetition of the dreadful scenes which for these many thousands of years past have marred the lives of men upon earth.

(To be continued)

Psa. 55. 22.

In Psalm 55. 22. there is a word which is full of rich suggestion. We are bid to "*Cast thy burden upon the Lord*". In the margin, however, is the word gift — thus reading — "*Cast thy gift upon the Lord*". So our burden is God's gift to us. This is true whatever the burden may be — duty, sorrow, pain, loss, care. Being God's gift, there must be a blessing in it, something good, something we could not miss without sore loss. It may be a blessing for ourselves, or it may be for others — in the garden it was the blessing of the world's redemption in the cup that was pressed to the lips of our Lord. In every case, our burden is God's gift, and it would not be a kindness to us if He were to lift it away.

But there is none of the promise. We are to cast our burden upon the Lord and He will sustain us. That is, He will give us strength to carry our load, to

endure our suffering. The story of Paul's thorn in the flesh illustrates this. The torturing burden was not removed, but instead there came grace sufficient — the strength of Christ to balance the human weakness, so that Paul was enabled to rejoice in his infirmities because of the blessing which came to him through them.

*"We must live through the weary winter
If we would value the spring;
And the woods must be cold and silent
Before the robins sing.
The flowers must be buried in darkness
Before they can bud and bloom;
And the sweetest and warmest sunshine
Comes after the storm and gloom."*

C. T. Ward

FOUR PICTURESA study in
1 Peter 2.

The Apostle Peter's words in the first five verses of the second chapter of his First Epistle enshrine four distinct pictures of the new life in Christ. The idea of this new life is introduced by the Apostle in the previous chapter, verses 3 and 23, where he says that we were "*begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus*" and "*born again by the Word of God*". The pictures are progressive, the first dealing with the laying aside of the things belonging to the old life, like discarded clothing, the second the individual growth and development of the new life, the third dealing with our corporate life in Christ and the fourth with our mission of service and sacrifice.

The first picture deals with our attitude to the old life. "*Wherefore laying aside all malice, guile, hypocrisies, envies and evil speaking . . .*" Peter exhorts. This is one of the many indications in his epistles that Peter was acquainted with the writings of Paul. The same figure is used in Ephesians and Colossians, where Paul speaks of our attitude to the old life as being like the discarding of old and unworthy garments. "*Put off*" Paul says "*concerning the former conversation the old man which is corrupt, and put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness*". The Bible likens man's own righteousness to "filthy rags" and points to the provision made in Christ for a complete change. It speaks of the "robe of righteousness", the "garments of salvation" and such things to put on as mercies, kindness, humility of mind, meekness, patience and long suffering. Accepting God's provision in Christ, we may wear, instead of malice, goodwill; instead of guile and hypocrisy, simplicity and sincerity; instead of envy, generosity of spirit; evil speaking will be discarded for speech that is good to the use of edifying, ministering grace to the hearers. Of all these evils, evil speaking is perhaps the one to which we are most prone. Let us remember "*we none of us know one another, and oft into error we fall; then let us speak well of each other, or speak not of others at all*".

The second picture deals, not with the discarding of the old life, but the development of the new. "*As new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye might grow thereby; if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious*". Those to whom Peter wrote were probably young in the faith, but the prin-

ciple is applicable to all stages of Christian growth and development. As Nature has provided in the mother, natural food for the child, so God has provided in Christ spiritual sustenance for the believer. The infant craves for its natural food and finds therein not only that which satisfies its needs but also that which provides for its growth and development. In like manner the spirit-begotten child of God longs for that which can only be found in Christ. He may try to satisfy his longings with other things, philosophies, creeds, doctrines, or it may be with worldly things, but life's experiences will eventually bring him to the point where he will cry "*I've tried the broken cisterns, Lord, but ah, their waters failed! None but Christ can satisfy, none other name for me*". Only in complete dependence on the Lord, as the child on the mother, can the Christian find satisfaction and the means of growth and development. This utter dependence on him was illustrated in our Lord's parable of the Vine and the branches; "*Apart from me ye can do nothing*".

The expression "if so be that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious" could better be rendered "Since you have tasted". The Apostle is not suggesting any doubt in the matter. Since they had tasted, that is, had an experimental acquaintance of the grace of God, they should desire to increase more and more in the knowledge and love of him. The fullest possible experience of the love of Christ which any child of God can enjoy here below is only a taste as compared with that which shall be revealed. "*Oh Christ, He is the fountain, the deep sweet well of love; the streams of earth I've tasted, more deep I'll drink above. There to an ocean's fullness his mercy doth expand . . .*"

We come to the third picture. While each child of God must grow and develop as a separate and distinct personality, as an individual branch in the vine, he nevertheless has a relationship to maintain with regard to his brethren in Christ. The third picture shows this corporate life which we enjoy as parts of one whole. "*To whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed of men, but chosen of God and precious, ye also as living stones are built up a spiritual house*". Peter's name must have been to him a perpetual reminder that he was a living stone. It was given to him on his first coming to Christ at the very beginning of our Lord's ministry. John and Andrew were

the earliest disciples and Peter came next. Andrew, we are told, first found his own brother Simon and brought him to Jesus: looking on him Jesus said "Thou art Simon the son of Jonas; thou shalt be called Cephas (Greek — Peter) which is by interpretation, a stone". Peter seems to see in this an illustration of that which is true with regard to all the elect of God, for all were called to be living stones. Almost certainly he had in mind the second momentous occasion when the Lord referred to his new name. It was at the time of his great confession "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God". In reply the Lord had said, "Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my church". This implied that he was one of many stones necessary to the building of the church of God. Unlike Peter, we do not get a new natural name when we come to the Lord, nor do we occupy the same position of importance in the temple of God. Nevertheless like him we are called to be living stones. "To whom coming": in his use of this expression Peter was probably reflecting on that never-to-be forgotten first meeting with the Lord when he received the new name. In like manner do we often look back to the time when we first came to God in the fullness of our self surrender. Perhaps the Lord gave us a new name then in conformity with our characteristics, a new name which will be confirmed and revealed when as overcomers we receive the symbolic white stone upon which it is recorded. A heap of stones is not a building, but the master builder sees how it is possible for these stones to be made into a house and how the various shapes and sizes can be best utilised. Coming to the master builder of the spiritual house we undergo his scrutiny as Peter did. He notes our shape and size and texture and assigns us a place in his spiritual temple. Although not all prominent like Peter, every stone, even the humblest, is necessary and is an object of the same painstaking care on the part of the master builder. It was in connection with Peter's great confession that the Lord for the first time foretold his coming suffering and death. This may have been in his mind when He said "disallowed indeed of men but chosen of God and precious". The Lord is still rejected and by the world disowned and his true church shares in his rejection. It will not be long before the stone which the builders rejected will be made the headstone of the corner, and the church, glorified with her Lord, will constitute the tabernacle of God amongst men when He shall be their God and they shall be his people.

The fourth and last picture is that of the Priest-

hood. "*A holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ*". It must have been difficult for Peter and the early Jewish believers to appreciate what was about to replace the ceremonial features of the Law still being enacted in their day. At the very centre of the religious and national life was the temple with its priesthood. Morning by morning and evening by evening the priests offered the daily sacrifices on the altar in the court and burned incense on the golden altar in the Holy. Not anyone could be a priest; only those who were called of God through their descent from the family of Aaron. Only this specially favoured class could offer sacrifices acceptable to God. Only they could go into the Holy and Most Holy. In these circumstances it was natural that the earlier priesthood should be an object of the deepest veneration and respect. It would not be easy for the early Jewish disciples to grasp the thought that the true priests were the followers of the Lord, that only they were qualified to offer the sacrifices that were acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, and that only they had the right of entrance into the true Holy places. That the Lord was thus a priest was one of the first things impressed upon the early disciples as a result of the collapse of their hopes at his crucifixion and death. "*Ought not Christ to suffer these things and to enter into his glory*" was the question the Lord put to them after He rose from the dead and the question which he answered so convincingly from the Scriptures. They could now see that for three and a half years, as the great High Priest, the Lord had been offering himself in sacrifice on their behalf. Since they were called to partake of the suffering as well as the glory, a thing they did not at first understand, it followed that they too were called to be members of the priesthood and to offer sacrifice as Jesus did. These consisted not of the animal sacrifices ordained in the Law but a full self surrender to the will of God. "*I beseech you therefore, brethren,*" Paul says, "*by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service*". "By him therefore" he says again "*let us offer to God the sacrifice of praise continually, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name*". This implies more than lip service to God. It means the same as "in everything give thanks" and implies a life so surrendered to the will of God that like the incense coming into contact with the fire, all of life's experiences, pleasing or painful, dark or bright, will yield a sweet fragrance of loving sub-

mission thankfulness and praise to God. May that thought stimulate us to renewed zeal as members of

the Holy Priesthood in offering those sacrifices which are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

T. Holmes

EVENTIDE

*"So he bringeth them
unto their desired heaven"*

*"At even, ere the sun was set,
The sick, O Lord, around thee lay,
Oh, in what divers pains they met,
Oh, with what joy they went away!"*

What a day for the suffering souls in Israel that had been! The Priests and Pharisees may have found no place in their thoughts for this tender Healer who had come to Israel, but for the poor and afflicted He was the Man of the Hour. How they spread abroad from village to village the news of his coming and goings, and set every suffering soul aflame with expectation and hope that He might cross their path, and lay his hands upon them, or speak some healing word. Think of the arresting power that could send men hastening here and there throughout a whole region proclaiming "Bring along your sick — the Great Healer is here!", and of the gripping confidence that could say to him "Will you but let these ailing souls touch only the fringe of your robes?" (Matt. 14. 36). A mighty surge of approbation had spread around the countryside concerning him, for nothing like these things had ever taken place in Israel before.

To be alone with his grief concerning John, Jesus had taken ship to a lonely place apart. "But when the crowds heard it they followed him on foot from the towns." (Matt. 14. 13). A great throng, with many sick in their midst awaited him, "... and He had compassion on them, and healed their sick". (v. 14). At another place and time, the nature of these sicknesses are specified in greater fullness, "... the lame, the maimed, the blind, the dumb, and many others..." (Matt. 15. 30). And perhaps it was just these same afflictions that awaited him as He stepped ashore at the place of his retreat. "And they put them at his feet". (Matt. 15. 30). What a picture in these few words! All the wasted frames from the shadowed homes of the countryside lying side by side — and placed there "at his feet"! What would He do? Would He chide them by reminding them that there ought to be no sick in Israel — that were they faithful to their God He would be "*Jehovah Ropheka*"

(Exod. 15. 26) to them, and would, according to his own good promise, heal them of their sicknesses? (Exod. 23. 25; Psa. 103. 3 and 147. 3). He could rightly have done that; instead He had compassion upon them all, and in the Name and power of God healed them one and all.

What a surge of gladness would sweep through the crowd as sightless eyes began to see, and speechless tongues began to speak, and palsied limbs began to move, and diseased bodies lost their pains! Truly it was a day most wonderful!

And for himself, too, it was wonderful — that deep surge of compassion that swept through his tender heart left its sanctifying impress there, and a little more of the "perfecting" work was done. He was now, at close of day, a little more nearly prepared to be the sympathetic High Priest for all who were "out of the way" and astray from God. It was an opportunity for himself not to be missed!

Time has passed, scenes have changed — and . . .

*"Once more 'tis eventide, and we
Oppressed with various ills draw near;
What if thy form we cannot see?
We know and feel that thou art here."*

These various ills — what are they? Not the ills to which the flesh is heir, to be sure! These are to be borne patiently, like the illness of Epaphroditus, and the thorn of Paul (Phil. 2. 27; 2 Cor. 12. 7). But there are ills and discomforts of the spirit that can be like a weight at the end of the day. Indeed, in a world like this, no day ought to go by without these ills and discomforts pressing heavily upon us. They are a part of our spiritual education, and contribute, greatly to our development into the likeness of our Lord.

Spite of all the ecclesiastical organisation and ministerial service in this world, it is still as a flock without a shepherd — a flock astray in the ways of sin. The daily paper tells us a story of tragedy and misery every passing day; the daily round brings each child of God into the painful contact with the pervertencies of men; in the office, at the work-bench, in

the street, and even in the home. The watchful eye and listening ear can see and hear the world's writhing pain and piercing groan, but no child of God can see and hear these things without being touched to the heart — or without joining in the groan! In proportion as the saint partakes of the spirit of him who wept over Jerusalem's perversity, so will he be inclined to weep with a world in anguish, waiting for it knows not what, waiting it knows not how long, but waiting in its chains of vanity for all that! Some day the hour of deliverance will come, but for this present season it must bear the anguish, and groan out its despair.

All this comes out in the daily life every day, and we who have been led aside, and let into the secret of the Divine purpose in it all, can either look on nonchalantly or sympathetically. And, in proportion as our sympathies are touched, so will these things lie heavy on our souls. Moreover, we shall see even some we love touching too lightly these Divine opportunities — never having loved him well,

perhaps having lost the love they had. And that wounds most of all!

How do these things react back upon us at close of day — the sorrows of a world, the coldness of a friend! They who fain would serve him best are touched the most by all these wrongs without, within. What can we so about it all? Surely nothing less than they of ancient Galilee did with their sick — lay them down at Jesus' feet and leave them all to him, and his healing power.

How necessary, then, at eventide, that we should go aside with him and tell him all that has grieved and disappointed us through the day, reminding him,

*"Thy touch has still its ancient power,
No word from thee can fruitless fall;
Hear in this solemn evening hour,
And in thy mercy heal us all."*

Out of the daily throb of pain can come a little more of that "perfecting" experience for every one of us, if we are alert and alive to its possibilities.

Make a hollow of your heart

Make a hollow of your heart,
So calm and still,
A humble, meek and lowly place
That God can fill
And on its quiet waters trace
His perfect will.

Make an offering of your heart
With each new day,
As sleeping flowers greet the sun's
Awakening ray,
And follow till the day is done
His perfect way.

Make a chalice of your heart
That God can bless
With Christlike love that overflows
In tenderness,
And find in selfless sacrifice
His perfect rest.

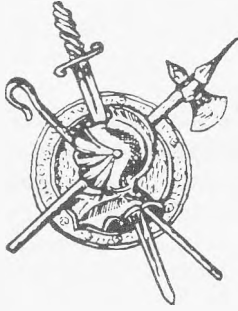
Margot King-Smith from 'The Quest'

Don't let this be for you a year on the perimeter — a year of almost but not quite, a year of sham and shoddy. Put your hand into the hand of Christ and tell Him you surrender ALL to Him — to His kingly rule of love. No half measures, no timidity, no expediency — but wholeheartedly commit yourself to Him. I know no other way for you and me to be quite sure that this will be a blessed year for us.

John Jackson — from Mondays' Prayer on the Air

If there is one thing which should be quite plain to those who accept the revelation of God in Nature and the Bible it is that he is *never* in a hurry. Long preparation, careful planning, and slow growth, would seem to be leading characteristics of spiritual life. Yet there are many people whose religious tempo is feverish. With a fine disregard for its context they flourish like a banner text, "*The King's business requireth haste*" (1 Sam. 21. 8), and proceed to drive themselves and their followers nearly mad with tension and anxiety!

J. B. Phillips



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

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

Vol. 74, No. 2

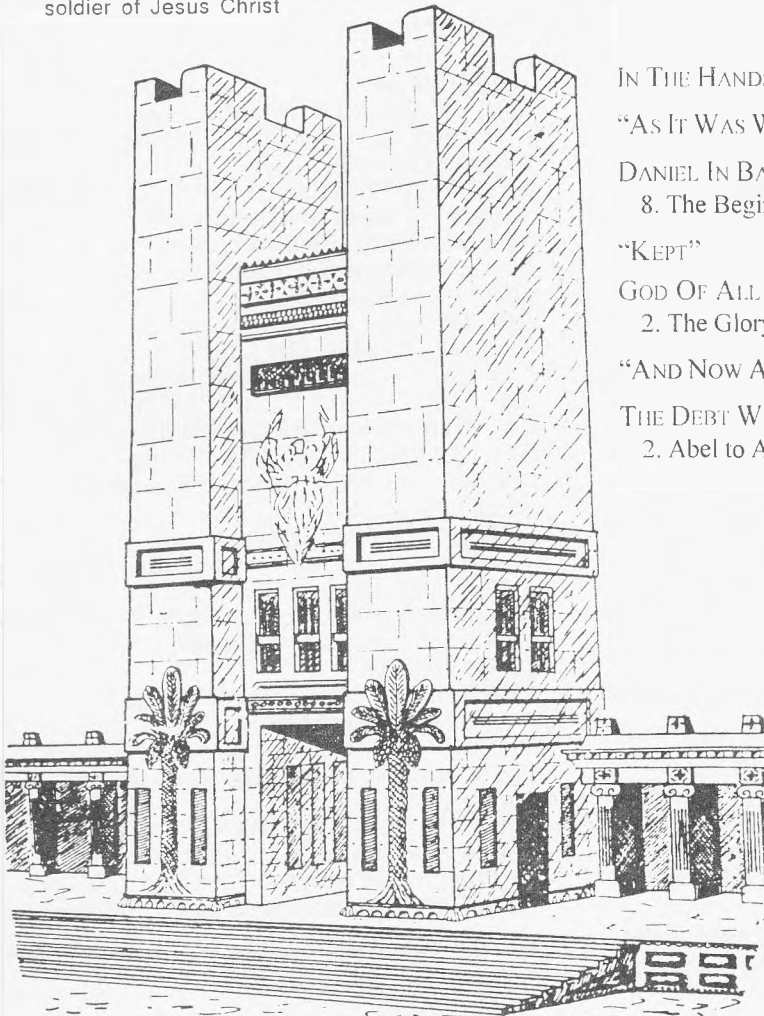
MARCH/APRIL 1997

Published March 1st

Next issue May 1st

CONTENTS

IN THE HANDS OF GOD	27
"AS IT WAS WRITTEN"	31
DANIEL IN BABYLON	
8. The Beginning of Visions	34
"KEPT"	37
GOD OF ALL SPACE	
2. The Glory of the Celestial	40
"AND NOW ABIDETH"	43
THE DEBT WE OWE	
2. Abel to Abraham	46



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

*This Journal is sent free
of charge to all who are
genuinely interested, on
request renewable annually
and is supported by the
voluntary gifts of its readers*

Published by
Bible Fellowship Union
4 Manor Gardens, Barnstone,
Nottingham NG13 9JL, England

Bible Study Monthly

FOUNDED 1924

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

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

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

Chairman: A. O. HUDSON (Milborne Port)

Editor & Secretary: D. NADAL (Nottingham)

Treasurer: R. J. HAINES (Gloucester)

PUBLICATIONS LIST

WITNESS

THE GOLDEN FUTURE. 36pp.

A foreview of better times, guaranteed by Divine care.

GOD'S FULFILLING PURPOSE. 20pp. (Cr 4vo).

An outline of the Divine Plan for mankind.

THE MILLENNIAL GOSPEL OF JESUS. 40pp.

The New Testament and the Millennium.

FUTURE PROBATION IN CHRISTIAN BELIEF. 90pp.

The case for conversion after death.

THE PLAN OF GOD IN BRIEF. 102pp.

An abridged edition of the work 'The Divine Plan of the Ages'.

PARADISE ON EARTH. 99pp.

Examination of the Scriptural basis for the belief in the Millennium.

A GLIMPSE OF GOD'S PLAN. 16pp.

A brief review from Creation to full Restoration.

PROPHECY

THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY. 52pp.

The nature of Biblical prophecy and the principles of its interpretation.

JACOB'S TROUBLE. 32pp. (Cr 4vo).

An exposition of the 'Gog and Magog' chapters of Ezekial 38-39.

12-16pp PAMPHLETS

- No. 31 The Bible — Book for Today.
 32 World Conversion — When?
 33 The Divine Permission of Evil.
 34 Everlasting Punishment.
 35 Conversion in the After-life.
 36 The Resurrection of the Dead.
 37 The Second Advent — Nature and Purpose.
 38 The Call and Destiny of Israel.
 39 The Personality of the Devil.
 40 Gifts of the Spirit.
 41 Man in the Image of God.
 42 Call and Purpose of the Church.
 43 Antiquity of the Books of Moses.
 44 The Reality of God.
 45 The Destiny of Man.

Unless stated, titles are Fcp 8vo (6½"x4")

HISTORICAL

THE TRAGEDY OF SAMSON. 52pp.

The story of Samson's life, his failures and ultimate reconciliation to God.

SAMUEL, GREATEST OF THE JUDGES. 40pp.

History of one of Israel's greatest men.

THE MISSION OF JONAH. 80pp.

A full examination of the book of Jonah with evidences of its historical accuracy.

DOCTRINAL

THE VIRGIN BIRTH OF CHRIST.

Full examination of Scriptural evidence.

THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF BAPTISM. 32pp.

Scripture teaching on baptism and its import.

THE COMING OF THE KING. 64pp.

A full examination of the Scripture evidence for the Second Advent.

GOD OF ALL SPACE. 48pp.

Impact of space science upon Christian belief.

THE ALMIGHTY — THE ETERNAL. 38pp.

Deals in depth with the relationship between the Father and the Son from a scriptural standpoint.

DEVOTIONAL

THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS. 36pp.

A study of consecration.

THE CUP OF THE LORD. 18pp.

A devotional treatise on our Lord's passion.

NARRATIVE

WATCHER IN GETHSEMANE. 16pp.

A narrative account of Jesus in Gethsemane.

IN THE LAND OF BEGINNING AGAIN. 24pp.

Five cameo stories of life in the early Millennial Age.

All literature shown in this list is available to readers of the Bible Study Monthly and to others who are genuinely interested. Printing and postal costs are met entirely by gifts of well-wishers and all such gifts are sincerely appreciated.

All requests for literature should be sent to:
 Bible Fellowship Union, 4 Manor Gardens, Barnstone,
 Nottingham NG13 9JL England.

B. J. Drinkwater

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 second hand.

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 numbers on church registers and success of some 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 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 began one recent year 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 ad-

mitted, 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 are only more people, which renders 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 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 if 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 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 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. 29). 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 it 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 by 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 un-

der 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 wilderness 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 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 unfailing care. The needs of his saints have always been met to the end of the age.

As the last years 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 heaven. 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).

D. Nadal

"AS IT WAS WRITTEN"

*Our Lord's sufferings
in prophecy*

"*For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him...*" (Mark 14. 21).

These are the words of Jesus as he was about to institute the 'Last Supper'. They had a special connection with the disciple who was to betray him, but they have a significance all of their own because of the extreme importance of his place in God's purpose. Each step of his ministry (we might say of his life) was very specifically guided by his Father in Heaven. As he walked to Emmaus with two disconsolate disciples he began with Moses and all the prophets explaining the Scripture concerning himself. (Luke 24. 27).

Long before that, when taken as a baby of eight days old to the Temple, Simeon has spoken prophetically about Jesus and then turning to Mary he continued "*a sword will pierce through your own soul also*". (Luke 2. 35). Luke twice records that Mary kept and pondered the things which were happening to her and to her special son. She must have thought hard about Simeon's words and eventually discovered their meaning as she stood with other women by the cross on Golgotha. But there is no hint of this as the angel appears to Zechariah and Mary concerning the birth of their sons. Nor do their poems of triumph (Luke 1. 42-56; 68-79) reveal any idea that they knew the violent death which the coun-

ins were to experience within a short time of each other because of their proclamation of truth. A clue is given here and there, as with Joseph listening to the angel telling him to name the baby "*Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins*" (Matt. 1.21). The words of Zechariah and Mary are echoes of the words of the prophets and it was they who had spoken of the sufferings of Messiah.

We cannot know how and when the full light of prophecy was revealed to Jesus concerning his sufferings and death but since he must have been familiar with the prophets from an early age, he was aware that anyone who spoke truly in the name of the Lord was at risk from the world and its master. Many of the great men and women of God from Abel onwards felt Satan's cruel opposition to what is right and good. At various times during his ministry, beginning with the marriage at Cana, Jesus clearly knew whether or not his time or his hour had come. In the last year before the cross, Jesus "*set his face to go to Jerusalem*" and a little later he said "*I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.*" Then come those words which are both tender and tragic, "*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have*

gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings and you would not! . . ." (Luke 13. 33, 34).

However, long before this, Jesus began to warn the disciples of trouble to come. After Peter had made his great confession identifying the Messiah "*Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised*" (Matt. 16. 21). Later there was a second and yet a third warning in which the premonition of the crucifixion became clearer. (Matt. 17. 22 and 20. 18). Jesus had been aware of plots to kill him fairly early in his ministry because he chose to uphold the values of true piety toward God rather than the traditions of men. Finally, during that last fateful week he clarified the position in front of friends and enemies; first in the telling of the parable about wicked tenants and then by references to the prophets. In the parable it was clear that outwardly religious people had been responsible for the suffering and death of God's messengers all through the centuries.

Now they were going to kill the son and the religious leaders knew who he was talking about. One wonders whether the priests thought of that parable when they arrested the apostles as recorded in Acts 5. 28 "*you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us*".

To the apostles and other members of the early Church the teaching with which Jesus followed that parable was perhaps more important. He referred to the stone which the builders rejected and which became head of the corner. Thus he brought together the words of Psalm 118. 22 and Isa. 28. 16 which were to become the basis of important teaching in the Church as it developed its message of a rejected Messiah who had been resurrected (Matt. 21. 42; Acts 4. 11; Rom. 9. 33 and 1 Pet. 2. 4-7).

There were two further incidents which indicate how near the surface of Jesus' thoughts were his destiny in God's purpose. During that special week before his death he spent some time in the home at Bethany. It was here that Mary anointed his feet with expensive ointment and was criticised for so doing by envious onlookers. Jesus rebuked them and said that Mary was anointing him for his burial, at a time when the love which prompted the act was a real comfort to him. Through all the mental agony which culminated in Gethsemane, Jesus was conscious of the loving, fatherly watchcare from heaven

which planned and authorised his life and death. This incident is in stark contrast to the ignorance of a ruler of this world. At his civil trial before Pilate, the governor reminded the prisoner that he had power to put him to death. Jesus corrected Pilate by saying that he had no power except that which was given by God. Human intelligence is a gift from God but unsubsdued to his will, it thinks only of how clever and powerful it is. Those surrendered to the power of the Holy Spirit are aware of the mighty power of God directing the affairs of mankind, and in particular the way which the followers of Christ must take. As they went to the rack and stake, the firing squad and the hangman's noose, they trod that path because of the knowledge that God permits a painful death only so that they may be transformed into the likeness of his dear son.

It would be interesting to know just which Scriptures were uppermost in Jesus' mind when he spoke to the disciples on the Emmaus road. Psalm 22 must have had a tremendous effect upon him causing him to echo the psalm's opening words as he hung on the cross. It is a wonderful psalm plumbing the depth of divine pathos in the suffering Messiah yet reaching the height of sublime victory in the salvation of all mankind. It is a psalm which appears to reveal clear details of Jesus' sufferings and in particular the indignity of watching his personal clothing divided and gambled for by the gentile soldiers. Some difficulty of translation surrounds the word 'pierced' in v. 16 but it is clear in Zech 12. 10.

The importance of this psalm and other prophecies does not lie in its literal detail but in the ethical-spiritual sense in which Messiah is depicted. Jesus knew that he must suffer as the prophets had done, and this is shown in the Parable of the Tenants as he taught in the Temple. It has been suggested that Psalm 22 may have been written by Jeremiah because of its similarity to his sufferings. It is the whole tenor of these Messianic prophecies concerning the suffering of God's servant reaching their climax in Isaiah 53, which gave grounds for belief in Jesus as the One who was to come, the prophet like Moses, the Messiah who would take away sin.

As we look through Psalm 22 we see a picture of one who totally trusted in the Living and Almighty God, the God of Israel who had delivered his people when they cried to him. Really the opening words taken in context with what follows are not a cry of despair but of persistent prayer, importunity at its

greatest, by one who taught his followers that they ought always to pray and not to give up (Luke 18. 1). He cried on the cross to the Father who had carried him safely through the many hazards of his childhood. He rested in that providential care which his brethren would need to learn to depend upon. The cry was from one who had reached 'rock bottom' in his experience; he felt like a worm which all trample upon, and a victim which the 'lions' might tear apart. This one who had brought healing and hope to many in Israel was now bitterly tormented and cruelly injured. God's chosen people utterly despised and rejected his son. His whole body felt as if it was going to pieces as the mighty ones of this world surrounded and oppressed him. Yet in spite of all this, his faith in God had not faltered and he cried again for deliverance . . . and was heard.

The full wonder of Psalm 22 is not only that it tells us of the suffering of Christ, but that in the midst of those sufferings there is victory. The early Church caught up the theme for when they preached about Jesus, they related the sufferings that he bore to the Kingdom which is to come. It was not for nothing that God allowed his helpless son to endure so much, but that the promise to Abraham so long before, could be fulfilled and that "*all the families of the nations shall worship before him*" (Psalm 22. 27-28). God has not despised or disdained the suffering of the afflicted one; nor has He hidden his face from him but has heard his cry for help. This has been the hope of all who have suffered for Christ, in both Old Testament days and among the New Creation. The

Lord Jesus Christ towers above all others in the depth of suffering, in his faith in God and in the ultimate atoning value of his work. Nevertheless, they who are with him, have always had the constant vigilance of a God who will never allow a tear to be shed nor a drop of blood to be spilled without his knowledge, permission and ultimate vindication.

Jesus knew the way which he took. He knew that an ethically upright person who told the truth and showed up sin for what it is, must pay the penalty of suffering. Just so had God permitted evil in the world. It had been allowed to appear to succeed for a time. But sin and evil are illogical and can never ultimately triumph. Much more, Jesus was proclaimed by John the Baptist twice to be the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world. At first the apostles shrank from the idea 'of a slain lamb'. The nearer they approached it, the more they tried to put it out of their minds. But when victory over death came, followed by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, they too were able to share the wonder of the crucified Saviour and of the empty tomb. Looking forward, the vision in the second half of Psalm 22 is yet to have its fulfilment. Just as it had been written that Messiah must suffer, so it has been written by all the prophets of Israel that he will establish a Kingdom of righteousness and peace for all humanity, "*all who have gone down into the dust will kneel before him*" . . . "*and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.*" (Psalm 22. 29; Phil. 2. 11).

We are to love and cultivate that which is pure to such an extent that that which is impure will become painful to us, distressing, and we will desire to drop it from memory, and this will only be accomplished by continually thinking upon those things that are pure, and avoiding the giving of thought to the things that are impure. We are to recognise true loveliness, and to esteem it. When we would think on the pur-

est of things we must of necessity lift our mental vision to as high a point as possible, and, as nearly as we may be able, discern the loveliness of the perfect character of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ, and proportionately the loveliness manifested in one or another of the followers of Jesus, who walk closely in His footsteps.

Come from us

Sis. Alice Johnston (Milborne Port)
 Bro. George Storey (Gateshead)
 Margaret Wood (Hastings/Sheffield)

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

A. O. Hudson

DANIEL IN BABYLON*The story of a great man's faith***8. The Beginning of Visions**

The seventh chapter of Daniel begins what is virtually an independent book — the book of visions. The first six chapters are histories; they relate events that took place during the space of some seventy years from the beginning of Nebuchadnezzar's reign to the beginning of Cyrus' reign — all the time of the first universal empire, that of Babylon. Chapter 7 goes back some seventeen years, to the first year of Belshazzar the last native king of Babylon, and tells of the visions which came to the aged prophet and have been of such surpassing interest to every generation of "watchers" from that day to this.

At this time Daniel was about seventy-four years of age. His old master and friend, King Nebuchadnezzar, had been dead for eleven years. He was no longer chief of the wise men of Babylon; all his official ranks had gone and he lived as a private citizen, almost certainly among his own fellow-exiles in some residential quarter of the city. His only friend at court was probably Queen Nitocris, younger daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, wife of Nabonidus the reigning monarch, and mother of Belshazzar, who this very year had been promoted to joint-rule with his father. The voice of Ezekiel had been silent for twenty-one years so that although he was only Daniel's age, we do not know whether he was alive or dead. So far as the Book of Daniel itself indicates, the prophet was alone, and in solitude recorded for future generations the vivid vision-pictures with which we as prophetic students have become so familiar.

Here then in the first year of Belshazzar Daniel slept and dreamed. In earlier years the purposes of God had been conveyed to the mind of the great king by means of dreams — the dream of the great image, the dream of the great tree, and Daniel had been employed as the agent in making known to the king the meaning of the dreams. From those dreams we have our first understanding of the Divine arrangement of Gentile Times followed by the setting up of the Kingdom of God. Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome; these are the four successive empires, from Nebuchadnezzar's day to our own, succeeded by the incoming and all-conquering Kingdom of God, pictured by the manlike image of gold, silver, copper and iron. The "Seven Times" during which the tree of the dream was to be bound with iron and copper

has been held by many to indicate in symbolic language the duration of those Gentile Times; without embarking on the hazardous seas of chronological speculation it can certainly be admitted that the mystic number 2520, which is the equivalent of symbolic "seven times" is a significant one in the succession of periods which make up human history as it is punctuated by events momentous from the standpoint of the Divine Plan. (A "time" in Daniel, Heb. *iddan*, is the Sumerian time measure which they called the "day" of God or "Divine day", a period of 360 years), hence the 3½ times of prophecy is 1260 years and seven times is 2520 derived from the 1262 year period in which eclipses of the sun and moon recur in the same order). It cannot be denied that the cycle of 2520 years, from the inception of the "head of gold" empire brings us just about to the present day when it is patent to the most casual observer that the feet of iron are about to collapse into the sea of burning flame and so go into utter destruction, just as is indicated under other symbols in the vision of Daniel 7 which we are now about to examine. We have therefore already a direct connection between the days of Daniel and our own day as the beginning and ending of an epoch in the outworking of God's purposes leading directly to the inauguration of the greatest epoch of all — the Kingdom of God upon earth.

The king's vision was one of human pride and achievement — a colossal image of a man, towering up into the skies. Daniel's dream was of something very different — a manifestation of beast-like forces begotten of chaos, striving together for mastery, and finally disappearing before the superior power of the Lord from Heaven. There are therefore important lessons for all Christians to be learned from the pictures that flickered across the prophet's sleeping mind on that quiet night in ancient Babylon so many thousands of years ago.

Detailed interpretations of the dream, both Historical and Futurist, are legion and there is no intention here of adding to the number. In a treatise which is descriptive of the life of Daniel in Babylon such detailed interpretation of prophecy would not be altogether in place. But because this treatise is a life of Daniel in Babylon something of what it meant to Daniel and his people at that time, is most decid-

edly in place, and upon that background the prophetic students may, if they will, proceed to elaborate their interpretations.

"I saw in my vision by night", says Daniel, "and, behold, the four winds of heaven strove upon the great sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another . . ." (Ch. 7, v. 2, 3). The account goes on to describe the first beast as like a lion with eagles' wings, rearing up on its hind legs in the endeavour to walk as a man, and, too, having a man's heart. Then came a second, like a bear, in a recumbent position, but with one foreleg flexed as though in the act of getting up. Thirdly, a leopard with four heads and four wings, and finally, a beast so alien to all known animals and so terrible in its aspect that Daniel was hard put to it to find words sufficiently descriptive.

The life of the four beasts was brief. There came a great appearance in the heavens, the setting of celestial thrones and the coming of the Most High for judgment; the arraignment of those beasts before him and their condemnation and destruction in the fiery flame. Then the sequel; the advent of a mighty one, the Son of Man, to receive the kingship of earth and rule over it in a kingdom which should never pass away. Four beasts, born of chaos, doomed to destruction, are succeeded by an everlasting kingdom. Taken in conjunction with the earlier vision of the great image, the application and the meaning almost immediately suggests itself.

Daniel had lived in Babylon for more than fifty years, the greater part of his life. He was thoroughly versed in the history, the mythology, and the folklore of the Babylonians. He had been Chief of all their wise men, their priesthoods and their philosophers. It would not be surprising therefore if the "background" of his dream, or as we might say, the "setting", had a distinctly Babylonian flavour. In such a manner the meaning and application of the dream would be much more readily grasped by those devout Jews in Babylon who were to be the immediate recipients of this Divine revelation.

The four winds "strove upon the great sea". That expression goes right back to the beginning of Babylonian mythology. The old stories of creation told of a time before the gods had made man, or the solid earth that was man's home, when all was chaos, a dark and dismal abyss in which the winds and waters raged and howled, and nothing had any shape or form. That chaos was personified by the

Babylonians and pictured as a terrible monster named Tiamat. When the time of creation drew near, Bel-Marduk the life-giver, the Son of Ea the God of the sea, came forth with his arrows of light to overcome and slay Tiamat and turn the dark chaos into the ordered earth illuminated by the light of the sun, preparatory to creating man upon it. All of which, of course, can be traced back pretty clearly to the original truth expressed in Genesis, "In the beginning the earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, and God said 'Let there be light' and there was light." And the subsequent work of creation was carried out by One "without whom was not anything made that was made" the only-begotten Son of God.

The Hebrew word for "deep" in Gen. 1, 1 is "tehom" which is the Hebrew equivalent of "Tiamat" and is directly derived from that Babylonian word.

So Daniel saw these four beast-like creatures emerging from the darkness and confusion of chaos and of evil. They were not from God; they did not have their origin in the heavens; they came from the earth and from the basest elements of the earth, and because they were thus born of chaos they must sooner or later meet the powers of heaven in mortal conflict, and be overthrown. That at least was the first fundamental truth Daniel drew from this vivid dream.

The first beast was like a lion with eagle's wings, a familiar creature to Daniel. There were many such in Babylon. Stone lions with eagles' wings and usually with human heads stood guard at every palace gateway and temple portico. There are two standing at present in the British Museum. Walls, buildings and gateways were adorned with sculptured reliefs of the same creatures. The winged lion was the symbol of Babylon, just as Landseer's lions in Trafalgar Square are the symbols of Britain. Daniel, seeing that creature in his dream, knew at once and without any doubt that he was looking upon the symbol of the world-empire that had been pictured in the "head of gold" of the image — the empire of Babylon.

But this lion was standing, rearing itself up on its hind legs like a man, whereas the winged lions of Babylon are usually pictured standing on all fours or recumbent. That, too, must have suggested something else to Daniel's mind. When the lions or other creatures of Babylonian mythology were pictured

as rearing up on two legs it was because they were fighting an enemy. So with the lion of Daniel's dream. It had a man's heart, the sagacity and intelligence of a man — maybe the outstanding soldier whose skill and sagacity established the empire, Nebuchadnezzar — but it was fighting for its life all the time and eventually it went down before its foes.

Daniel saw that happen in the dream. The A.V. is not quite correct. Vs. 4 should read "I beheld till the wings were plucked *wherewith* it was lifted up from the earth . . ." Daniel lived to see the wings plucked.

The second beast was a bear, a beast alien to Babylonian mythology, for there were never any bears in Babylonia. Bears are creatures of the wooded mountains and the land of the two rivers has no mountains and few trees. Here was an alien power which "raised up itself on one side." That part of the picture would be familiar to Daniel, for the sculptures of Babylon did show animals with one foreleg bent in recumbent position and the other straightened as the beast "rose up to the prey." So, eventually, Persia, the land of mountains and of bears, the silver breast of the image, sprang upon Babylon, Egypt and Lydia, and devoured them, just as the bear in the vision devoured the flesh from the three ribs it carried in its mouth.

Daniel could not have known, by his own unaided knowledge, what was prefigured by the four-winged and four headed leopard, the third beast of his dream. Very possibly though his mind was enlightened by the Holy Spirit, so that in some dim way he was able to see into futurity and sense something of the swiftly-moving armies of Greece which spread the third empire so rapidly over the four quarters of the world, and when it had reached its wildest limits at the death of Alexander the Great, became divided into four realms under four heads. It remained for later historians to show how accurately the march of events fitted the circumstances of the dream.

Then came the fourth beast, "dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth . . . and it had ten horns." This beast was evidently unlike any known earthly animal and its aspect

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

was such as to strike terror into the beholder. This was the beast which figured most prominently in the Divine judgment shortly to come, and with that hint as to its continued existence right up until the time of that judgment it is not surprising that most students think of Rome, the successor of Greece in world rulership, destined to rule until the Son of Man should come in the glory of his Kingdom and sweep away every vestige of man's rule from the earth. According to Daniel, this beast more than them all was the enemy of God's saints and made war against them; this, said the angel, shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth and shall not only prevail over the saints but shall speak blasphemy against the Most High and prevail during the mystic period of trial and persecution, the time, times and half a time, the twelve hundred and sixty days which always betokens oppression, persecution and testing of the faithful in God. One wonders if this strange and terrible beast which Daniel saw in his vision was in fact the dragon or serpent of Babylon, the mysterious *sirrussu*, whose form is so often seen on the sculptures of that ancient city. That was a creature like nothing known in Nature. The four bronze serpents guarding the gateway of the Temple of Bel-Marduk in Babylon were *sirrussu*. More than anything else that mythical creature symbolised the power of evil and the archangel of evil, the Devil himself. and when in the Scriptures the dragon or the serpent is mentioned it is always this strange and terrible beast that is in mind. From Daniel to Revelation there is the same idea made prominent; the dragon of ancient Babylon is manifest in that great power which for twenty out of the twenty-five centuries of Gentile Times has wielded its crushing iron rule over the nations and persecuted the saints of God.

But this was not the end of the dream. The forces of heaven were moving to judgment and away in the celestial realm the outraged holiness of God was ready now to sweep back into the oblivion of chaos all these beast-like systems which for so long had usurped his domain.

To be continued

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.

T. Holmes

“KEPT”

A Memorial reflection

“I have kept them in thy name” (Jno. 17. 12).

The surrendering up of a stewardship is always a searching time. It is not every steward who can do this with honour, and look back upon the period of stewardship with satisfaction. Happy, indeed, the man who can carry into retirement the conviction that he has not consciously been derelict in duty, and need have no fear even though heaven and earth search into his record.

In his incomparable prayer, in John 17, our Lord was rendering up his stewardship, which included the task of teaching and protecting the little band of apostles and a wider circle of believers, numbering in all about five hundred (1 Cor. 15. 6). These all had been waiting for the consolation of Israel, and had followed the Lord throughout the most part of his ministry. And these all (the Apostles in particular) were the choicest souls in Israel, of whom the Lord Jesus said: *“Thine they were, and thou gavest them to me.”* Now He had come to the final night of his human life, and in their hearing, so that they might know how close their relationship to God had been, and also how responsible before God his own relationship to them had been, He addressed the most moving and impressive prayer within the records of holy Writ to God, who had set his love upon this little band. How deeply it must have stirred their hearts to see and hear their Lord engaged in this most intimate prayer — a scene and prayer without parallel in the annals of time.

To hear Jesus say *“For their sakes I sanctify myself that they also might be sanctified through the truth”*, could not do other than impress on them that they were the subjects of Heaven’s care. His matchless life had been devoted to their protection and instruction — this they already knew — but here, in the subdued solemnity of that secluded room, it was their privilege to listen to the Shepherd of their souls surrender up his charge to God. *“While I was with them . . . I kept them in thy Name”*; now, *“Holy Father, keep through thine own Name those thou hast given me”*, are the impressive words which lighted on their ears as the Man of sorrows committed them to his Father’s care. That some of those words winged themselves to the target of their hearts is sure, for one who, in that supreme hour, heard them, himself wrote: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus . . . who . . . hath begotten us . . . who*

are KEPT by the power of God through faith” (1 Pet. 1. 5). Thus, the words of the Shepherd had fixed themselves in such wise that they emboldened Peter to tell all the children of God that Divine Power was active as a garrisoning force in their lives, to throw a cordon around them, and to be as an energising influence to help them in their resistance to the Adversary of their souls.

The truth that God is a “Keeper” of his people goes back a long way in Israel’s history. At the very forefront of the Priestly blessing, wherewith the High Priest was empowered to bless, stood the words: *“The Lord bless thee and keep thee . . .”* Thus the sense of a Divine Protector was early impressed. In later days the Psalmist caught up the theme, and sang: *“Behold, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy Keeper . . . the Lord shall preserve thee from all evil . . . from this time forth and even for evermore”* (Psa. 121: 4-8). Again, in a very special promise to a very particular Servant, God said: *“I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people”* (Isa. 42. 6). In a variation of the same promise, God says: *“Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel . . . In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee, and I will preserve thee and give thee for a covenant of the people . . .”* (Isa. 49. 7-8). Thus, in various ways, by many tongues, the Lord impressed upon the faithful of Israel that the angel of the Lord encamped about them, and that the heavenly messengers were given a charge concerning them to keep them in all their ways.

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

Obviously, therefore, conditions lay behind these promises, and only by complying with the conditions imposed could the Promise itself be claimed. In what sense, then, had God promised to keep the faithful of Israel? Did He promise to preserve them from injury or death, and give them a long span of life? Let the records of those worthy names inscribed on Israel's honoured scroll (see Heb. 11) be answer to that! Individual faithfulness amid mass unfaithfulness made suffering inevitable. Royal anger and mob passion wrought their fury upon the valiant souls which dared to obey God rather than bow to the dictates of men. Thus, even the faithful in Israel fell in death, but in their fall the Divine Promise was certified. God kept them faithful to the end, when faithful testimony meant sure death. That which was precious in God's sight was not the bulk of flesh and bones, but the heart of steel, the uncorrupted character, the outlook of well guided faith. Into such faithful hearts God sent a flow of power — an insurgence of his own Holy Spirit — an influence from his sovereign Throne. It charged the batteries of stern resolve with heavenly dynamic, and made even the strongest men become stronger still. It made the weak more puissant than the loftiest kings, and showed that heaven's finger is powerful beyond even the loins of mighty men. Thus, in either life or death, divine protection is an incontrovertible fact, and incontestable truth, and an invincible reality, Israel's stalwarts always found it so, as fiery furnace-floors, lion's dens, violence of fire, mother-hearts bereaved, bear testimony.

This little "great-word" comes down from ages past, then, freighted with the victories of such men. Men had dared, and God had given the power of conquest over self and circumstance. It tells of great responsibilities nobly borne, of great issues faithfully met; of the shaping of men's lives and the direction of a nation's destiny. When others had fallen faithlessly, God had kept them faithful unto death; when others had been set aside, discarded and disowned, God had "kept" these as his own — his own heart's treasure and delight. "I kept them in thy Name," said the Lord. When impetuous impulse rushed Peter off his feet, and discouraging doubts laid Thomas low, and uprush of indignation made James and John desire fire from heaven, and sharp contentions of would-be greatness gave bitterness its chance! These and many other pitfalls had beset their feet, but past them all his gentle had safely

guided them. Words of approval now words and then to stimulate; words sharp with rebuke to afford restraint, words pregnant with instruction to enthuse their minds with Kingdom expectations — all these and many things beside had been fraught with keeping power.

Thus, in happy season and in sad, He had spoken the words which killed jealousy, checked resentment, smothered contention, provoked love and inspired hope. But, above all else which had tended to keep them safe, was the story of the Father's love. "*I have manifested thy Name unto the men which thou gavest me*" — God's Name, God's character, God's Love, God's Holiness, God's Omnipotence — set forth in winsome little parables which shot right home and gripped their interested hearts. And then, "*they have known surely that I came out from thee; and they have believed that thou didst send me.*" Belief of this cardinal point helped them to stand; disbelief caused the nations to fall.

With the closing of the prayer they went forth into the night — the Master to his Gethsemane, and they to disappointment and flight. Peter fell, Thomas sank into the slough of doubt, others retired crestfallen, because He had not redeemed Israel. But into Peter's heart something had been instilled which gave vent to penitential tears, and kept him from Judas' fall. Something had been infused into the doubter's mind, and constrained him to venture again into the upper room, where the doubt was overcome. Something had been sown in hearts that in sadness said "We trusted that it had been He", which sprang to renewed vigour as they watched him breaking bread. Thus, after one dark hour while the Shepherd lay entombed, the keeping power began again, and brought to rich fruitage the words sown in pre-resurrection days. Timid and retiring men were made strong, and neither prison cells nor lictor's rods could stop their witnessing. Many of them fell in death, but the Divine Power wrought dynamic energy in the heart, and fitted to stand and withstand every strain. In weakness Divine Power matured, and made them more than conquerors.

Of the little band in the upper room, only one was lost. He had never been amenable to "keeping" power. A cultured man, yet withal a thief and carping critic. Cold, calculating, desirous to lead, not to be led, a conspirator and traitor to the end. When came the evil hour he fell. It was not the Master's fault that he thus fell. He had seen and he had heard all that the

others saw and heard, but he had not, like them, been "keepable". Sight of eye, and hearing of ear, had produced no good effect. He was unprepared for the evil hour, and died, as he had lived, with Mammon for his God. Son of Abraham though he was by birth, in moral things he was a child of the Evil One.

Setting the traitor, Judas, and the denier, Peter, side by side, we will be better able to determine what the "keeping power" may do. Peter had his many faults, impulsiveness, impetuosity, too great a readiness to speak — but he was amenable to restraint. If he roamed a little from the path, the Shepherd's crook could draw him back. When others went away and Jesus challenged them, it was Peter's ready tongue which said: "*But where else can we go — only thou hast the words of life!*"! Despite all his faults, he became one of the "inner" three — a sure token of a sincere man, with honest goodness in his heart. For him, the Master prayed when the evil hour drew nigh. He knew Peter was "salvable" at heart. He knew the rush of circumstance would sweep Peter off his feet, but He also knew he would rise again, and, after his turning about, become a tower of strength to his brethren. Peter was one of whom God said: "He is Mine". Judas was one of whom Satan could have said: "He is mine". Peter was a sheep of the Divine pasture. Judas was a wolf wearing a woollen fleece. The Good Shepherd could keep God's sheep and bring him back when wandering. He was not authorised by God to protect the wolf. The same influences were exerted in both cases, but one was saved, while the other was lost.

Brethren in the Lord, there is a determining power in God's truth, which, because of what is inherent in the heart, becomes a savour of life unto life for some,

but a savour of death unto death for others! Why is this? The difference springs from the human heart — from the motives which lead to response towards the truth. Some are severely simple and sincere through and through; others are wayward, daring, inclined to take liberties with the word and with Providence, while others are malicious, ravenous, greedy of place and power, caring not who may suffer, if only they can gain their ends. The Shepherd of the flock is not commissioned to keep and protect the destructive wolf. He is not authorised to check the wayward goat, but He is deputed to use Almighty pastoral power to keep and guard and feed the sheep of God in every circumstance. The true sheep hears his voice. The goat, too, may hear his voice. Even the wolf may hear his voice. But the true sheep obeys. The goat will wander on. The wolf will slouch around waiting for his "kill". Immediate response to the leading influence of the Lord manifested in daily Providence is the keynote of the "keepable" state; hesitation to obey or refusal to obey makes the "keeping" work impossible. Sheep do not change into goats. Neither do they become wolves. If a seeming brother falls it is scarcely likely that he ever was a sheep. The congregation may have accounted him a sheep, but the Lord knew the truth of the situation all the time. To enjoy the Shepherd's care as a true sheep is a blessed thing, but to have crept into the fold, yet not know the Shepherd's care is a state of dire peril indeed. Such may for a time range themselves around the study of the Word, but lacking the sweet binding influence of the Holy Spirit, it is perhaps only a matter of time before their studious ardour cools, and their interest is dead. But on his own word, a true sheep He cannot lose, but keeps them to the end.

"As I was paying heed to what was profitable, some writings came into my hands which were too old for Greek ideas, and too divine for Greek errors. Thus was my soul instructed by God, and I understood how pagan teachings lead to condemnation, whilst these teachings abolish the bondage that prevails throughout the world, and free us from a plurality of rulers and tyrants innumerable. They furnish us not with something which we had not already received, but with something which, thanks to errors, had been lost".

Thus wrote Tatian, an Assyrian, and one of the

most brilliant pagans of the second century, speaking of his conversion to Christianity. It is a worthy note that, coming to the Old Testament (the writings to which he refers above) and the teachings of the Christian Church, he realised how different were these principles from the Greek philosophy which held premier place in the world of that day, and, too, that acceptance of this new way of life brings freedom from the bondage which is upon men. Said Jesus: "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free".

A. O. Hudson

GOD OF ALL SPACE

3. The Glory of the Celestial

*Impact of space science
upon Christian belief*

This visible universe is not the only sphere of life. The experiences and the convictions of many testify that there is a world of living intelligence above and beyond the physical, not perceptible by any of the five human senses but a real world nevertheless. Sometimes it is called the spiritual world and its citizens spiritual beings because it lies beyond the bounds of man's senses, and sometimes the celestial world because it lies beyond the bounds of man's geography. Our own universe is an atomic structure built up from ninety-two elements, ranging from hydrogen the lightest to uranium the heaviest — discounting a few heavier man-made ones — which, by chemical combination with each other, form all known substances, and powered by radiated energy vibrating at rates between a hundred thousand times a second and many many millions, technically called the "electro-magnetic spectrum". Everything in this universe obeys the laws set by this atomic structure and this energy range; what may lie outside of these, we do not know and as men will never know since all our knowledge is derived from observational instruments which themselves are constructed from these atoms and can respond only to these energy vibrations. Our information regarding the celestial world comes to us through the Bible, the revelation of God, creator of both this world and that, supplemented a little in our own day by the reasoning of men whose deepening knowledge of the physical world is enabling them vaguely to see what possibilities may conceivably lie beyond it. The decline of Christian belief characteristic of the past century or more had led to a very general scepticism as to the experience of a "spiritual" world and of "spiritual" beings; the leaders of scientific thought and research have for a number of generations ignored any claims for the reality of anything that could not be demonstrated physically either by the natural senses or some man-made observing or measuring instrument. But now some of these scientists are not so sure; they are beginning to perceive the possibility that there can be and might well be some kind of world and some kind of life outside the scope of our physical universe and in so doing they concede the case to the Bible. In this, as in so many matters nowadays, the progress of scientific discovery is demonstrating the intrinsic harmony of science with

Divine revelation. At a conference of high level United States physicists in 1967, during a discussion on the problems of detecting life in space, it was said that we may no longer insist that life can only be manifested in material bodies such as ours, bodies of micro-cellular structure; there is no certainty that an entirely different form of life structure is not possible. At a rather earlier date another atomic physicist, appearing in a B.B.C. feature, referred to the possible existence of other universes dependent on other forces not capable of interaction with our own, so that they might conceivably exist, so to speak, on a different wave-length and be quite imperceptible to us although present in reality all the time. Firsoff, in "*Life beyond the earth*" suggests that there is "*no reason why longer or shorter wave-lengths*" (than those of the electro-magnetic spectrum, which govern all the phenomena of our universe) "*could not form the basis of sensory perception . . . we cannot be sure that there are no other forms of vibrant energy that could be so used . . . these may not be obstructed by living tissues, and so the organs of perception or emission may be in the brain*". All this is to say that modern scientific thought no longer denies the possibility of a world which is a real world but beyond our powers to perceive, inhabited by living intelligences who themselves cannot be perceived by man but can make their presence known, and communicate directly, to the human brain. This is the Biblical position; that world and those beings are given, by the Apostle Paul, the name "celestial".

The inhabitants of the celestial world are popularly termed "angels" and are depicted in religious pictures and sculpture as white-robed human beings, furnished with wings for the purpose of travel from the realms above. (This particular form was developed long before men knew that the earth's atmosphere extends only a few miles up and that wings are useless in space). The term "angel" is the Greek word carried over into English; in both the Old and New Testaments the respective Hebrew and Greek words mean, simply and solely, a messenger. This is derived from the fact that whenever the Bible tells of a celestial being visiting the earth, he comes, naturally, as a messenger, with a commission to fulfil. But in thus coming he must of necessity

make himself apparent to men. One of the powers characteristic of celestial beings is evidently that of metamorphosing or "materialising" into a human form which they can create for the time being from the elements of the earth around, a question of manipulating so much carbon, oxygen, hydrogen and so on to attain the desired end. The alchemists of the Middle Ages spent a lot of time trying to transmute the elements — turning lead into gold was their chief aim — without success; nowadays it is becoming a commonplace, such as, for instance, the conversion of natural gas into protein cattle food. There is nothing too wonderful today in thinking of a visitant to this earth thus clothing himself temporarily with an earthly body in order to render himself visible and audible. In the majority of instances such visitants appeared as ordinary men, as in the case of the three who visited Abraham (Gen. 18), those who appeared to Joshua (Josh. 5), Gideon (Jud. 6), Manoah (Jud. 13) and so on. Sometimes the appearance was in the form of a transcendently glorious being, but still human, as to Daniel (Dan. 10) but only when the importance of the occasion made it appropriate. New Testament manifestations to Zacharias, Mary, Peter and Paul were of the same general nature. Our Lord, after his resurrection and until his ascension, having been raised in the glory of his celestial nature, appeared to his disciples in various human forms assumed for the occasion — a gardener to Mary, a stranger on the way to Emmaus, and so on. One has to picture the celestial being as completely independent of the physical characteristics of our universe, able to come and go at will and adapt himself to whatever local conditions exist.

This leads to the reflection that the celestials must possess powers of mobility, to use a human expression, of a totally different nature from those of man. It has already been remarked that man's hopes of travelling to the distant stars are tempered with the reflection that such journeys must inevitably take thousands or millions of years. The nature of celestial life imposes no such limitations. The angel sent to Daniel in response to his impassioned prayer upon behalf of Israel (Dan. 9) appeared to him at about three o'clock in the afternoon of the day on which the prophet began his supplication. Even allowing for six hours' praying, if the angel was subject to human limitations of movement from one place to another and even travelled at the speed of light — and Prof. Einstein gives reasons why, in his view,

nothing can possibly travel faster than light — he could not have been farther away than the outermost planet of the solar system, Pluto, when he started. No one is going to suggest that Heaven is situated on the dark and cold chaos which is Pluto. There is, too, an interesting little reflection on those three men who visited Abraham. Two of them left the patriarch at not earlier than three in the afternoon to walk to Sodom, forty miles distant over rugged and trackless mountainous terrain. They arrived there before five! It is clear that once out of Abraham's sight those two angels abandoned human form, and adopted their own natural methods of transit before appearing again as men at the gates of Sodom two hours later. It would appear that a characteristic of the celestial nature is the power of what we would call instantaneous translation from one place to another irrespective of distance.

All this might lead to the conclusion that celestial beings are disembodied intelligences, like powerful minds without bodies, having no real world of their own, but just existing in space. In warning against this, the Apostle Paul makes it clear that just as earthly, terrestrial creatures possess bodies, organisms, by means of which the mind can make contact with its environment and know itself for what it is, so with the celestial. *"There are celestial bodies, and there are terrestrial bodies, but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another . . . there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. . . as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly"* (1 Cor. 15). Celestial beings are real beings with bodies suited to their environment and powers, and they exist in a real environment or world. Just as men can live only by absorbing energy from food, air and sunlight wherewith to power their thoughts and actions, so in some similar way celestial beings, whose lives are sustained by God just as surely as are those of men, must absorb and give out energy, which has its source ultimately in God, in living their lives and carrying out their activities. Likewise must the celestial world be a real world constituting an environment in which those beings are "at home" and which provides all things needful both for continued life and continued activity.

This latter is an important consideration. The idea that the "other world" or the "future life" is a place or state in which nothing is ever done and nothing new ever happens is ethically unsound and theologi-

cally incorrect. One might have some sympathy with the legendary charwoman, who, after a life time of hard work, had her tombstone bear the words "Gone to do nothing for ever and ever" but an eternity of idleness is likely to be more frustrating than comforting. Nearly fifty years ago J.W. Dunne, in one of his books, pointed out that if a man was placed in a world in which everything was done for him and he was never required to take any decision or make any effort so that the mind had nothing to do and the brain responded automatically to every changing situation, then in time that man would become an unconscious automaton; he would cease to think and cease to be a human being. In more recent years British and Canadian Universities have conducted experiments, in the interest of astronaut research, to discover what happens when a man is deprived of all external sense impressions by being enclosed in a cubicle without light or sound or anything to do. It was found that thinking became difficult after a few hours and no subject could tolerate more than a few days of the condition. Similar experiments in the United States led to the conclusion that unless the mind is stimulated by outward impressions and changing phenomena, growth and development ceases; if continued long enough the condition would lead to unconsciousness and death. It follows that an essential factor in continuing life is change and activity and this must be as true in the celestial sphere as in the terrestrial. It is not surprising therefore that we find casual allusion in the Scriptures to this aspect of the celestial world. "*Bless the Lord, O you his angels*" says David "*you mighty ones who do his word, hearkening to the voice of his word. Bless the Lord, all his hosts, his ministers that do his will*" (Psa. 103. 20-21). Here is a vivid picture of powerful beings dedicated to the service of God and living their lives in devoted activity according to his will. The nature of their occupations and achievements are of necessity unknown to us and in any case would be largely incomprehensible; man's only contact has been the occasional visit of solitary messengers for brief periods in past times. One can imagine a remote island inhabited only by primitive people to whom a very occasional westerner comes on a brief visit and goes away again; how much of the multifarious activities and the achievements of western civilisation on earth could those simple people be expected thus to glean. All we can say is that the scope and the grandeur of life in that celestial world and the variety of its accomplishments must be infi-

nately greater than anything that a man could imagine. This much at least is indicated by the inspired words of the eighth Psalm, wherein man is described as created a little lower than the angels even though constituted the custodian and administrator of all other living things on earth. It is apparent also from Job 38. 7 that at the time of terrestrial creation the celestial world already existed and its citizens "shouted for joy" at what was to them a new departure in divine creative activity.

That the celestials, although of vastly superior intellectual powers to humans, are subject to limitations in knowledge is inferred from Scriptures indicating that they are not cognisant of all that God purposes to do (Mark 13. 32, 1 Pet. 1. 12). That they evince an intense interest in the work of God amongst men can be concluded from the statements that there is joy among the angels in heaven over one sinner that repenteth (Luke 15. 10) and some indication in Matt. 18. 10 that one of their duties, or the duty of some of them, is the protective oversight of Christ's disciples here on earth. There may be more in the old idea of "guardian angels" than this present-day matter-of-fact world is prepared to concede. It might be justifiable to think that in the new earth of the future, when evil is banished and man reconciled to God, there will be closer and much more frequent contact between the two worlds than is the case or is even possible at this present time.

There is no sin in that world — its citizens are altogether and in every respect conformed to the Divine ideal, fully developed and occupying their ordained place in creation. As such that world forms a model for this and one day this earth and its society will be like that. The "Lord's Prayer" is one authority for that expectation: "*thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*". Twin principles expounded by Christ — love for God and love for neighbour — must there exercise universal sway, and in the power of so dynamic and orderly a righteous society it can be expected that united and co-operative effort and achievement carries life ever onward into widening realms of unimaginable splendour.

This is the Christian Heaven. The hope which the New Testament holds out to all faithful dedicated disciples of Christ is that following the close of terrestrial life they will experience a resurrection to enduring life in that world. The Apostle Paul speaks of those who "*sleep in Jesus*" and are awakened by instantaneous translation to the celestial sphere at

the Second Advent of Christ when He comes to establish his Millennial Kingdom upon earth (1 Thess. 4. 14-17. 1 Cor. 15. 51-52). The future life of the Church in eternal association with Christ involves a great deal of Apostolic teaching which is not relevant to the present subject, it may well be, though, that our Lord's declaration in Jno. 14. 2-3 to the effect despite the "many mansions" in his Father's house He must needs go away to prepare a place for his followers is a hint that the world in which the Church finds its ultimate home is one created on a still higher level of sentient life, beyond even the angelic celestial. Such may be necessary in order to fulfil in transcendent measure the promise that He will present us "faultless before the presence of his

Father with exceeding joy" (Jude 24). This also is one of the many unrevealed aspects of the future which will one day be made plain.

Beyond the lengthening vistas of all such possible celestial spheres, above the highest and most glorious of all created forms of life, is God, the Author and sustainer of all creation, the source of all life, of all energy, of all that is. In that incomprehensible Presence is enshrined the supreme mystery, a mystery which, perhaps, none of His creatures will ever fathom. Without beginning, without end, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, "even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God". All that we are, all that we shall be, is of Him.

(To be concluded)

T. Holmes

"AND NOW ABIDETH"

2. The graces of Love

*A series of studies
in 1 Cor. 13*

In turning attention to the list of graces which go to make up the Master-grace of Love, we find some of them described in terms of a positive nature, "Love is", while the rest are defined in terms of their opposite, "Love is not". Do not assume from this that Love is a compound of negatives. There were good reasons for Paul's adoption of this form of statement to the Corinthian Church; the context preceding offers proof enough of envy, of vaunting, of pride, of callous indifference to purity in their midst. Life, with them, was rough and raw, little moved from heathen ways. Paul desired to have them know that these carnal vicious practices were not accordant with the principles of the *Agape*, and would not win them approval in Heaven's sight, nor fit them for the nobler service to which they had been called. For men such as these — just as with Israel of old — it was essential to lay emphasis on the negative, and tell them precisely what "thou shalt not do". Such men, as yet, were unready for the deeper liberties of Christ, unready for the "golden rule" of doing unto others as they would others should do to them.

It is to our advantage to survey these negatives from their opposite point of view, for as we turn them round into positive elements, we can see why the *Agape*, the Love of God, will achieve such wonderful results in the hearts of men in days yet to come, and why they mean so much to the saints today. God's upper standard methods are based upon the

principle "do this", not upon a "thou shalt not". Hence the "*Agape*" will be assertive, aggressive and positive.

In this world, where evil reigns, the impact of these assertive qualities on other lives is bound to have a disturbing influence. They differ greatly from the legislative enactments which control and shape the ways of common life. As they impinge upon that life, men are apt to see themselves as targets for the marksmanship of men with a better weapon, and to feel resentment towards the more efficient marksman with his superior advantages. But such disturbance of the muddy waters by the inflow of a purer stream is God's way of purifying the stagnant reservoirs of human thought. The impact of Divine Love upon the empire of sin will be the greatest disturbing factor the world has known. It will uproot ancient concepts and overturn age-encrusted institutions as nothing else has done. What this mighty dynamic is in its whole, it must also be in all its parts. As the whole is an aggressive thing, so also is every part.

It is well for us to see these parts in their positive shape and dress, and to realise that there is deeper intent in their cultivation than mere adornment of character. Like the truth which Jesus taught they are as a sword (Matt. 10. 34) sent forth into the earth to assail the citadels of sin, though for this present Age restricted in their assault to outpost skirmishing ere

the main attack begins. We have the same weapon of attack today, though by less skilful use we cannot achieve the same results. But our feeble assaults with Love and Truth are not without some effect.

Taking the words of Paul as they stand in the text, we note that Love, on its positive side, suffers long and is kind; it rejoices with truth; . . . it beareth, believeth, hopeth and endureth all things. On its negative side it envieth not, it vaunteth not, and is not puffed up. It does not behave itself in unseemly ways; it seeketh not its own; is not provoked: takes no account of evil, does not rejoice in iniquity, nor does it ever fail.

Translating these negatives into the terms of their opposites they would read in tabulated form:—

Love envies not
 but is generous and benevolent,
 Love vaunteth not itself
 but is modest and decorous,
 Love is not puffed up
 but is humble and knows its place,
 Love doth not behave unseemly
 but is courteous and polite,
 Love seeketh not her own
 but is sacrificing and charitable,
 Love is not provoked
 but is evenly minded and good tempered,
 Love takes no account of evil
 but is guileless and pure,
 Love rejoiceth not in unrighteousness
 but is genuine and sincere,
 Love never fails
 but is always a success.

Writing up these qualities as positive elements they will read: "Love suffers long, and is kind; love is generous and benevolent; is modest and decorous; is humble and knows its place; is courteous and polite; is sacrificing and charitable; is evenly minded and good tempered; is guileless and pure; is genuine and sincere; rejoices with truth; bears all things; believes all things; hopes all things; endures all things. Love always succeeds."

To all appearances this is a list of simple qualities. Having passed the Master-grace through the prism of his own sanctified understanding, it comes out to Paul's pen broken up into its varied constituents, thus enabling us to take note that all have common names, and that they are qualities to which men of good faith pay lip service every day. Simple though they are, they are too exacting for the ordinary man to

observe and practise in the common round of life. It may be granted that some of the noblest of humanity, nature's gentlemen, have possessed some of them, in proportion as culture or circumstance brought refinement to their lives, but of this we can be sure, as history will attest, the balanced whole constitutes a standard of moral character too high for men unassisted by Divine help to reach. Once and once only that balanced whole has been exemplified before the eyes of men, and that once is the standard for all time. Men have scrutinised and analysed Christ's life but it has stood every test. Even non-believing men have had to confess that He stands alone, separate and apart from all men. The lustre of that One incomparable life is the measure of the outstanding worth of these simple graces blended and coordinated in the balanced wholeness of the *Agape*. There, in him, we see the elements for what they are; there we see the balanced whole for what it is. Love is not any one of these elements alone, but a complete synthesis of them all. As with the diamond, the synthesis makes it what it is. The diamond, like the more common graphite, is composed of carbon elements, but it is the way the atoms are arranged and interlocked that makes all the difference between the two. So it is with the *Agape*. The blending and interfusing of these elements so that each is permeated and tintured by all the rest makes Love the unique thing it is. There is no such quality as simple long-suffering or benevolence; it is always long-suffering or benevolence "plus". All that is of the real, the good, the true, goes into each one of them, but shines through this facet or that as the sparkling gem is turned.

From the evidence of Scripture, as well as of human experience, it seems that this synthesis of Love is an activating power peculiar to this reign of sin and death. Under no other set of circumstances could a synthesis like this be required. This spark from the Divine Flame which has been kindled in our hearts has its origin in the heart of God. In him it represents his attitude to fallen men. From him it passed first to his well-beloved Son, and kindled there the ready response to come down to man's relief, regardless of the cost.

While we can see the need of God's long-suffering with members of a fallen race, we cannot see the same need for the exercise of that quality towards the sons of light above. Long-suffering is not called for in his Love for them. Nor can we see the self-

sacrifice of Jesus in "seeking not his own" was needful in the heavenly courts. "Seeking not one's own" to the point of sacrifice could scarcely be an element of Love in the heavens. But notwithstanding such a lack those heavenly courts must have their codes of respect and esteem, with love each for each, befitting to such sacred atmosphere. Love, as sons of the same Father there surely must be, but even so it would seem to be minus some elements of the *Agape*, as that Master-grace has been made manifest towards fallen man. Nor does there seem to be reason or need for the perfect man, restitution being complete, to show long-suffering to his fellow-men, nor yet present himself in self-sacrifice on his behalf. There will be no cause for envy in that new earth, for all will have enough to make life complete. Nature's gentlemen will have grown mature and beautiful in righteousness and holiness, and brother-love will link them together in one happy relationship with God as the Father of all.

From considerations such as these it would seem that the "*Agape*" is Redemption Love, that the wider range of its elements is peculiar to these present times, on this sad old earth. And more than that, they seem to be the tie that binds the saint to his Saviour and his God, and that the saint alone of the teeming millions of earth is the honoured casket for those precious elements, of this deeper, fuller Love. In him, it is still Redemption Love, a love that spurs him on to graduate as a co-deliverer of a suffering world. These precious elements, thus exclusive to the Church, constitute the very essence of Christ-likeness, and as none but God's Elect can be conformed to the very image of his Son, so none but

these can scale the heights, or plumb the depths of this very special Love.

It will be a great thing indeed for Restitution's gentlemen to take on the perfect Love of that new earth, but it is a greater thing — an infinitely greater thing — for the saint of God in these present times of sin and death to put on this adornment of Christ, as a co-ordinated and balanced thing, with Satan and his hosts at large on every hand to tempt and harass and oppose. Nothing but the power of God can accomplish this amazing thing, and nourish into completeness and maturity the "likeness" of his Son.

Thoughts like these should invest our calling with deeper urgency and seriousness every day, for the opportunity to grow like Christ is flitting by with every setting sun. When once the body of the Elect is complete, the opportunity will not recur again. It is no easy thing to transform conceptions into character, but if it is to be accomplished in any heart, it must be done today. These simple elements must be put on, and must interpenetrate and permeate each other in their entirety if the Love that is shed abroad by the Holy Spirit is to reach its maturity in Christ-like character. The very desires of the heart of God must infiltrate into every saintly heart, and fill it with the same burning zeal to live and labour for this groaning world's redemption and deliverance from sin and death. That is the end and purpose of the "*Agape*"; that is the objective towards which our simple elements must grow. Neither are these graces an adornment just for today; they are the equipment for a great work on the grand scale in another and better day.

(To be continued)

Note on Phil. 2. 10

"That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, both in heaven, and in earth, and under the earth." The reference to some who "under the earth" will bow the knee to Jesus sometimes provokes a question. Those in heaven, and those on earth — that is easily understood; but who are those "under the earth?" The Greek word which is translated by these three words is *katachthonios*, which is composed of *kata*, meaning down, *chthonios*, which is defined by Liddell and Scott as having reference to anything in or under the earth but especially to the gods below the earth. These gods in Greek mythol-

ogy were the Titans, who rebelled against the gods of heaven and after being defeated were cast out of Heaven and imprisoned below the earth. These Titans correspond to the fallen angels, and it would seem that Paul used the word to refer to those fallen angels who are described by Peter as being imprisoned in Tartarus. In other words, when the Divine Plan for man is complete, not only will all in heaven and earth bend the knee, but also those who were "disobedient in the days of Noah" unless of course by wilful and continued opposition to the ways of God they reap the inevitable wages of sin — death.

F. A. Shuttleworth

THE DEBT WE OWE

Part 2. Abel to Abraham

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 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. 12). 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 only 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 found 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 unflinching 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 indestructible 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 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 wicked

ness" 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 fullness 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 this 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)

"Oh the comfort of feeling safe with a person, having neither to weigh thought or measure words, but pouring them out just as they are, chaff and grain

together, certain that a faithful hand will take apart and sift them, and keep that which is worth keeping, and with a breath of comfort blow the rest away."



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

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

Vol. 74, No. 3

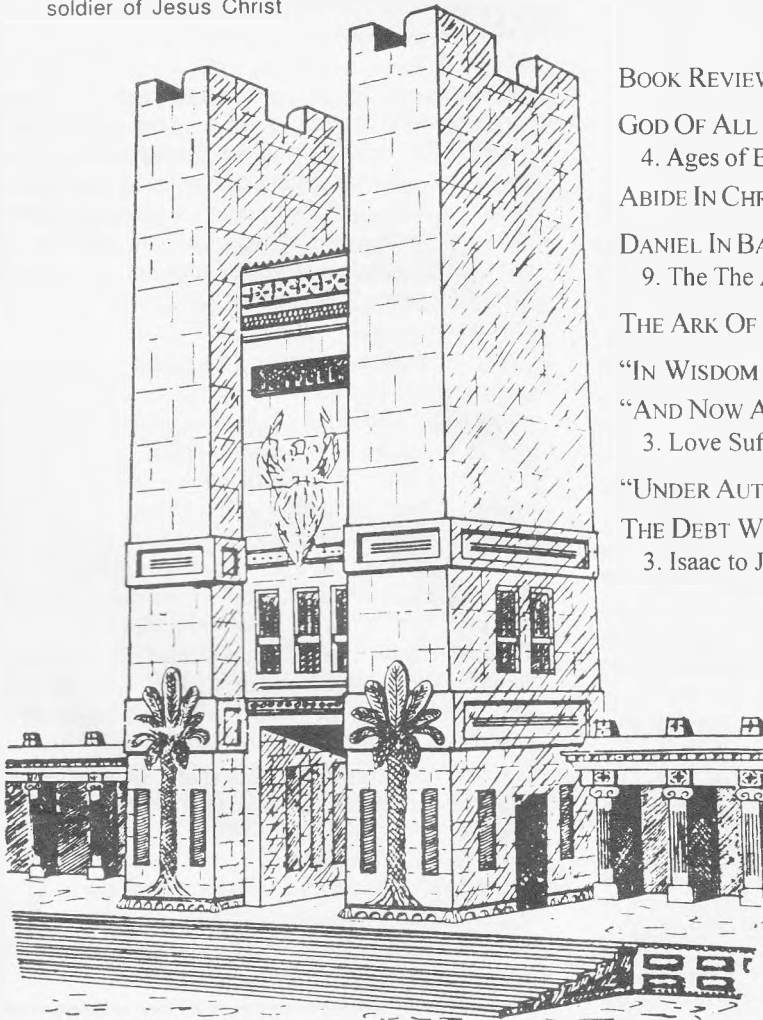
MAY/JUNE 1997

Published May 1st

Next issue July 1st

CONTENTS

BOOK REVIEW	50
GOD OF ALL SPACE	
4. Ages of Eternity	51
ABIDE IN CHRIST	54
DANIEL IN BABYLON	
9. The The Ancient of Days	58
THE ARK OF THE PRESENCE	61
"IN WISDOM YOU MADE THEM ALL"	64
"AND NOW ABIDETH"	
3. Love Suffers Long	65
"UNDER AUTHORITY"	67
THE DEBT WE OWE	
3. Isaac to Joseph	70



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

*This Journal is sent free
of charge to all who are
genuinely interested, on
request renewable annually
and is supported by the
voluntary gifts of its readers*

Published by
Bible Fellowship Union
4 Manor Gardens, Barnstone,
Nottingham NG13 9JL, England

Bible Study Monthly

FOUNDED 1924

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

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

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

Chairman: A. O. HUDSON (Milborne Port)

Editor & Secretary: D. NADAL (Nottingham)

Treasurer: R. J. HAINES (Gloucester)

BOOK REVIEW

David Rohl: A Test of Time

Century hardback, ISBN 0-7126-5913-7, £19.99

Arrow paperback, ISBN 0-09-936561-8, £14.99

In God's economy, apparent difficulties often provide useful opportunities. An enforced 3-week stay in hospital last December provided me with the ideal chance to read several books which had been staring at me from the bookshelf for some time. For my 65th birthday last June, my wife gave me (*inter alia*) the rather splendid version of *A Test of Time*, linked to archaeologist David Rohl's excellent TV series *Pharaohs and Kings*, which appeared on Channel 4 in 1995. (I have not seen the paperback version listed above, but presume that it includes the same admirable illustrations, many of them in colour).

This book should be of exceptional interest to any student of the Bible, since it posits a completely new chronology for what Egyptologists term the 'Third Intermediate Period', altering many dates by as much as two centuries. Far from undermining the accuracy of the Biblical record, Rohl's new research (meticulously documented) not only supports it at every turn but also throws fascinating new light upon it.

To take one example only (from Chapter 9) — Rohl's revised dates and his detailed background research afford very strong evidence indeed to suggest that the well-known 'Amarna Letters', addressed to the Pharaoh by a vassal ruler of 'the hill country' named 'Labayu', were in fact written by King Saul, including clear references to David, to Jonathan and other Biblical characters.

David Rohl is an archaeologist and a historian, but he is also an excellent communicator, and the high quality of his charts and illustrations greatly help to explain the complexities of his arguments as he goes along. He argues that, ironically, the discrepancies in the currently-accepted chronology arose precisely because 19th-century Egyptologists were so desperate to affirm the Biblical

record; in consequence, when they made what seemed a fairly obvious connection between the name of the great Pharaoh Rameses II (the 'Great') and the Biblical location 'Raamses', they automatically assumed that Rameses II was 'the Pharaoh of the Exodus', whereas, if Rohl's new dates are to be believed (and they are supported by an immensely convincing web of interconnecting evidence, with 42 separate 'Conclusions'), Rameses II was in actual fact a contemporary of King Solomon.

I found the book riveting. One further example to whet your appetite: the 'Royal Cache' of tombs, in 'The Valley of the Kings', included a long stone tunnel, in which where are four massive stone sarcophagi — the tombs of important Court Officials, of various periods. According to the 'traditional' dating of the Dynasties, the tomb of the unpronounceable prophet Djedptahefankh, at the far end of the tunnel, has to have been placed there *after* the other tombs — yet David Rohl shows clearly that there is simply not enough room in the corridor for Djedptahefankh's sarcophagus to have passed the existing tombs! The dates *have* to be wrong. And, towards the end of the book, the results of Rohl's researches into Joseph's tomb are absolutely fascinating.

If you're interested in Biblical archaeology and dating at all, do go out and buy this book — it really is an eye-opener.

B. K. -S.

Notices on Page 57

A. O. Hudson

GOD OF ALL SPACE*Impact of space science
upon Christian belief***4. Ages of Eternity**

What of the far-distant future, when the human race is fully at one with God, evil has vanished without trace, and death is a thing of the past. The Bible goes no farther than the close of the Millennium, with which is associated the disappearance of evil and the entry of reconciled men into everlasting life. Jesus alluded to that time in the words "come ye blessed of my Father; inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25. 34). This, says Paul, is when Christ, at the close of his Millennial work with mankind "shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, the Father, that God may be all in all" (1 Cor. 15. 24). Of the state of humanity after that moment there is barely a hint, only that "the dwelling of God is with man . . . and there shall be no more death . . . for the former things are passed away . . . behold, I make all things new" (Rev. 21. 3-5). "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered, nor come into mind" (Isa. 65. 17). "In the coming ages" says Paul, God will "show the immeasurable riches of his grace" (Eph. 2. 7). The unassailable principle which the Bible enunciates with clear and definite voice is that life goes on; life is endless.

The idea of eternity is difficult to grasp and even today there are varying definitions of what is meant by the word. "Eternal" and "everlasting" in the Bible are usually rendered from the Greek *aionian* and the Hebrew *olam*, both of which imply duration or continuity in time as well as permanence of quality or state. This idea of duration, of continued progress in time, is increasingly being abandoned in modern thought and the thesis advanced that eternity is equivalent to timelessness, a condition of no-time, an eternal "now" in which the past, present and future exist simultaneously. It is almost as if some types of mind shrink from the prospect of perpetual conscious existence subject to sequential change and continuing experience, rather preferring a kind of Nirvana in which the mind ceases to concern itself with external activity and sinks into the embrace of a universal Consciousness having no purpose of object beyond the serene contemplation of an unchanging environment. This is not the Bible view; God is a God of action and activity, of ceaseless creativity and continuing achievement, and all his creatures are intended ultimately to take their places

in an orderly system of created things of infinite variety and continuous development. And this implies duration and a consciousness of duration.

It is debatable whether intelligent life can continue on any other basis. Edmund Parsons, writing on the metaphysical problems of Time ("*Time Devoured*" 1964) has said that "all consciousness is consciousness of change, with duration as relative to it". Dr. Eiseley ("*The Firmament of Time*" 1961) says that life, unlike matter, has a definite origin at a point in time and continues travelling in a unique fashion in the time dimension. This treatise has already referred to current investigations which show that intelligent consciousness can only subsist when it is continually aware of, in contact with, and affected by, the varying characteristics of a changing environment. Life in eternity must be thought of as continued progress through new experiences and into new fields of knowledge, without end. Thus space, time, life and progress are all infinite and there can be no end or boundary to any of them, just as there can be no end or limit to the creative power and activity of God.

Coming back from these rather exalted heights to the position of the redeemed and perfected human race at the end of the Messianic reign, the fact has to be faced that this planet earth, admirably adapted as it is for continued human life, is limited in size. The original Divine commission at man's creation to "be fruitful and increase, fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen. 1. 28) has been measurably accomplished already, although the present fashionable forebodings about the earth's inability to support more than the three thousand millions it has at the moment are wide of the mark and quite inaccurate. Under the present social system, controlled by greed and characterised by ignorance, it may well be so, but under the beneficent and wise administration of the Messianic Age the position will be very different. It has been reliably calculated that if full use was made of the available land surface and of usable solar energy reaching the earth sufficient food could be produced for fifty times the present population, although the planet would be uncomfortably crowded long before that number was reached. But even so, if life is to go on into the unlimited future it is clear that man must either migrate from the earth or stop procreating.

The second alternative is sometimes thought to be unnatural, but is this really so? The same thing happens in everyday life. In the traditional life span of seventy years the procreative period of a married pair does not exceed some twenty-five years; the family is complete and the process ceases. It might well be that in a communal or racial sense God has ordained things the same way. If, at a certain point in history, the original commission and power to "increase and fill the earth" will have achieved its purpose, and the power so to do comes to an end, the analogy with the individual family is exact. In such case the human race could be regarded as a unit of Divine creation, complete within itself and properly settled in this home in space which has been created for it.

The alternative — successive migrations to other homes in space — if considered from the purely physical standpoint, bristles with difficulties. Asimov, in "*Planets for Man*" (1965) says that, assuming the necessary technical problems could be solved in the next hundred years, it would be necessary from the year A.D. 2100 onwards to send into space 900,000 persons every day in order to keep the population of this earth within maximum limits. How such a number would survive, either on the journey or upon arrival at destination, is not stated. In any case no space-ship had been designed or even imagined which could make such a journey. There are high hopes of reaching our neighbour planet Mars in the next few years but this is as far as serious thinking goes. The colossal amount of materials which would have to be taken from the earth's resources to transport and support such emigrants on such a scale on their way to a planet outside the solar system, even if such were possible, would exhaust the earth's total supply in a very short time, and leave the situation worse than before.

The problem, though, is not really a physical one. If it should transpire in the purpose of God that men from this earth are to commence a new life at some other spot in the far recesses of the Universe then it can be expected that Divine power will call into action forces unknown to man and outside the range of his powers to do what he cannot do of himself. The idea of instantaneous transfer to another life and another world is a familiar one in ordinary Christian theology. Scripture teaching is plain that at his Coming the Lord Christ takes to himself his faithful; the Apostle Paul describes this as a "change" from earthly to heavenly conditions (1 Cor. 15. 35-50), as

being "caught away to meet the Lord" (1 Thess. 4. 16-17) where the word used literally "to be snatched away". If such an instantaneous transfer is to be the experience of certain specific individuals, the Christian Church at one time in earth's history, and we know that this is the case, then no reason exists to doubt the feasibility of the same thing in a different sphere and to a different end at another time if such should be the Divine Will.

One apparently insurmountable objection to the idea that the earth will be the home of humanity to all eternity is the popular scientific view that the sun must one day cool down and in consequence all life be extinguished upon earth. A very complete process for the formation and eventual disintegration of stars has been worked out on the basis of observations and calculations from which it is believed in authoritative quarters that the sun has only about five thousand million years of useful life left to it. Having used up most of its hydrogen it will, in consequence of its reduced weight, enlarge in size and destroy the earth by its corresponding temporarily enhanced heat: it will then slowly cool and the solar system become a frozen and lifeless waste. If all this is true then there is obviously no eternal home for man upon earth. But no one can be sure that it is true. After all, no man has actually observed such processes taking place, for the time scale of the stars is too vast. In fact, observations of the past one hundred and fifty years, from which the stellar processes of twenty thousand million years have been deduced, are on the same time-scale as if a man, knowing nothing of Nature, should take a movie film of the plant life in his garden for just one quarter of a second and on the basis of that brief record form a complete theory of the growth of plants from seed-sowing to flower and fruitage during a complete year.

The theory of a dying sun is not universally held. One school of investigators believes that in its journey through space the sun sweeps up hydrogen to replace that which is consumed and converted to heat, as though the fire is being stoked up as fast as it burns. It has been discovered in quite recent years that the vast stretches of "empty space" between the stars are not empty at all; they are full of free atoms, mainly of hydrogen, and because space is so big and the stars in it so relatively small the material composing the stars is only about one ten-thousandth part of all the substance there is in the universe. The remaining 99.99 per cent is distributed loose throughout all space. The sun with its planets is trav-

elling through space at a speed of 60,000 miles per hour so that it must inevitably collect a lot of that material in its course. Even the earth, much smaller, is known to be picking up a thousand tons of matter from outer space every day, in its course round the sun. And if someone suggests that, even so, in the infinity of eternity even this vast store of matter must be used up and where is the next lot coming from, science is already well on the track of the answer. A few generations ago it was almost universally believed that the entire universe was getting colder as the heat from the sun and stars was dissipated into space and that nothing could ever recover that lost heat. That belief was based on the so-called "mechanical" view of the universe which regarded it as a vast machine powered by heat; when the heat was all gone the universe would come to a stop, cold and still. The principle which gave rise to that theory was the then fairly new science of thermodynamics, treating of the relation and interaction between heat and energy, a science which dictates the design and capability of every kind of power generating device and every machine which needs power to drive it—since all power comes primarily from heat, through the agency of coal, oil, sunshine and so on. The chief apostle of this science was Nicolas Carnot (1796-1832) who was a good engineer but made no claim to being a theologian: he defined his thesis in terms now known as the "second law of thermodynamics" but he was talking about steam-engines and not about stars. Nevertheless it became fashionable to say that the universe cannot go on forever because of the second law of thermodynamics. But the universe does not consist fundamentally of steam-engines; it consists fundamentally of stars, and today different counsels prevail. The nature of the processes going on inside the stars is better understood, and there seems to exist a very real possibility that the energy generated by the annihilation of matter in stars is, at a later stage and elsewhere in the universe, re-constituted into matter which can be transformed again into energy. Scientists are beginning to perceive the rudimentary principles of a driving force which maintains the universe in ceaseless action and reaction the effect of which is to continue eternally the chemical interchanges between matter and energy upon which all life depends.

When the heart is quiet and the door is shut on the world, we can give thanks to God for sleep, for merriment, for our opportunities to worship with

That driving force is God. He is the source of the energy which powers all creation, which under certain conditions and at one time appears as matter and under other conditions and at another time is manifested as active energy again. He is the source and sustainer of all life, which makes the use of that matter and that energy to function in its appointed manner. The universe is not a dying creation but an eternal one because it is sustained by the eternal Creator, "*in whose hand is the soul of every living thing and the breath of all mankind*" (Job 12. 10). With that fact firmly established it matters nothing whether mankind is to find his eternal home on this earth or experience a later change of habitat from an old home due for dissolution to a new one newly blossoming into flower. The power of the Most High is adequate for the transfer, and since, to the redeemed, heaven is where God is, and God is everywhere, the geographical location, so to speak, of the "new heavens and new earth" which is the inheritance of perfected mankind is surely a minor issue. The Biblical pictures and foreviews of that consummation are expressed in terms of this earth as we know it but that is the only possible manner in which the glories of the future can be described to men who have never known anything else but this earth. No matter where man may find himself in the eternal future it will always be a true picture; man's outward physical perfection, adjusted and adapted to a perfect outward environment, allied with his inward mental and moral attunement to his Creator and his God, will ensure his absolute happiness and content in whatever place it pleases God that he should dwell.

So man approaches, not the end, but a new beginning. Perhaps that is, after all, the mystery of creation, a succession of endings that are also beginnings. Life goes on, reaching always forward, ever finding something new and something greater and grander on the way. There may, after all, be a more profound truth than has ever been suspected enshrined in those words which God utters when the world of human insufficiency gives place to the Divine rule of the future; "*the former things are passed away; behold, I make all things new*".

Excellent (The End)

others, but let us not neglect to give thanks for this same quiet hour when the heart communes with God and is still.

A. Spain

ABIDE IN CHRIST*A meditation on the Parable of the Vine*

"Abide in me, and I in you. as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me." (John 15. 4).

During the life of Jesus on earth, He frequently exhorted his disciples "Follow Me". It was when he was about to leave that He used those words which indicate the more spiritual and intimate union with himself in glory, "Abide in Me".

There are many followers of Jesus from whom the meaning of these words, with the blessed experience they promise, is somewhat hidden. They seem not to have realised to what closeness of union, to what intimacy of fellowship, to what wondrous oneness of life and interest, He invited them when He said "Abide in Me".

"I am the Vine, ye are the branches" (John 15. 5). It was in the Parable of the Vine that our Lord first used the expression "Abide in Me". That parable so simple, yet rich in its teachings, gives the best and most complete illustration of the meaning of our Lord's command, and the union to which He invites his disciples. The connection between vine and the branch is a living one. No external temporary union will suffice; no work of man can effect it. The branch, whether an original or an ingrafted one, is such that only by the Creator's own work, can the life, the sap, the fatness and the fruitfulness of the vine communicate themselves to the branch. Just so is it with the believer. His union with his Lord is no work of human wisdom or human will, but an act of God, by which the closest and most complete life union is effected between the Son of God and the redeemed one. God hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into our hearts. The same spirit which dwelt, and still dwells, in the Son becomes the life of the believer into him.

So close is the union between the Vine and the branch, that each is nothing without the other. To the Vine the branch owes its place in the vineyard, its life and its fruitfulness, and so the Lord says *"Without me ye can do nothing"*. The believer can be pleasing to God only in that which he does through the power of Christ. Christ dwells in him. The daily inflowing of the life-sap of the Holy Spirit is the power which brings forth fruit. He lives alone in him, and is utterly dependent on him alone.

No less indispensable than the vine to the branches are the branches to the vine. Such is the wonderful condescension of the grace of Jesus, that just as his

people are dependent upon him, He has made himself dependent upon them. Without his disciples, his bride, He will not dispense his blessings to the world; He will not offer them the grapes, the fruit. Marvel not! It is his own appointment. This is the honour to which He has called them, that as indispensable as He is to them, that from him their fruit may be found, so indispensable are they to him that through them his fruit may be abound. Meditate upon this mystery of the perfect union between Christ and ourselves. All that the vine possesses belongs to the branches. The vine does not gather the soil's fatness and sweetness for itself. All that it gathers is at the disposal of the branches. As it is the parent, so it is the servant of the branches. And Jesus, to whom we owe our life, completely gives himself for us and to us. *"The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them."* *"He that believeth into me, the works that I do shall he do also, and the greater shall he do."* All his fulness and all his riches are for the child of God. The vine does not live for itself, keeps nothing for itself, but exists only for the branches. All that Jesus is and has. He is for us. He has no interest separate from ours, and as our representative he stands before the Father.

The branch, likewise, does not exist for itself, but to bear fruit which will proclaim the excellence of the vine. It has no reason for its existence except to be of service to the vine. As Jesus has given himself so wholly over to him, he feels himself to be wholly his Lord's. Every power of his being, every moment of his life, every thought and feeling belong to Jesus, that from him and for him, he may bring forth fruit. As he realises what the vine is to the branch, and what the branch is intended to be to the vine, he feels that he has but one thing to think of and live for, and that is the will, the glory, the work, and the kingdom of his blessed Lord, the bringing forth of fruit to the glory of his Name.

The branches are for fruit, and for fruit alone. *"Every branch that beareth not fruit, he taketh away."* The branch needs leaves for the maintenance of its own life and the perfection of its fruit. The fruit itself it bears to give away to those around. As the believer enters his calling as a branch, he perceives that he must forget self, and live entirely for others, love to sacrifice and to do good unto all men, especially to the "house-hold of faith". It is for fruit,

"much fruit", that the Father, the husbandman, has made us one with Jesus.

O wondrous parable of the vine, unveiling the mysteries of Divine love, of the heavenly life; how little have we understood thee! Jesus the living vine in heaven, and we, the living branches, on earth. How little have we understood how great our need, and also how perfect our claim to all his fulness! How little understood his perfect claim to all our emptiness. Let us in its beautiful light study the wondrous union between Jesus and ourselves, until it becomes to us the guide into full communion with our blessed Lord. Let us listen and believe until our whole being cries out "Jesus is indeed to me the true vine, bearing me, nourishing me, supplying me, using me, and filling me to the full, to make me bring forth fruit abundantly". Then we shall not fear to say "I am indeed a branch to Jesus, the true vine, abiding in him, resting in him, waiting for him, serving him, and living only that through me, too. He may show forth the riches of his grace, and in due time give his fruit to a perishing world".

So, then, it is when one tries to understand the meaning of this parable that the blessed command spoken in connection with it will come home in its true power. The thought of what the vine is to the branch, and Jesus to the child of God, will give new force to the words "Abide in Me". It will be as though he says "Think, child, how completely I belong to thee: I have joined myself inseparably to thee; all the fulness and fatness of the vine are thine in very deed. Now thou art one in Me, be assured that all I have is wholly thine. It is my interest and my honour to have thee a fruitful branch. Only abide in Me, yield thyself wholly to my teaching and rule, simply trust my love, my grace, my promises. Only believe I am wholly thine. I am the true vine, thou are the branch. Abide in Me." What sayest thou, O child of God? Shall I longer hesitate, or think how hard it is to live like a branch because I thought of it as something I had to accomplish? Shall I not believe that I am in him, He himself will keep me, and enable me to abide? Beloved, is not our answer "Yes, I will abide in thee, blessed Lord Jesus?" O Saviour, how unspeakable is thy love. We can only yield ourselves to thy love with the prayer day by day that thou wouldst unfold somewhat of its precious truth, and so encourage and strengthen thy loving children to do what our hearts long to do, ever, only, wholly to abide in thee.

God himself has united you to Christ. "*Of God are ye in Christ Jesus, who was made unto us wisdom from God, both righteousness and sanctification and redemption*" (I Cor. 1. 30). "*My Father is the husbandman*" (John 15. 1). The whole Christian life depends upon the clear consciousness of our position in Christ. "Of God are ye in Christ Jesus". We must remember in our union to Christ, especially that it is not our own doing, but the work of God himself. As the Holy Spirit teaches us to realise this, we shall see what a source of assurance and strength it must become. If it is of God alone that I am in Christ, then God himself, the Infinite One, becomes my security for all that I can need or wish in seeking to abide in Christ. Try and understand what it means, this wonderful "Of God in Christ".

In becoming partakers of this union with Christ, there is a work God does, and also a work we have to do. God does his work by moving us to do our work. The work of God is hidden and silent; what we do is something distinct and tangible. For instance, conversion and faith, prayer and obedience, are conscious acts of which we can give a clear account, while the spiritual quickening and strengthening which come from above are secret and beyond the reach of human sight. So it may be that when the believer says "I am in Christ Jesus" he may look more on the work which he did than to that wondrous secret working of God by which he was united to God. It is of great consequence that the mind should be led to see that behind the turning, believing, and accepting Christ, there is God's Almighty Spirit doing its work, inspiring our will and carrying out his own purpose of love, in planting us in Christ Jesus. So, we learn to praise and worship with new exultation and rejoice more than ever in the Divine favour which has made us partakers of Christ. At each step, as we review it, the song will come "Of God are we in Christ Jesus".

What hope and strength, what a sure standing ground it gives all who rest their right to Christ and all his fulness on nothing less than the Father's own purpose and work. We have thought of Christ the vine, and the called one as the branch; let us not forget that other precious work "My Father is the husbandman". The Saviour said "*Every plant which my Father hath not planted shall be rooted up*" (Matt. 15. 13) but every branch grafted by him into the true vine can never be plucked out of his hand. The same love and delight with which the Father watched over

the beloved Son watches over every member of this Body, all who are in Christ Jesus.

What confident trust this faith implies, not only as to the being kept in safety to the end, but especially in the being able to fulfil in every point the object of being invited to Christ. The branch is as much in his charge and keeping as the vine; his honour is as concerned in the well-being and growth of the branch as of the vine. God, who has chosen and planted us in Christ, has thereby engaged to secure, if we will but let him, by yielding ourselves, that we too shall be to his praise in Christ Jesus. What confidence and urgency this will give! How it will quicken the sense of dependence, and make us see that praying without ceasing is indeed the one need of our lives. An unceasing waiting upon God, who has united us to Christ to perfect his own Divine work, to work in us both to will and to do his good pleasure! What a motive this is for the highest activity, in the maintenance of a fruitful branch life. Motives are mighty powers; it is of great importance to have them high and clear. Here, surely, is the highest. *"You are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works"*; grafted by him into Christ; what for? Unto the bringing forth of much fruit! Whatever God creates is exquisitely suited to its end. He created the sun to give light. How perfectly it does its work! He created the eye to see. How beautifully it fulfils its object! He created the "new man" unto good works. How admirably it is fitted for its purpose!

So then, each branch can say, "Of God, I am in Christ, created anew, made a branch of the vine, fitted for fruit bearing". Oh that believers would cease looking at their old natures, and complaining of their weaknesses, as if God called them to what they were unfitted for; would that they would believingly and joyfully accept the wondrous revelation of how God is uniting them to Christ, has constituted himself the Husbandman taking charge of their spiritual growth and fruitfulness. How quickly hesitancy would disappear, and under the influence of this mighty motive — faith in the faithfulness of him of Whom they are in Christ — their whole nature would rise to accept and fulfil their glorious destiny. So then, as we press onwards and upwards to our glorious inheritance, let us yield ourselves to the mighty influence of these words: "Of God are ye in Christ Jesus".

"He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." When we live by faith

in the Son of God, the fruit of the spirit is seen in the life. There are times when the great Husbandman trims and prunes the vine. *"Every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth that it may bring forth more fruit"*: thus Jesus with solemn tenderness explained the purpose of the Husbandman. The pruning may cause pain, but it is the Father who applies the knife. He works with no wanton hand, or indifferent heart. Some branches may be found trailing on the ground; these must be cut from earthly supports to which their tendrils are fastening. They must reach heavenward and find their support in God. Excessive foliage which draws life-sap from the fruit must be pruned off. The overgrowth must be cut out to give room for the life-giving rays of the Sun of righteousness, so the Husbandman prunes away the harmful growth that the fruit may be richer. *"Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit."* The Lord indicated the kind of fruit when He said *"this is my commandment that ye love one another, even as I have loved you."* The fulfilling of this commandment is to be the convincing and indisputable token of discipleship. Try to understand how this is so. We know that God is love, and that Christ came to reveal this, not as a doctrine, but as a life. His life in its wonderful self-abasement, self-sacrifice, was above everything the embodiment of Divine love, the showing forth to men, in such human manifestations as they could understand, how God loves.

In Christ's love to the unworthy and ungrateful, in his humbling himself to death, He simply lived and acted out the life of Divine love. Just as Christ showed forth to the world the love of God, they, by living and loving just as He did, are to be perpetual witnesses to the love that gave itself to die. Amidst all the diversity of character, of language, or of station, they are to prove that love has made them members of one body and of each other, and has led them to forget and sacrifice self for the sake of the other. Their life of love is the chief evidence of being children of God. It is the love to each other as true followers of Christ that is ever put in the foreground as the link between love to God alone and to men in general. In Christ's intercourse with his disciples, this brotherly love finds the law of its conduct. It studies his forgiving and forbearing spirit with the seventy times seven as its measure. As it looks to his unwearied patience and humility, his meekness and lowliness and entire devotion to their interests, it accepts the instruction *"I have left you an exam-*

ple that ye should do as I have done to you" (John 13. 15). Following his example each will not live for himself, but for others. The law of kindness is on the tongue, for love has vowed that no unkind word shall cross the lips. It refuses even to listen to, or to think, evil of others. In gentleness and loving kindness, in courtesy and generosity, in its life of blessing, the Divine love which has been shed abroad in every heart of the children of God, shines out as it did in the life of Jesus. Does not the heart bound at the thought of the unspeakable privilege of thus showing forth the likeness of him who has loved us? Does it seem too high to attain? Remember that we have but to "abide in him" to be able to love like him. Regard this abiding in him more than ever as an abiding in his love. Rooted and grounded in a love that passeth knowledge, we receive of its fullness and learn to love. We learn to love the brethren, even those who may be the most trying and unlovable to us. With the love of Christ in the heart, this

command will cease to be a burden, and become a joy. *"This is my command, that ye love one another even as I have loved you"*. This is surely some of the "much fruit" which the great Husbandman is looking for. Let us try in all simplicity and honesty to translate this language into the daily doings in our homes and daily conduct that all men may see that we are living with Jesus and learning his ways. Let tempers be under the rule of Jesus. Let the gentleness that refuses to take offence, that is always ready to excuse, to think and hope the best, mark our intercourse with all. Let the life be one of self-sacrifice, ever seeking the welfare of others. By the grace of God, the most commonplace life can be transfigured with the brightness of heavenly beauty, as the infinite love of the Divine nature shines through frail humanity. Beloved, let us praise God; we are called to love as Jesus loves, as God loves. Then, with fresh faith, accept the blessed injunction, *"Abide in Me, and I in you Abide in my love."*

CHRISTIAN AFRICAN RELIEF TRUST

We have received the 1996 report of the relief work being done in Africa by CART.

It is an impressive document stating what has been done and how their targets have been achieved. It is clearly a work of faith, totally dependant upon our Heavenly Father, reflecting his great love through many Christian believers in UK and overseas.

23 containers, each 20 feet long, containing many apple boxes full of food, clothing, bedding materials, household items, medical supplies and other needs to fourteen countries right across Africa. The report contrasts the staggering £34,000 needed to transport the goods, with the tragically low annual income of £81 per person in Tanzania. Amid all deprivation and death there are heartening testimonies of how some needs are being met through the grace of our God and through the sacrifice and service of his people. The way in which He has prompted Christians to assist in this work in Europe and Africa is quite remarkable. Apart from the ongoing need of goods and money to continue what has been done, CART has a problem of the storage of donated materials, and it looks to the Lord for a solution. We ask for your prayers in this.

If you can help in any way at all please write to CART secretary Mr G. G. Tompkins, 'White Gates', Tinker Lane, Lepton, Huddersfield HD8 0LR England

AN OPPORTUNITY

Our longer term readers will remember Dr. Adam Rutherford, whose tragic death removed a familiar and enthusiastic figure from our midst. Among his many interests through the years he conducted extensive research in and around the Great Pyramid in Egypt, resulting in his four-volume publication dealing with the physical, scientific and chronological features which he deduced from that edifice. In consequence of the recent demise of his widow there is a remaining stock of this publication to be disposed of, and these are now available to anyone interested free of charge except for the cost of postage and packing.

The four volumes comprise of 1650 pages, Demy 8vo (9in x 5.5in) in cloth bound, and sent surface mail, for £6 in UK, 25 US\$ or 30 Aust.\$\$. Please send orders and remittances to:-

Institute of Pyramidology,
PO Box 136
CHESHAM
Bucks
HP5 3EB
England

and not to B.F.U.

A. O. Hudson

DANIEL IN BABYLON*The story of a great man's faith***9. The Ancient of Days**

"I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of Days did sit." (Ch. 7, vs. 9).

One of the most pregnant sentences in the whole of the Bible! Into those few brief words Daniel infused all the longing and all the hopes and all the faith which had sustained him through so many years. One day God would arise in judgment, and then all for which the righteous had waited would be theirs. The long captivity of man to the dominion of sin and death, his long submission to oppressive evil powers, would be at an end, and the saints of the Most High would possess the kingdom, and rule in equity and justice for ever and ever.

This, the second part of the dream, leaves the actors in the first part still standing on the stage. The four beasts are still there; the fourth, strange and terrible, the latest to rise, dominating the other three certainly, but all four are still there. And now Daniel perceives a gathering tumult in the heavens. The sable curtain of night is lightening; a vivid golden radiance is banishing the blackness. The dark night-clouds turn dimly red and then break out suddenly into blazing cascades of fire, pouring down upon the earth and swelling into a fiery river which threatens to bear away all obstacles in its course. From above that plunging, leaping curtain of light there appears a waving field of white, an army of angels, thousands upon thousands, and ten thousands upon ten thousands, winging their way fast to earth, growing more clear and more perceptible as each second passes. Then the roaring of the thunder, the vivid, searing lightning, and behind those speeding angels a majestic Appearance before which Daniel must have prostrated himself in reverence and awe; he knew well that no man may look upon the face of God, and live. But presently a calm, heaven-sent confidence took hold of him and he looked up to see the Ancient of Days, in all the dignity of kingly power and all the purity of his awful holiness, seated upon his Throne of judgment. The Time of the End had come and the Judge was in his place, the Assizes of Heaven about to begin.

In those first few seconds before the vision passed again into the movement of action Daniel had time to see that there were other, lesser, thrones surrounding that upon which was seated the Supreme Judge, the Ancient of Days. It is not so stated in verse 9,

but implied by later verses, (18 and 22), that those thrones were occupied by "*the saints of the Most High*" waiting to take their destined place in the whole sequence of activities and events that was to be associated with this imminent judgment. The force of this aspect of the vision is obscured by the usual English meaning of "cast down". "*I beheld till the thrones were cast down*" says the Authorised Version, and it is usually tacitly assumed that Daniel referred to the fall of earthly thrones and kingships at this Time of the End in consequence of Divine judgment. That is not what was intended. The term "cast down" in the original has the significance of being set down or placed firmly in position. This usage appears in the English word "cast" for making solid, firm objects from fluid materials, as in the case of "cast" iron, an object made solid by "casting" from molten metal. The reference here in Daniel 7 is to judicial seats as in Psa. 122. 5. "*For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David*" and Matt. 19. 28. "*Ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*". There is no suggestion anywhere in the Scriptures that the angels are assessors in the judgment; in the vision they are attendants upon the Ancient of Days but not occupants of the thrones, and the only reasonable view we can take of the vision is that Daniel saw the "saints of the Most High" seated in the presence of God and ready to play their own destined part in the drama of judgment. That fact should help considerably in placing the time of the fulfilment of the vision.

But as yet the saints on their thrones had no part to play. The focal point of the vision shifted again to the earth, to the earth before the Throne, where stood the four beasts of the vision. The books were opened and the judgment began; the fourth beast, the terrible, unnatural one, was first condemned, and before Daniel's fascinated eyes was slain and its body cast into the blazing river which still cascaded down from the glory of God and ran, a fiery torrent, away into the darkness of oblivion. The other beasts were not slain immediately; they were deprived of their dominion, but "*their lives were prolonged for a season and time*". Now this expression as it stands can be productive of misunderstanding, as though these three beasts were granted a kind of indefinite lease

of life, whereas the truth is the reverse. The word "prolonged" in the Hebrew means to assign or cut off to a determined length. The expression "season and time" in the A.V. is based on the old English expression "till a time and tide", which was a phrase indicative of a fixed and irrevocable point of time which could by no means be exceeded (hence the English proverb "*Time and tide wait for no man*".) What Daniel tells us in verse 12, therefore, is that the fourth beast was slain at once and the other three, after being deprived of their dominion, sentenced to die at a certain fixed time not stated but already determined in the mind of the Judge.

Again the prophet's eyes turned heavenward. Somehow or other he realised in his dream that now was to come an important event in the sequence of happenings which he was witnessing, for at this juncture (verse 13) he repeats the expression, "*I saw in the night visions*" as though to mark this point with some special indication. Looking back at his words from the standpoint of our later Christian knowledge, the significance of this stage in the symbolism is clear enough, for in lifting up his eyes to heaven, Daniel saw "*one like the Son of man*" coming "*with the clouds of heaven*". The expression is so familiar a one to Christians that we immediately think of the Second Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ for the dual purpose of gathering his Church, and setting up the earthly Kingdom which is to be the desire of all nations; and that, not unnaturally, is the interpretation which is usually and immediately placed upon this verse in Daniel 7. The application seems so obvious that several discordant features are often overlooked, and it may come as somewhat of a shock to realise that the usual interpretation is not quite so fitting as is thought.

In the first place the saints are already, in the vision, seated on their thrones of judgment in the presence of the Ancient of Days, observing the execution of judicial sentence upon the four beasts, and this *before* the "Son of Man" appears with the clouds of heaven. In the second place this "Son of Man" coming with the clouds of heaven, does not descend to the earth but is brought into the presence of the Ancient of Days, to receive a royal investiture, and a kingdom. And in the third place — and this is important to a right view of the vision — the expression "the Son of Man" in the A.V. is not a correct rendering of the original. Daniel actually said that he saw "one like a son of man", i.e. one like

a human being, in contrast to the Deity above and the beasts below; this man-like being, then ushered into the presence of God and awarded the kingdom of the earth. The translators, reasoning back from their New Testament theology, rendered "*the Son of Man*" instead of "*a son of man*" forgetting that in Daniel's day the phrase "Son of man" as applied to the Messiah was completely unknown and could have had no possible meaning.

Daniel, then, saw a man coming with the clouds of heaven, as contrasted with the raging sea which only brought forth beasts. Daniel and his people had no knowledge of the Messiah, no conception of a Son of God who would exercise all power in heaven and earth as the active agent of the Father's purposes. The prevalent understanding of the Kingdom was that God himself would intervene and destroy evil nations and all evil, and exalt his people Israel. It was for this that Daniel looked and prayed, and in the vision of the Ancient of Days he must have found his expectations fully realised.

This addition to the vision, therefore, this introduction of another being, one like an earthly man and yet coming from heaven, to receive and administer the Kingdom, started a new line of enquiry in Daniel's mind. This was something he had not thought of before. Like others nearly six hundred years later he must have asked himself "Who is this Son of Man?" That is probably the reason for Daniel's admission at the end of the account (vs. 28) "*As for me, Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me . . . but I kept the matter in my heart.*" He began to perceive that there was going to be more in this question of the fulfilment of God's promise to overthrow evil and introduce everlasting righteousness than his studies in the Scriptures had until then revealed to him, and, devoted student that he was, he gave this new development serious thought.

We have the advantage, now, of seeing why the vision entered into this aspect. It was on the basis of this chapter and the picture of the relationship between the "Ancient of Days" who awarded the Kingdom and the "Son of Man" who received the Kingdom that our Lord assumed and used the title "Son of Man". It could have come from no other source and the Jews were aware of the fact. (The use of the same expression in the Book of Ezekiel is not in the same category; the Almighty habitually addressed Ezekiel as "Son of Man" in allusion to the fact that he was, in fact, a human being, with no

prophetic or symbolic implication whatever. The suggestion sometimes made that in the New Testament the Greek phrase is "the Son of *the* man" referring to Jesus' natural descent from "*the* man", Adam, is based upon misapplication to Greek grammar and does not deserve to be taken seriously.) When Jesus proclaimed himself to be "the Son of Man" all who heard him would instantly connect his claim with the vision of Daniel and understand his words accordingly. This is very clearly shown when in answer to the High Priest's question at his trial, "*Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?*", he replied, "*I am; and thou shalt see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.*" (Mark 14. 61-62). That was the statement and the claim that sealed his fate; he had declared that he was the One seen by Daniel in the vision.

That the Jews of Daniel's day and immediately afterwards clearly perceived the vision to teach that one who in some manner was associated with men and made like man, yet a heavenly being, would thus stand in the presence of God and receive from his hands the Kingdom, is very evident. The Book of Enoch, written several centuries after Daniel's time, has much to say about the Son of Man and the Ancient of Days and that is a good guide to Jewish thought. The coming of the Son of Man to execute the Divine will in the days of the Kingdom was an accepted part of Jewish theology in the days of Jesus.

We are left, then, with the plain fact that in Daniel the coming of the Son of Man "with the clouds of heaven" takes place *after* the Ancient of Days has pronounced judgment on the beasts and *after* the "*people of the saints of the Most High*" have taken their places on their thrones to observe the execution of that judgment. As the chapter proceeds, we find that the kingdom, and dominion is given to the "Son of man" and to the "saints" simultane-

ously. Both receive the kingdom; both rule and exert authority in association the one with the other.

In the reality it must be accepted therefore that New Testament references to the coming of the Lord in the clouds of heaven (such as Rev. 1. 7; Matt. 26. 64 etc.) must generally refer to a time after the Church has been gathered and after the kingdoms of this world have fallen and been destroyed. They must refer to the latest and most spectacular phase of the Second Advent, the commencement of the reign of Christ and the Church and his revealing to all mankind, the time that is sometimes spoken of as "the Kingdom in power." The appearance of one like a Son of Man in Daniel's dream symbolises the last event in the series of events which characterise the transition from the kingdoms of this world to the Kingdom of God, the period of the Second Advent.

So the vision ended where all such visions ought to end, in the light and glory of the Kingdom. The four wild and terrible beasts had been destroyed and obliterated: the raging sea had disappeared. As with John in Revelation "there was no more sea". In its place the powers of heaven had taken control of earth and the light and glory of the Son of Man irradiated the whole world and gave promise of the peace and joy that was to be. There is quite a close connection between this vision of Daniel 7 and that later one of the Apostle John in Revelation 19 and 21 in which, after the destruction of the beasts of the earth, the kings and their armies, and the disappearance of the sea, the new Jerusalem comes down to earth with the glory of God and of the Lamb to enlighten it.

There the ancient prophet left the matter. For two more years we hear nothing of him until, in the third year of King Belshazzar, he dreamed again. But this time the dream was not of distant golden days but of the things near at hand. The empire of Babylon was nearing its end, and it was meet that Daniel be instructed in the events that were soon to come.

(To be continued)

There is indeed strength given us in being quiet before God. Man is so prone to do and say, and to attend to things himself rather than to allow God to work out things for him, while he patiently and humbly waits before him. It is one thing to talk about this, and quite another thing to actually be quiet before God. It never pays to act hastily. We can always afford to wait until we truly know the mind of the

Lord. "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength."

Isa. 30. 15

Man is created for union in the living Word, and except in union with him he is not in a true living state.

F. D. Maurice 1805-1872

B. J. Drinkwater

THE ARK OF THE PRESENCE*A meditation on
Exodus 33. 14*

"My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest."

Such was God's promise to Israel at the outset of their journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. The thought behind this promise was not so much that God would be with them, but rather that He would go on ahead. Leaser puts it *"My presence shall go in advance"* whilst Rotherham reads *"mine own presence shall go on, thus will I lead thee to rest"*. Centuries later, at the outset of another pilgrimage, a similar promise was made, *"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age"*. Although the thought of leading, of going on ahead, is not implied in this second promise, a parallel drawn between the two shows that the same significance is there.

The first promise was made by God to an earthly house, the second to a spiritual house by the Lord Jesus. To draw this parallel we must go back a little to the incidents which led up to the giving of the first promise. Exodus 19 records the making of a covenant between God and Israel. The basis of this covenant was the Law, and Israel expressed their willingness to keep this law, and by doing so became "a peculiar treasure, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation". God gave them a permanent reminder of this promise in the shape of two stone tablets upon which were inscribed this Law, but whilst Moses was with God in the mountain to receive these, the Israelites broke the first and primary law. Moses, in pleading for them, reminded God of his promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Israel; when Moses descended the mountain the sight of the golden calf and Israel's idolatrous feasting caused his anger to blaze up and he threw down the stone tablets and they were smashed.

As a result of this first defection, God said that He would not go with them, but send an angel instead (Exod. 33. 1-3); so failure to keep the Law brought alienation from God.

As a result of this, Moses *"took the tabernacle and pitched it without the camp . . . and called it the Tabernacle of the Congregation"*. This was not the tabernacle which God had commanded Moses to erect, for that had not yet been constructed; this is made clear in Rotherham's translation of this passage (Exodus 33. 7) *"and Moses proceeded to take a tent, and pitch by itself outside the camp, and he called it "The Tent of Meeting" (or trysting tent). Moses was greatly troubled by the alienation which*

had resulted from Israel's wickedness; on one occasion when he went out to the "Trysting Tent" to speak with God he expressed his utter inability to face alone the task of leading Israel, and asked God to reveal himself to him, *"that I may understand thy nature, and so know how to find favour with thee"* (Exod. 33. 12-13 *Moffatt*). God caused his goodness to pass before Moses and assured him that He would manifest himself to him. Acting under instructions, Moses prepared two more stone tablets and ascended Sinai with them, that God might inscribe the Law thereon. On this occasion God declared himself to be, not a God of anger, but *"the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth"*. In order that this truth might be deeply impressed upon Moses, God gave him the assurance that He would not send an angel with him, but that *"Mine OWN presence shall go on, thus will I lead thee to rest"*; (As *Moffatt's* alteration of the text by placing verses 14-16 of Exodus 33 after the 9th verse of Chapter 34).

In Moses's account, in Deut. 10, of the giving of the Law a second time, he tells us that God ordered him to make a wooden box in which to keep the stone tablets. This he did and on receiving them, he put them in this box, which in turn he placed in the temporary trysting tent. This arrangement continued until the tabernacle which God had designed was completed: then the two stone tablets were placed in the new ark. This was a much more elaborate container than the plain wooden box (Exod. 25. 10-22) and as it thus held the two tablets of the Law, it was called the ark of the covenant, or the ark of the testimony. It was, however, much more than this, for when the Tabernacle was completed God manifested his Presence in the *Shekinah* glory which settled between the cherubim. Thus it became the "Ark of the Presence" (Josh. 4. 16 *Moffatt*). The Ark did not, however, always remain in the Tabernacle; it went before Israel to search out their resting places as they journeyed on; it diverted the waters of the Jordan and enabled them to cross dry-shod; it threw down the walls of Jericho and led them on to victory.

The ark of the presence did not always bring victory. In Josh. 7 and 1 Samuel 4 there are accounts of defeat even when the ark was with them, but this was not due to any failure on God's part, but to the fact that Israel was disobedient and defiled and thus

alienated from him. On the second occasion not only did the Israelites suffer defeat, but they also lost the ark to the Philistines. Even in captivity the power of the ark was manifested. The Philistines placed it beside Dagon in his temple, but on the morrow they found the idol on its face; they replaced it but on the next day they found it not only on its face but with its head and hands broken off. Furthermore the Philistines were plagued with tumours, so that after seven months they were glad to return the ark to Israel. After being lodged three months in the house of Obed-Edom, it was carried up to Jerusalem, where it remained under a tent until Solomon's temple was built. It was then taken from its tent and carried into the inner Sanctuary; after Solomon had recited his great dedicatory prayer, God showed his approval by manifesting his Presence in the *Shekinah* glory between the cherubim.

This manifestation of God's presence in their midst should have nourished the religious life of the Israelites and kept them from idol worship, but alas, they forgot the covenant that they had made with the Eternal, and the memory of many blessings which the Ark of the Presence had brought upon them faded. Thus the doleful prophecy of Jeremiah 3, 16 was fulfilled. *"In after days when you become numerous and fruitful in the land, says the Eternal, men shall no longer speak of the Ark of the Eternal's compact; that shall never enter their minds, they shall not remember it, they shall never miss it, and it shall never be re-made."*

This concludes, in this minor key, the account of the Ark of the Presence in the Old Testament, but we strike a major chord in our consideration of that much more intriguing subject, the anti-type.

We, as "Israelites indeed", are journeying from Egypt, through the wilderness, to the Promised Land. What does the Ark of the Presence mean to us? We are alienated from God, and even now we cannot keep God's perfect law unaided; we need the blood-sprinkled mercy seat, and without a leader and guide would become lost in the wilderness. As we looked back to the making of the first promise, so we need to consider the events preceding the second promise.

In the type, the two stone tablets were first contained in a wooden box. If wood is Scripturally symbolic of humanity, this would surely represent the law of the Lord deep in the human heart of Jesus (Psa. 40. 8). This wooden box remained outside the camp, so Jesus in his humanity was "without the

camp". The Israelites were sinful, idolatrous, unbelieving. He was holy, harmless and undefiled, separate from sinners. Thus He remained among them, but not of them, until the antitypical Tabernacle was completed. Even as the Ark was not made for the tabernacle but the tabernacle for the ark, so in the antitype the spiritual Tabernacle was not made for Jesus; but before He could enter therein, the sacrifice must be consumed and the blood sprinkled on the mercy seat. With the consumption of this sacrifice the wooden box was destroyed; but what of the perfect Law of the Lord contained therein? Even as in the type the stone tablets were placed in the golden ark when the tabernacle was completed, so our Lord's love for God's law remained, and when He arose from the grave and later ascended to his Father, he was clothed in the gold of the Divine nature, and entered into the Most Holy, into the presence of God. When the tablets were placed in the Ark of the Presence, it was no longer outside the camp, but in the midst; likewise since Jesus has entered into his glory He dwells no longer without the camp, but has become the first-fruits among many brethren, and He intercedes on our behalf, he provides for us the way back to God.

Not only does He intercede for us, but he is all and more to us than was the Ark of the Presence to Israel. The Ark should have nourished the religious life of natural Israel; He provides for us spiritual bread from heaven, symbolised by the golden vase of manna, and calls us to become "a peculiar treasure, a holy nation", a fulfilment of the picture of Aaron's budding rod. The manifested presence of God in their midst should have kept Israel from idolatry; so, surrounded as we are with counter-attraction, calculated to draw us from the whole-hearted worship of God, we need to keep our eyes fixed upon our Ark of the Presence, worshipping always and only him Who is worthy of all praise. If we would become and remain spiritually healthy we must come regularly to the fount of every blessing, bowing in prayer and meditation before this holy shrine. Only before God's perfect law are we fully conscious of our shortcomings, only before the mercy seat can we find peace with God, only in the presence of Jesus can we enjoy the fellowship and communion which will enable us to attain that growth in holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.

This, however, is only the static aspect of the matter. Even as the Ark of the Presence went before Israel to lead them to rest, so Jesus goes on ahead,

leading us, through hardship and danger, to our eternal rest. To Israel the Jordan was an impassable barrier: Moses told the people that they were to wait, "for you have not crossed here before". We have our Jordans too: those just starting on their pilgrimage may not yet have come to the place where they have not "crossed before"; on the other hand those nearing the end of the journey may look back to many such emergencies. To young and old the lesson is the same. Even as the Israelites waited for the feet of the Levites carrying the Ark to touch the water, saw the waters diverted, and were able to cross dryshod, so we must wait until our Ark of the Presence shows us the way across the obstacles over which we must pass.

After Jordan came Jericho. We, too, have our Jerichos: enemy strongholds, within or without, stand between us and the Golden City. Israel waited patiently while the priests carried the Ark round Jericho, day by day, until victory was theirs; we must persevere in our efforts to overcome the enemy, realising that "standing and waiting" will sometimes be our portion, so that all the glory may be given to him Who gives us victory.

Israel lost the Ark of the Presence to the Philistines because, having left it at Shiloh, they had turned from the worship of the true God to idolatry; may the time never come when we shall have strayed so far from the worship of God that we lose our Ark of the Presence! In the type, after its return from captivity the Ark found its way to Jerusalem where it remained in a tent until taken into Solomon's temple. This seems to picture the return of our Lord, after the journeying of the Gospel Age, to gather his Church to himself to dwell forever with him in the heavenly courts.

Beautiful as was the trysting-tent in its simplicity, its beauty was eclipsed by the glorious Temple which Solomon prepared as a final resting place for the Ark. The altar in the court was larger and the laver was more elaborate, the Holy Place was larger and more ornate, but the Inner Sanctuary had a beauty all its own. The woodwork was wonderfully carved, and tons of gold and hundreds of precious stones were used for its decoration. It was eight times the size of the Most Holy of the Trysting-tent and was dominated by two great golden cherubim, each fifteen feet across, standing, not face to face with bowed heads as were those upon the Ark, but side by side facing forwards, standing erect wing tip to wing tip, thus completely filling the width of the Sanctuary. All was new and unsurpassed in beauty, but into this

glorious edifice was brought the much-travelled Ark, made so long ago in the wilderness, a fitting picture indeed of him Who is proclaimed "the same yesterday, to-day and forever".

Although this was the same Ark, there was a difference. The golden vase of manna was no longer within. Likewise when the anti-typical Ark of the Presence finally enters the Heavenly courts there will be no need for the heavenly manna, for the Church will be clothed with immortal life. Neither was Aaron's rod that budded contained therein. This is fitting too, for the Church will have made her calling and election sure, and will have thus fulfilled the significance of this phenomenon. But the two tablets of the Law remained. So Jesus, in all his glory and majesty, still loves the Law of God, and the glorified Church too will be lovers of God's Law, and so the complete Christ, Head and Body, will not only be the Ark of the Presence, but also the great Law-giver of the New Age.

This brings us to the outset and the third and last pilgrimage. Is there any promise that God will be with the nations in the same sense that He was with Israel and Jesus was with the Church? Will the Ark of the Presence go on ahead and lead them to rest? No, the wanderings of the Ark are forever concluded. The glorified Bride and Bridegroom will remain at the New Jerusalem, beckoning men up the great highway of holiness which will lead them to that perfect life, health and happiness when God dwells between the cherubim. After the wanderings of the antitypical Ark of the Presence through the Gospel Age its journey is almost completed; soon all the faithful will be safely in the inner Sanctuary. But what of the time remaining? Rest assured that Jesus' promise to be with us all the time, even unto the end, will be abundantly fulfilled. In sickness or in health, in poverty or wealth, in sunshine or shade; through fire and flood; through weal or woe, in victory or defeat; on the heights of joy or in the depths of despair, in the loneliness of seclusion or in the noise of the throng — through any or all of these our Ark of the Presence will safely lead us, until we enter into heaven itself, there to dwell for ever in the very presence of God, beneath the wings of the cherubim.

*"Lord Jesus, make thyself to me
A living bright reality!
More present to faith's vision keen
Than any outward object seen,
More dear, more intimately nigh,
Than e'en the sweetest earthly tie."*

“IN WISDOM YOU MADE THEM ALL”

“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 (1 Kings 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 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 insatiable 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.”*

A.O.H

In the Apostle Paul we have the greatest example of an imperfect man giving his all for the perfection of heaven. It brought him at last to a prison cell, almost blind, feeble and in chains; his only possessions a few books and parchments and an old cloak. Almost friendless and alone he faced a martyr’s death, but he could say, *“I have fought a good fight . . . henceforth there is laid up for me a crown”*. The crown was the thing for which he had paid his all,

esteeming it only a light affliction. He had nothing, yet everything, for he had the conviction that the crown was his. Do we desire to have the same conviction? To some it is worth while, to others much. Let us say, *“To me it is worth everything. I want my Father’s perfection, the perfection of Christ, the life of heaven, the fellowship of saints and angels for ever, and by the power and grace of God which avails for me through Christ I know I shall have it”*.

T. Holmes

“AND NOW ABIDETH”*A series of studies
in 1 Cor. 13***3. Love Suffers Long**

Coming now to the consideration of the constituent elements of Love, an effort will be made to analyse and define them with the known character of God. Only thus can we be sure of our definitions.

The first constituent is long-suffering, for “Love suffers” long. As defined by Scripture, long suffering is not that passive submissiveness seen in people subject to the rule of tyrants, dictators, or other autocratic rulers whose domination they are unable to break or remove. True, such peoples may suffer long, but there is no virtue or purpose in their suffering. Since God himself has shown long-suffering, it must refer to a state where the sufferer has ample power to remove the cause of the suffering, yet chooses not to do so, in order to effect some further end or purpose, in accordance with a plan of campaign. That this was not a characteristic of heathen priesthoods or monarchies is very patent from extant history. It was not their practice to suffer long with recalcitrant or rebellious men who ignored or flouted their authorities. Terrible indeed were the curses and punishments which befell the wretch who dared to pit himself against their power. Ruthlessness — severe and speedy ruthlessness — was the watch-word of their government, for only thus were their thrones secure.

But has there been long-suffering in God? Here the answer is of quite a different kind. He has always possessed power to overcome those rash enough to range themselves as his enemies, yet He has never used his power arbitrarily to crush them until they have had sufficient opportunity to repent and reform. In the days of Noah he suffered for long years the taunts of wicked men and the perversities of fallen angels ere He brought fitting recompense upon their heads (1 Pet. 3. 20). His power was adequate to curb their violence and suppress their rebelliousness, but for his own Name’s sake He bore their presumptuous ways with much long-suffering. At a later period God waited for a long time before meting out recompense to the Amorites for their blatant iniquity. To afford them sufficient time to fill their measure full, God kept his own people waiting in Egyptian bondage, as He had told Abraham He would. (Gen. 15. 16). Again, with the faithless hosts of Israel God waited and suffered long. “*With ves-*

sels of wrath fit only to be destroyed he endured with much long-suffering” (Rom. 9. 22). He could have destroyed them for their impieties and sins time and again, yet He refrained; instead, He pleaded and waited over long centuries, desiring to have them repent and return to his care. Even into Jesus’ day his waiting went on, until that rebellious generation had filled the measure of their sins (Matt. 23. 32).

God is long-suffering towards the wayward and venturesome members of his spiritual family. He is not “*slack concerning his promises . . . but is long-suffering to us, not wishing that any (taking undue liberties) should perish*” (2 Pet. 3. 9). His long-suffering attitude makes salvation possible even for the back-slider and trifler (2 Pet. 3. 15). The special illustration of God’s long-suffering, which also brings in our own long-suffering too, is found in the Parable of the Unjust Judge. Annoyed and vexed by the widow’s unceasing importunity the unjust Judge gave judgment at last on her behalf — yet not for her own sake particularly, but lest her unceasing coming should weary him. Basing God’s seeming indifference to his people’s cry upon this illustration, the Lord continues “*Shall not God avenge his elect which cry to him day and night, and he is long-suffering over them*” (Luke 18. 7).

The Elect, because they are God’s elect, are made to suffer by their enemies. But they do not themselves retaliate upon their enemies nor make recompense to them, like for like, again, because they are God’s elect! Instead they have committed their whole interests to God, and wait on him for the avengement of their wrongs. But even though they suffer most acutely God does not move at once to their relief. Like the importuning widow they cry oft and persistently, yet God seems not to hear. Thus the Elect suffer long, exactly as long as God’s long-suffering lasts. But relief and recompense will come when long-suffering has accomplished its purpose by its seeming tardy policy.

Another illustration of the same principle is found in Rev. 6. 9-11. Souls under the Altar are here heard crying out to God “*How long, O Master, (R.V.) the holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood upon them that dwell upon the earth?*” Earthly rulers had persecuted to death some who had access to the “Altar” — that is, some who were consecrated

to holy things, and their cry goes up "How much longer shall this go on unchecked and unavenged?". They were told to wait and rest a little longer till the persecutors' cup had become filled to the brim by their persecution of still other brethren who would be killed as they had been. Rev. 16. 5-7 depicts the avengement of all these sufferers when the period of long-suffering was at an end.

God's attitude in all these persecutions of his saints throughout the Ages has been that of sympathy towards them, but of perfect self-control and self-command over himself. He has been working to a Plan, and accordingly has not permitted the enormities of wicked men to deflect him from his pre-arranged purposes. Men have dared and defied his government repeatedly, and He has allowed them to go on for a time un-restrained, inviting them meanwhile to repent. But, in time, their cup became full, their allotted time expired, and judgment fell upon them. "Long-suffering" waited till the clock of destiny struck the hour; then, and not before, recompense was meted out. Thus, at long last, the Sovereignty of the Will of God asserts itself against the perversity of humanity's misdirected freedom of will.

It must be the same with us, as we submit ourselves to his Will. We also must learn to wait till the appointed hour, thus affording time, and still more time, for the transgressor against us to repent. And should repentance not be forthcoming, even after waiting for seven times seventy transgressions to transpire, it is not for us to retaliate avengingly. Vengeance belongs to God, and we must learn to bear and suffer just so long as God forbears to strike. To be thus able to bear and suffer long we need "to be strengthened with all power . . . unto all patience and long-suffering with joy, giving thanks to the Father . . ." (Col. 1. 11) for his grace to help in this time of need. "Long-suffering" says Trench (N. T. Synonyms) "is the restraint which does not hastily retaliate a wrong, the opposite to wrath or revenge."

This is no easy grace to cultivate, and only those who commit themselves to God for the righting of all wrongs can grow therein. Like our beloved Lord we must learn to bear the taunting word and stinging blow and "answer not a word", committing ourselves instead to him to bide his appointed time of recompense. But while we learn to bear and bide, it is no passive grace we seek to cultivate, for Love not only suffers long but is also kind. God had been

the great example of long-suffering, yet while suffering the sting of man's impiety and inhumanity. He has caused his sun to shine and rain to fall, and made the soil to yield its fruitful harvests for one and all. So also with his child. He must suffer long but he also must be kind, for Love is kind.

There is none of this grace in the ancient priesthoods, for, with them as with many nations today, kindness was accounted as weakness, to be presumed upon and taken advantage of whenever possible. And we should search the "haystack" to find the proverbial "needle" if we sought royal history for tokens of this grace. But in God there has been much of it. Over and above his gifts in Nature, noted above, the salvation and calling of his saints began in his kindness to men. "When the kindness of God our Saviour and his love toward man appeared . . . He saved us . . . that we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Tit. 3. 4-7). Here is kindness and love toward all men in that a Saviour is provided for them, but a special kindness to those who make response thereto, and are saved from their bestial life, and called to higher things. This same thought is expressed again by Paul concerning God's appealing attitude towards the ungenerous critic in Rom. 2. 4. ". . . Behold then the goodness and the severity of God, to them that fell, severity: but towards thee, goodness." "Chrestotes" says Trench (N. T. Synonyms) "is a beautiful word, as it is the impression of a beautiful grace . . . it occurs in the new Testament only in the writings of St. Paul, being by him joined to 'philanthropia' (love of man) in Titus 3. 4. to 'makrothumia' (long-suffering) and 'anoche' (forbearance) in Rom. 2. 4; and opposed to 'apotomia' (severity) in Rom. 11. 22. It is also rendered "good" in Rom. 3. 12, and "gentleness" in Gal. 5. 22. In the Latin translations it is rendered "benignity" in Gal. 5. 22, and "sweetness" in 2 Cor. 6. 6. These words speak for themselves. Tertullian (an early church writer) says *Chrestotes* was so predominantly the character of Christ's ministry that it is nothing wonderful how 'Christus' became 'Chrestus', and 'Christiani' 'Chrestiania' on the lips of the heathen world, and though used by them with an undertone of contempt, it is a standing tribute to the gracious quality and nature of the early Christians' public life. This grace of kindness is well defined as a "benign sweet-tempered gentleness which is graciously humane and tenderly obliging to all". It is, too, well

represented in the Master's attitude to the outcast woman who had crept in among Simon's guests in order to wash and anoint his feet. In blazing indignation Simon said within himself, "If this man were a prophet — if He was what he pretends to be — He would have perceived who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him". True to his creed, this was the haughty Pharisee! To her Jesus said, "Thy sins are forgiven thee!" Of her He said "... she loved much!" That was the touch of kindness that healed and comforted in an hour of exquisitely-expressed repentance. It did not spurn the sinner because of its many sins, but graciously welcomed its approach, and its tear-bedewed bequest.

In the Age to come there will be many broken weeping penitents who will require comfort and encouragement along the Way of Holiness, and it well behoves all who hope to have qualified as helpers and comforters to take every opportunity, day by day, to grow proficient in the gentle art of being kind. It is just the art of seeing the thwarted love in the sinner's heart rather than the stigma that attends the sin. "She loved much" had more potent effect on the woman's heart, than Simon's coldly pharisaical phrase "she is a sinner". It is better to be like the Lord than like the Pharisee.

(To be continued)

D. Nadal

"UNDER AUTHORITY"

Are we living
'under authority'?

The Bible upholds 'authority' but it does not encourage 'authoritarianism'. When Jesus' disciples disputed as to who was the greatest "*he said to them, 'The Kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves'*" (Luke 22: 25, 26 RSV). How different the history of the Christian Church would have been if all believers were obedient to those words! How different society in the twentieth century would be if religious and non-religious people began to observe them! If authority is associated with unpleasant attitudes it is because authority has been misused.

However, in both Old and New Testaments there are examples and exhortations to accept and obey authority. An 'authority' is a person or group of persons who command obedience because they have been given authority. They receive power to organise things and people because they have acquired special knowledge, expertise and experience. They are most effective when they observe the words of Jesus quoted above. He more than anyone else fits the definitions of authority perfectly — as a Roman centurion recognised (Luke 7: 1-10).

Ultimately authority comes from God. Way back in Creation, the voice of authority rang out "Let there be" He needed none to delegate authority and power to him, but rather He gave them to others, and in particular to his son. (Col, 1: 15; Heb. 1: 1-4).

The latter reference in Hebrews clearly shows that others in past times had represented God and been given authority to speak on his behalf. In the centuries before Christ came to Earth perhaps no one spoke with more authority than Moses the man who gave Israel God's law. Prophets looked back to Moses and the law as the authority for their own ministry. Jesus, the son of God, rebuked those who ignored or circumvented the word of Moses. How then did Moses achieve such a position in the purpose of God?

As the family of Jacob in Egypt grew into a large nation, the customs and moral principles which had regulated the small nomadic tribe from Canaan, needed a much more complex set of rules. No code of law devised by mankind, not even that of Hammurabi, could properly convey God's will for Israel. Their manner of life in the worship of their God, and attitudes towards other people had to truly reflect his love. Therefore the law which governed their lives together, must be given by God. Transmission of that law from God to his people needed someone who could bear the authority in a godly way; a person who would be humble enough not to covet God's glory yet strong enough to bear the weight of responsibility which such a leader needed. He had to know God and be able to communicate something of his wonderful character to his people. Moses led a rabble of slaves away from the largest pagan empire in the world. Egypt was a nation sophisticated in religion, technology, art and trade.

Israel could readily have borrowed the complete Egyptian culture. But the law which Moses gave was designed to separate Israel from all pagan peoples; and to be effective Israel must obey that law. Moses alone, in the whole of the Old Testament drama was the one who could impose that authority.

The prophets carried that authority forward. Like Moses they had to be called by God. They were men and women who were moved by God's Spirit. Their teaching did not replace the law given by Moses but showed the people of Israel how to obey the parts of the law which were particularly relevant to their own age and condition. They taught by example and by the spoken and written word, what was most important in the law. They showed that the covenant which Moses mediated between God and Israel was the guiding principle when interpreting the law. In this way a right relationship between God and his people could be established and maintained. Above everything else they taught Israel that the most important thing in their lives was 'to know God'. But this relationship had to be based upon obedience to the known will of God and failure to obey, meant judgment and correction. Such judgments were prefaced by "Thus saith the Lord" and that was the prophets' authority. They saw visions and dreamed dreams and some saw heavenly messengers. To bear God's message, they needed conviction, courage and compassion. Their conviction sprang from constant awareness of God's presence in their lives. It was a conviction that knew when God was communicating and which impelled obedience. Without very great courage they would have shrunk back in despair from the opposition from among God's own people. Human beings never want to hear criticism of their behaviour. Yet it is a cardinal principle of spiritual growth that God's people listen and act upon his correction. Are we any more ready today for that discipline than were the children of Israel? Perhaps more than anything else those who had authority from God needed compassion. They needed it because they were carrying a message from an all merciful God. He knew the weakness and frailty of human nature. He was not only the potter who shaped the clay, but was the creator who brought the clay into being in the first place. The messages were authenticated in those whom God sent, by their resemblance to him. We do God and his prophets a grave injustice if we continually convey a picture of them full of wrath and destruction

for the sinner. When the Son of God came to Earth, he did not radically change the message; he placed the emphasis more accurately. He showed that it was sin which the Heavenly Father wished to destroy — the sinner he yearned to redeem and restore. It was the spirit of loving reconciliation which gave so much authority to the work and words of Jesus.

It is worthy of note that men and women of god in Old Testament times always upheld human institutions of law and order. The Bible never supports violent revolutionaries nor those who seek to undermine existing civil government by evil methods. Perhaps the lives of Joseph and Daniel particularly make this point by their high standing in the governments of the greatest empires of their day. Men of faith paid due respect to those in authority around them. They clearly accepted the principle which Paul was to lay down much later in history when he wrote, "*Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.*" (Romans 13. 1, 2 RSV). One of the most fascinating examples of this is to be found in the ministry of Jeremiah when he repeatedly warned the citizens of Jerusalem to submit to the power of Nebuchadnezzar. He also wrote to those exiled in Babylon to accept the authority of their captors and to pray for them. How different from the intense antagonism which the Jews showed toward Gentiles in the first century AD. The great leaders and prophets in Israel were so much nearer to the behaviour of Jesus than the religious Jews of his time, and some Christians today. It is a case of clear, logical thinking to distinguish between rightful civil authority which a believer ought to obey, and involvement in worldly practices which the Christian must avoid. The teachings of Jesus and the apostles left the church in no doubt upon this point. Nevertheless it has not been easy in the modern world for disciples of Jesus Christ to accept the authority of men and women who openly disdain our Lord and his church. Even some civil leaders who make a profession of the Christian faith give little credibility to their words by their actions. It is sometimes hard to believe that they represent God in this 'democratic society', where money has become the chief motivation. Yet the child of God needs to be patient and respectful, knowing that wrong cannot really be put right until He whose right it is, shall reign. However environmentally conscious we are, there is going to be no

lasting improvement in the natural creation which the western world is doing its utmost to wreck, until the Creator steps in and calls a halt to the abuse of knowledge and materials. We should now live in a manner which is both respectful and obedient to human institutions so far as our conscience will permit, but at the same time obedient to God's laws as we understand them, both in the natural and spiritual world. Our lives, if contrite through the Holy Spirit, constantly guided by prayer and directed by the Word of God, will carry in word and action an authority which none can gainsay.

Moses had written "*The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me . . . him you shall heed*". During his ministry Jesus established the unique authority of which Moses spoke. When he went to John at Jordan, the Baptist saw that Jesus stood above anyone who had gone before when he said "*I need to be baptized by you, do you come to me?*" (Matt. 3, 14). Later on John's question about Jesus' identity, was answered by reference to the wonderful work he was doing, (Luke 7, 18-23). Jesus dealt with Satan in the desert by his masterly use of the Scriptures. When he began proclaiming that the Kingdom of Heaven had come and demanding that men and women should repent, his words carried the same authority. Nicodemus, a respected Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin recognised that here was one sent by God (John 3, 2). The religious leaders instructed the temple guard to arrest Jesus, but they returned to report that "*No man ever spoke like this man*" (John 7, 46). The Sermon on the Mount produces a very powerful impact. Other Jewish teachers of his day proved their points in arguments by quoting famous rabbis. Jesus spoke on his own authority when he said "*You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder But I tell you that anyone who is angry . . .'*" (Matt. 5, 21, 22 NIV). He did not destroy the law but cleared away the traditions of men. Jesus spoke with authority as the 'Word' and explained what God really wanted. The demons recognised the authority given to him, as one did at Gadara, in calling out "*What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God*" (Luke 8, 26-39). Just before this event, the disciples had been crossing Lake Galilee when a terrifying storm had blown up. Jesus, asleep

on a cushion, was hurriedly woken up and to their surprise the disciples found that the wind and waves obeyed him. They were discovering the truth of what the angel had said to Mary and what Jesus was going to say to them later, "*nothing is impossible with God*" and with those who work with him. Jesus' authority was challenged by the religious leaders from the day when he healed the paralysed man who was let down through the roof. He said to the man, "*your sins are forgiven you.*" (Luke 5, 17-26). The outraged lawyers and pharisees questioned his right to forgive sins. So Jesus said to the man "*Rise, take up your bed and go home*". The man was healed and by that miracle Jesus demonstrated his compassion. However those miracles were much more. The man who got up and walked was proving that Jesus really was preaching God's Kingdom of love and light. The miracles were signals to Israel that Satan's kingdom was doomed to destruction. They were signals that the day must come when every paralysed person should get up and walk. Whenever a blind person received sight from Jesus it established the promise that when God's Kingdom had fully come every blind person will see. And that is how Christians must live today, their behaviour must indicate that they are part of Christ's kingdom. Jesus was doing more than alleviating the sufferings of a few folk of the first century. That was important and undoubtedly gave him much joy. If he could feed five thousand people he could also feed five billion. He had been given the authority to establish the Kingdom for which Israel had looked and longed and when it came they didn't recognise it. What he did in a small country in the first century he would do again and again "in due time". Paul had learned the facts of the gospels and in his letters he expanded on those facts when he wrote such things as "*. . . . the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe, according to the working of his great might which he accomplished in Christ when he raised him from the dead and made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come,*" (Eph. 1, 19-21). How far has the greatness of his power been at work in us? Like our Master, we are living under authority.

Nothing will do except righteousness; and no other conception of righteousness will do except Christ's

conception of it.

William Barclay

F. A. Shuttleworth

THE DEBT WE OWE

Part 3. Isaac to Joseph

With reluctance we leave the venerable figure of Abraham, who was without doubt a key-stone of the faith and a land mark in history, pausing a moment before Isaac, the miracle child of his old age, through whom flowed nations and kings. Isaac was a man of peace and meditation, living in a quiet backwater without the trials which had tested his father's faith to the uttermost. He had been a cherished son, inheriting along with the promises great wealth. Struggle was not for him. Barring disputes about wells, he rode on quiet seas. Blindness in his old age may have been his chief misfortune, but in the providence of God it led to his giving the blessing to the son most fitted to receive it. A partiality for a favourite son may have been his one weakness, as a disappointment in that same son may have been his one sorrow. The delightful picture splashed on the canvas is that of a man in his youthful prime, walking in the fields at eventide, his thoughtful mood interrupted by the colourful approach of an eastern caravan which brought him Rebekah, whom he loved at first sight. Her choice, her long journey to become his wife and her astute valuation of the promises of God give her an honoured place in the gallery of the great women of faith. There are so many of these pilgrim women who shared the faith, enduring its hazards and the loneliness of the separated life. They must have their own gallery with a special day for viewing, where honour may be rendered to whom honour is due.

Beside the portrait of this tranquil man of faith hangs a sketch no less interesting, that of Eliezer of Damascus the steward of Abraham's estate, controller of his considerable household and ambassador extraordinary to the city of Nahor, in search of a bride for his master's son. He it was who chose Rebekah and brought her on her long journey to become the mother of nations. Here is the picture of a faithful servant seeking not his own, but rendering up honest accounts of his governorship, entrusted with a delicate mission, carried out with sagacity and a practical exhibition of true faith. While he believed in the God of Abraham he wanted signs for which he dared to ask with a natural simplicity, signs which he promptly acted upon to the successful completion of his mission, so forging another link in the strong chain of eternal purpose.

The portrait of Jacob is one of darker shades. There was little of serenity about his life but much of toil, struggle and suffering. In later life he considered his days 'few and evil' in comparison to the lighter and more lengthy days of his predecessors. His faith cost him something. He knew danger, hardship, grief and disappointment. Having by stealth gained possession of the family deeds, because he had the faith of his grandfather and set a high value upon those "exceeding great and precious promises", he was in turn outwitted, forced by circumstances to do what he least wanted to do but submitting because of his innate devotion to God and God's precepts. His critics have been many and sharp, but the tenacity and virtue of the man far outshines the narrow wit of his slanderers. If Isaac favoured Esau with his dish of venison, Rebekah favoured Jacob the slightly younger of her twin sons. Before their birth she had been told the elder should serve the younger. Watching the two boys grow to manhood she could not fail to see the difference in character and the father's indulgence for the more flamboyant hunter who prepared his tasty dishes. Even in looks they were different, making necessary an elaborate deception which she contrived and for whose consequences she was ready to accept responsibility. Esau had brought into the family two pagan wives, which besides being a source of irritation to her, disqualified him to receive the promises of God.

The discovery that he had been ingeniously displaced filled Esau with murderous hatred, further revealing his unfitness for God's purpose. Rebekah sent Jacob away for safety to her old home. The grandson of Abraham went out, a solitary wanderer, to retrace the steps of the founder of his house, to become in turn the founder of a larger house which in time would be welded into a nation. Known to many as wrestling Jacob, because he struggled with God and prevailed, his tenacity expressed in the determined cry, "*I will not let thee go unless thou bless me.*" was the obtaining of a first hand assurance which his filching of the blessing of Isaac had not given him. He valued the blessing so highly he had sacrificed his all for it; now he sought it so intensely that even his mighty opponent did not shake his courage or conviction. His reward was a new name, Israel, a prince with God. The will to survive even a

hand to hand conflict with almighty strength was a guarantee to his posterity of survival over monstrous difficulties. Whom God had not overthrown no power of man or force of evil could overthrow, a fact evident in the history of his race. Their foes have been many and cruel but Israel survives as a nation. The house of Jacob still stands. Of the spiritual house of Israel the same can be said. Twenty centuries of persecution, ostracism and cunning deception have failed to destroy the faith or separate God from his people (Rom. 8. 35-39). Wrestling Jacob procured and passed on to the heirs of faith the pledge to the overcomers. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne even as I also overcame" (Rev. 3. 21).

The strong unsmiling face, etched in lines of sorrow, looks down the corridors of history with gentle, steadfast eyes. He was at all times a man of action, unwavering in his devotion to God, ready to count all things loss for the greater prize of a promised inheritance. Many of his words illuminate the pages of life with a rich glow. His dream of the heavenly ladder with the angels travelling between heaven and earth, his exclamation, "Surely the Lord is in this place. This is the house of God, the gate of heaven," mark him a poet, an enthusiast, a man who followed his vision. His constant love for Rachel reveal him as the ardent lover, the devoted husband, the tender father of their sons. His dedication of a holy place, his vow of a tenth of all he might possess while still a penniless wanderer, shows him a man of mental and physical stamina, a worthy head of the great house of Jacob which at the time of his death consisted of about one hundred members. More of his descendants were to carry it forward to nationhood by mysterious ways, one of whom was his own son Joseph, son of the beloved Rachel.

Of the twelve sons of Jacob, Joseph was the gentlemen of the party. There is no evidence that Jacob ever had any strong affection for the sons of Leah, whom his uncle Laban had palmed off on him in place of Rachel, so getting another seven years work out of him. Her six sons and those of the serving girls had not the qualities of Joseph, the son of the loved and beautiful Rachel. There is that eye-catching portrait of the charming, vivacious lad, dressed in the many coloured coat which denoted the rank of a prince. This evidence of Jacob's favour, the guileless flaunting of his superiority, his artless chatter of dreams which appeared to exalt him even above

his parents, aroused in the sullen minds of his brethren a deep hatred.

There came a day when he was sent to inquire if all was well with them and the flocks, when they conspired to kill him. It is possible that the doting Jacob would have made Joseph his heir, not only of his property but of the birthright and the blessing of the promises. This the ten could not allow, so they put him in a pit, eventually selling him to a spice caravan going down to Egypt. Little did they know what they were doing for the future of their family or race. For twenty pieces of silver they sold a resourceful seventeen-year-old into a slavery which he turned to good account. They had stripped him of the princely coat which had so enhanced his status and his good looks. This they dipped in the blood of a young goat, taking it back to Jacob as evidence that Joseph was killed by some wild beast. In the skin of a kid Jacob had deceived Isaac. Now with the blood of a kid he himself was deceived, but whereas he had gone into exile, Joseph appeared to be torn to pieces. Poor Jacob tore his own clothes in anguish. He wore sackcloth and the tears of sorrow flowed in rivulets down the furrows which time, work and trouble had made in his cheeks. His was an irreparable loss, for Joseph had been his delight, the apple of his eye.

Joseph however was resolved to make the best of his plight. He had been taught and trained in the faith of his father and brought up in a large household, without doubt an apt and precocious pupil. He must have suffered grief at being so rudely torn from father and home. That his brethren could do this to him must have shocked him out of his youthful complacency. In his heart was more affection for them than they had for him. His later forgiveness of their crime and his reunion with them is one of the classical scenes in Israel's story. His hopeful and lively temperament, coupled to his faith in God, enabled him to take the experience calmly. He believed in God's purpose, that he himself was destined to play a part in that purpose. His dreams were signs, unforgotten buoys which kept him afloat where another might have sunk in despair.

The versatile boy with the charming tongue, the readiness to work, the gift to organise, was probably in charge of the whole caravan long before it reached Egypt. By his ability and grace he no doubt made himself as indispensable to the Midianite who bought him as he did to Potiphar, to the prison governor,

and last of all to Pharaoh when at thirty years of age he became the Grand Vizier of Egypt.

The story of Joseph's rise to power is too well known to be repeated although it is one of the most fascinating biographies ever written. God was with Joseph and made everything to prosper that he did, but if he had not had the faith and the natural talents, the knowledge, the patience and the will to assert himself, to remain true to his early training, God could not have used or prospered him. God works, but they of the faith must readily work with him or nothing can be achieved. When Potiphar's wife would have seduced him the very suggestion was to him wickedness, the action a sin against God, against her husband his master, and against himself. Where a lesser man might have succumbed, the principle of righteousness held Joseph like a steel hawser. He went to prison because of it but he came out to rule Egypt, to wear the white linen and the gold ornaments, to carry the wand of authority, to wear Pharaoh's ring, to ride in the second chariot behind the monarch or to be conveyed about in a splendid litter while he supervised the crops, the canals and storehouses of the land.

He had the manners, looks and charm of a prince, which Jacob had recognised when he dressed him in that multicoloured coat. Moreover he was talented and educated. Where did he get that knowledge of organising, accounting and superintending an estate? He undoubtedly had it when he went down into Egypt. Is it possible he was tutored by an aged Eliezer of Damascus who lived long enough to fall for the charm of the engaging grandson of Rebekah whom he had brought on that long journey from Nahor? Eliezer was the steward *par excellence* whom Abraham had thought at one time to make his heir. Maybe to him Potiphar and Pharaoh owed something for the implicit trust they placed in Joseph's administration. Without the genius which made him so able a superintendent he would never have been in a position to succour the whole house

of Jacob when the seven years famine dried up supplies.

That this was part of the purpose of his going into Egypt he easily recognised, when at last he met and embraced his beloved parent and established his brethren and their families in the land of Goshen. His dreams had not been the idle imaginings of an ambitious youth. They had been hints of his future. Jacob with a touching humility acknowledged the lordship of his son, begging that he would take him back to Machpelah for his burial. "Bury me not I pray thee in Egypt." The strange rites of Egypt, their obsession with the land of the dead, must have been highly distasteful to Jacob. Circumstances had forced him into a land not his, a land he could not love, a land which would become a house of bondage to his future children, a land in which he felt even his bones could not rest in peace. He had the funeral of a King but not before his remains had undergone the Egyptian custom of embalming, a fashion unknown and repugnant to the pastoral tent-dwellers of the land of Canaan. Into the burial cave of Abraham went the elaborate Egyptian sarcophagus of Jacob, as very much later another such one was interred at Shechem containing the bones of Joseph which the children of Israel faithfully carried about with them in all their wilderness wanderings.

Joseph lived and died an Egyptian but at heart he was a Hebrew, Abraham's great-grandson, with confidence in the oath-clad promise of a land that God had sworn to give to the numerous seed of that great man of faith. Egypt was not that land; when the time came to go, Joseph, like Jacob, did not want even his bones to be left behind. Jacob had left Joseph all his property, part of which was a parcel of land at Shechem, and there nearly two hundred years later the faithful leaders laid him to rest in the land which God had given them. From first to last Joseph held fast to the faith which will yet bring him a reward greater than the plot of land at Shechem, a position even higher than that of the viceroy of Egypt.

(To be continued)

"This love of which I speak is slow to lose patience - it looks for a way of being constructive. It is not possessive; it is neither anxious to impress nor does it cherish inflated ideas of its own importance. Love has good manners and does not pursue selfish advantage. It is not touchy. It does not keep an account of evil or gloat over the wickedness of other

people. On the contrary, it is glad with all good men when truth prevails. Love knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope; it can outlast anything. It is, in fact the one thing that still stands when all else has fallen"

(1 Corinthians 13. 4-8 Phillips)

Printed by

Ian Loftus Printing · Unit 1 · Old Great North Road · Sutton-on-Trent · Newark · Notts · NG23 6QS
Telephone: (01636) 821850 · Facsimile: (01636) 821876



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

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

Vol. 74, No. 4

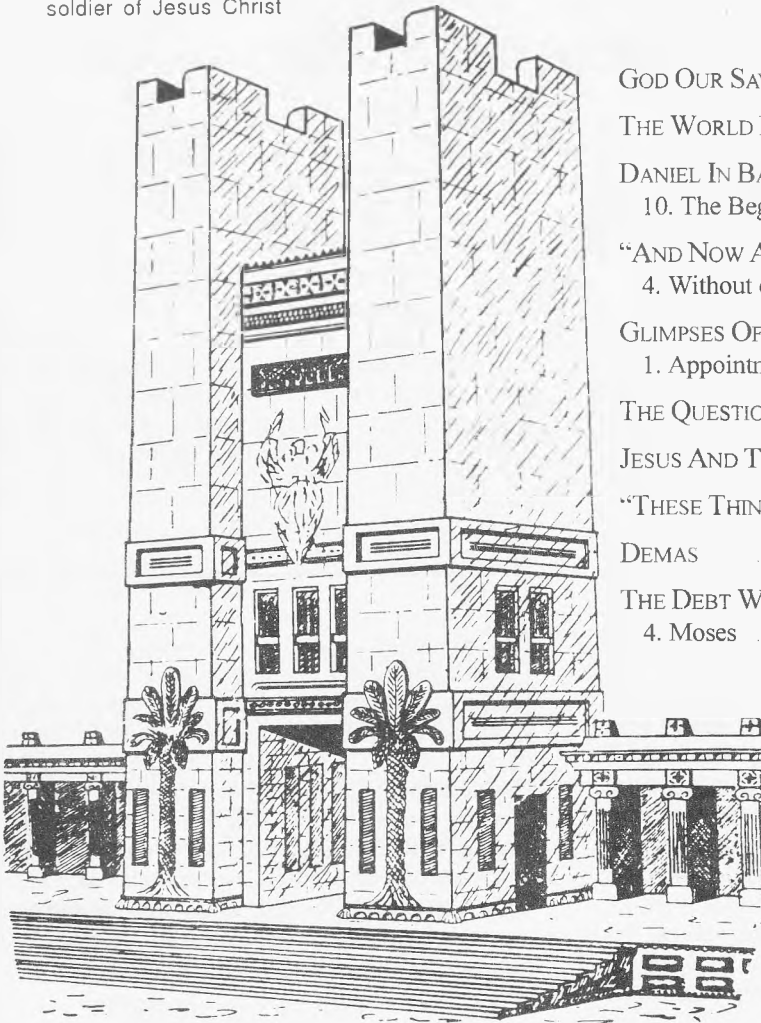
JULY/AUGUST 1997

Published July 1st

Next issue September 1st

CONTENTS

GOD OUR SAVIOUR	75
THE WORLD IN HIS HANDS	77
DANIEL IN BABYLON	
10. The Beginning of the End	78
“AND NOW ABIDETH”	
4. Without envy or conceit	82
GLIMPSES OF A PROPHET	
1. Appointment of a Young Man	84
THE QUESTION BOX	86
JESUS AND THE WOMAN OF CANAAN	87
“THESE THINGS”	89
DEMAS	92
THE DEBT WE OWE	
4. Moses	94



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

*This Journal is sent free
of charge to all who are
genuinely interested, on
request renewable annually
and is supported by the
voluntary gifts of its readers*

Published by
Bible Fellowship Union
4 Manor Gardens, Barnstone,
Nottingham NG13 9JL, England

Bible Study Monthly

FOUNDED 1924

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

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

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

Chairman: A. O. HUDSON (Milborne Port)

Editor & Secretary: D. NADAL (Nottingham)

Treasurer: R. J. HAINES (Gloucester)

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

"I will instruct and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go. I will guide thee with mine eye" (Psa. 32. 8).

There comes a happening in the life which disrupts the orderly course of events and nothing is ever the same again. And the immediate reaction is "Why has God permitted this?". It seemed so unnecessary, perhaps bringing grief and pain. Things may not have been perfect, but — how much better if God had left them alone! And in all such reasoning we are forgetting that God is fashioning and directing all our lives for his purpose, controlling and ruling our affairs and circumstances to create in each one of us just that heart and character which will fit us for the place in his creation which we are due to occupy at the end of our earthly pilgrimage. He knows, so much better than do we, the extent to which we, each one, has become transformed into his likeness and so be ready for the call to higher service. He knows, so much better than do we, what in the way of our experiences and of other influences are necessary to us that we might be fully transformed. And all the time He is the guide and instructor. He knows what we need and He knows the way. It is for us to watch diligently and perceive his leading and follow his guidance. He is a true teacher and a sure guide; as He led Israel through the wilderness and brought them safely at last to the Promised Land, so will he surely do with us. If He ushers us outside the door and closes it for the last time, He will open another door into which He would have us enter. If He closes one book because it is complete He will open another that we may begin afresh. And all the time He leads, like the guiding cloud in the daytime and the pillar of fire by night, his eye always upon us that we stumble not or miss the way, until at the last we cross the final boundary and are safely home.

There is so much we do not know, about ourselves and each other, so many reasons why what seems to be utter disaster is after all a manifestation of God's love and care

for his children. "The eternal God is thy refuge" says the Psalmist "and underneath are the everlasting arms." If He take one of his own into those everlasting arms it is because He loves that one and knows what is best. And for we who remain there is the consciousness that He leads, that we might follow; He instructs, that we might learn: his eye is upon us that we might realise his watch-care over all our ways and with us in all the circumstances of life, giving guidance in our perplexity, and strength for our weakness, and that peace of mind which comes from knowing that his hand is in control of all our affairs and will bring them forth for good, all the time that we rest then in him.

A.O.H.

Basile Dumont became BFU Treasurer in 1956, an office he held till 1994. For thirty years he was also secretary handling large amounts of mail and contributing his accountancy, legal and administrative skills for the benefit of many readers. As a founder trustee and treasurer he also contributed immensely to the project of the BFET (Gainsborough House Project). He was a faithful and mature child of God and a loving brother in the Lord. He fell asleep on 11th May; and we remember in loving sympathy and prayers, his daughters Yvonne and Barbara and their families.

Gone from us

Brother Basile Dumont (Hounslow)

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

T. W. Watson

GOD OUR SAVIOUR*An Exposition of
1 Tim. 2. 3-6*

With the increasing number of churches dependent upon his care, Paul found himself obliged, at times, to depute some of his authority and oversight to other men, in whose integrity and trustworthiness he had every confidence. One of these men, near and dear to the ageing Evangelist, was "Son Timothy".

To prepare and equip this young lieutenant for these responsibilities, Paul sent him the first letter that bears his name. Timothy was but young in years in comparison with many over whom he would be called to preside, and on that account likely to be despised because of his youth. On his young shoulders responsibility was laid to "set things in order" in the Church gatherings, as well as to administer necessary discipline upon obstinate and wayward offenders both in Church affairs and in their outside public demeanour. Though Timothy may well have known the methods of Paul's own procedure in these things, it was an advantage to him to have, from the Apostle himself, this letter of authority and guidance, for it placed him, during Paul's absence, in a position in the Church second only to Paul's own.

In the Church assemblies were men of many kinds. Some of them were of Jewish birth, with all the touchy sensibilities peculiar to their race. Many were of heathen origin, and before the gospel attracted them were brutal, rough and uncouth. Some of them were cultured men according to the standards of Greece, then prevailing. Together they would make a motley crowd, with interests almost as varied as their faces. It would be no easy task for Timothy (or others taking this oversight) to keep a state of peace within the assemblies, or to impress upon them the need for a pure and upright life.

Among the items of advice given to Timothy were those found at the beginning of the chapter from which we have taken our text. "*I exhort, therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings be made for all men, for kings and all that are in high places; that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and gravity.*" (V. 1 and 2 R.V.).

This may seem unusual advice from our point of view today, but in a day when disregard of the reigning monarch was a dangerous thing, it was expedient that such advice be tendered for the peace and wel-

fare of the community. Most heathen peoples would pay their regards to the Imperial bust; only the Jews, as a rule, would dare to disregard the Emperor's claims. For this disregard they were punished very frequently. The Christian communities could not offer worship before Cæsar's effigy, but Imperial resentment could be tempered and softened by causing it to be publicly known that they were praying to their God for the welfare of the Emperor and his government. All legally permitted religious systems were expected to pray to their respective gods for the blessing of their god upon the Empire and its Emperor. Paul's advice to Timothy was that this practice should be encouraged and practised publicly — not because it needed those prayers to persuade God forcefully to interfere in the affairs of the nations, but that they should not incite or aggravate the Imperial petulance unduly. God's control over the affairs of the nations would go on, and influences from the higher sources had gone out at times, in earlier days, and curbed or modified royal and Imperial proclamations, and could do so again.

Proceeding, Paul says "*For this (public prayer) is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus . . .*"

Paul says, as the ground and reason of his assertion concerning the salvation which God wills, that "*there is one God, and one mediator between God and men . . .*" Was there anyone in Paul's day who said that there was more than one God? Indeed yes! That there was but one God was a belief peculiar only to Christian and Jew. Every other nation, people and tribe, the wide world through, had its god or many gods, Greece, Egypt and Rome numbered them by hundreds — each with its own province and attributes. For what purpose did the peoples approach or appease these myriads of gods? To protect them in danger; to give victory in war; to provide food and all necessities, to act, in all cases, as a watchful dispensing Providence — in a brief word, to give them their daily bread, in peace and quietness of life.

Did any claim that there was more than one Mediator between the high gods and men? Yes, assuredly! This was a belief gaining greater currency every day, against which Paul warns Timothy at a

later stage of his advice (Chap. 6. 20-21). More particularly Paul combats this thought in his letter to the Colossians. Heathen philosophers had claimed that there were many intermediary ranks of intelligences between the highest authority (whatever its name may be locally) and the level of brutish carnal man. Some initiates into these things claimed inner knowledge (*gnosis*) of these ascending and descending ranks, and by their activities some of these thoughts had invaded the Colossian church (Col. 2. 18-20). Heathen religions had many of these intermediaries, of which the lower interceded for their devotees before the higher, and the higher before the highest, till their prayers eventually reached the pinnacle of all power. For what did they intercede? For food, for raiment, for home, and homeland — for all those things that made up the round of life. The god who was accounted the dispenser of these things was their Preserver and Saviour. The intermediary who interceded on their behalf was their patron deity, and to both of these higher powers their crude reverence was expressed.

Paul had made contact with this pantheon of gods previously, notably at Athens, where among its numerous altars he found one inscribed to "*an unknown God*" (Acts 17. 22-31). Eliminating the whole hierarchy of these intermediaries, Paul told them "*He is not far from each one of us, for in him we live and move and have our being*".

Again at Lystra Paul had contact with a primitive people which reacted immediately to his kindly act. (the healing of the impotent man) by naming the Apostles Jupiter and Mercury, (two among many of these intermediaries) before whom they would have done sacrifice. In his amazement and horror at such an unexpected consequence, Paul told them these things had come about because God had suffered the nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless, though they worshipped and invoked their many gods, through their numerous intermediaries, it was not these gods but the Living God — the God who made heaven and earth — who had fed them. "*He did good, and gave you from heaven, rain and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness . . .*" (Acts 14. 8-18). God had sent his sun and rain upon both the just and the unjust, and had preserved the nations alive through the centuries. God had been, and still was the Saviour of men — the Preserver and Maintainer of such life as there was in these rude barbaric times of ignorance. It was to dispel

some of this ignorance that Paul had been sent among the nations, to teach them that "*though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or on earth, as there are gods many and lords (intermediaries) many . . . to us there is one God, the Father: of whom are all things, and we for him; and one Lord (one intermediate) Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and we (made nigh to God) through him.*" (1 Cor. 8. 5-6).

If God is thus the Provider and Saviour of all men through the bounties of all natural resources, we may easily understand a later reference to these self-same things when Paul says "*we trust in the Living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of them that believe.*" (1. Tim. 4. 10). To the believer there was a 'plus' or 'special' factor. Something was common to believer and unbeliever alike: but something else was 'special' to him that accepted the message of the Living God. The whole creation was his charge, but saints were his peculiar care. The knowledge that the nations needed (whereby they might be saved) was that there was but one God — the Living God — and one Mediator between God and them, himself having been Man. Who had given himself a Ransom-price for all.

Timothy was being sent by Paul into Macedonia — a province in which the very notions against which he had appraised Timothy had prevailed. Timothy was therefore fore-warned and put on his guard against what to expect when he arrived at his journey's end, and also what he ought to do to guard against giving unnecessary offence to the fickle susceptibilities of those exercising authority there.

The key to the right understanding of the reference to God our Saviour, who willeth that all men should be saved, is found in that little word 'one'. twice repeated, applied by Paul to both the Living God, and to his Son. It implies, by comparison, the many gods of the heathen nations around, which, to the darkened minds of these people, were their protectors and Saviours. The salvation which God willed for them was their deliverance from the superstitious reverence paid to all these varying grades of gods, so that they might know him as the one Universal and Living God — the provider for all men — and approach him through Jesus Christ, his Well-beloved Son.

How apt is the statement of Paul to the Thessalonians (natives of the very country to which Timothy was being sent) — "*. . . ye turned unto*

God, from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivereth us from the wrath to come." (1 Thess. 1. 9-10 R.V.). In so doing, the Thessalonians had become participants

in both the 'common' and 'special' salvation, a privilege then open to all the nations and peoples everywhere, who would heed and obey the call of God to the Light, as the Thessalonians had done.

'THE WORLD IN HIS HANDS'

What a strange enigma this world is unless one has received insight from God! A tiny particle rotating in an uncharted ocean of space, subject to a mighty Force which imposes law, regularity and cohesion upon its many and varied parts. Yet it carries a reign of chaos, lawlessness and disintegration. Using a telescope a scientist will bow in awe before the unknown first cause, and confess vague belief in the intuitive wisdom and omnipotence of the creative God. Turning from his telescope he will deplore the disparity between the unfailing order of the stars and the moral order in which we live. Does the same God rule here as there? Does the same Authority stretch its empire to this chaos as to that ordered regularity? Man has parcelled out this earth, saying for a moment "this is mine", "that is yours". In some mad moment he will jump the fence, smite his fellow to the ground, appropriate his land and wealth, exalt his throne, and strut in regal colours through the earth. Of such have been the 'Caesars' and the 'Tsars' since the awful riot began. Each in turn has claimed the right of 'sovereignty'. Common folk have been subject to the power of the orb, the sceptre and the purple and must obey royal behest. "Do you not know that I have power . . ." was the condescending query of such an imperial voice to the One who stood before it unabashed and unashamed! Greater mistake was never made, for though in a secondary sense, there is no power but derives from God, absolute and primary power they have not! God has foreseen and foretold the rise and fall of empires over long centuries, but their coming and going are but temporary arrangements until He comes whose right it is. The 'absolute' and 'unforfeitable' is still in God's hands, and here sometimes amid the chaos and the change, those hands, reach down to make a place of shelter for one of his own. Unwilling though He was to defend his own good Name, the Man of Sorrows was instant and alert to defend Divine prerogative. "You would

have no power over me unless it had been given you" — from who, Caesar? No! "*from above*" And the omnipotent God can still reach down when time and circumstances require. In quiet and measured tones that truth was reiterated to the disdainful prefect's ear, and changed the situation. Was Jesus standing at Pilate's bar? Yes, in a way — but more immediately Pilate was standing at Heaven's bar.

To Jesus this was the Cup which his Father had given him — nothing more, nothing less. He overlooked the Roman and the Jew, and saw himself beneath his Father's Hand! That was enough to keep his heart at peace and rest, even though Satan's malice fanned priestly passion to cyclonic force. "*You would have no power over me unless . . .*" is still a truth to be warmly embraced by all who have made a full surrender to the Most High! Irrespective of what the outcome might be, the truth still stands unmoved. Jesus went to death, but it was his Father's choice, not Pilate's, nor priests'!

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

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

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

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

A. O. Hudson

DANIEL IN BABYLON*The story of a great
man's faith***10. The Beginning of the End**

It was two years after Daniel's dream of the four world-empires, in the guise of four ravenous wild beasts, that the aged prophet's eyes were opened again. Perhaps it was the quickening tempo of political events around him that sharpened the old man's faculties and enabled him to apply himself more devotedly to the leading of the Spirit. For more than ten years past the name of a military leader, Cyrus of Anshan, descendant of the kings of Elam, had been familiar to him as it was to all dwellers in Babylon. Cyrus with his armies was rapidly bringing all the lands of the Middle East into subjection to the rising power of the Medes, who with Babylonians had destroyed Assyria some hundred years previously and in the days of Nebuchadnezzar had ranked as a friendly power to Babylon. Queen Amytis, the wife of Nebuchadnezzar was herself a princess of Media. But Nebuchadnezzar had been dead now for thirteen years and Queen Amytis was destined to follow him only a year after this particular vision of Daniel, and Cyrus had ambitious designs on Babylon. His army was engaged in the siege of Sardis, capital of Lydia, the only power beside Babylon which remained unsubdued, and Daniel, astute politician that he was, must have known that Babylon's turn could not be much longer delayed.

So it is not surprising that in the eighth chapter of Daniel we are taken right into the centre of happenings which were to transfer the sovereignty of the world, first from Babylon to Medo-Persia, and then from Medo-Persia to Greece. This vision and this prophecy is one of the easiest in the whole of the Bible to interpret for the reason that its application is given by the revealing angel in terms of the plain names of the countries concerned. The correspondence with history is so marked that there can be no doubt about the matter. The factor that requires a little more thought, and yet is of greater importance than the interpretation, is the question: of what value is this strictly "history-book" prophecy to us? But that question can be looked at after we have considered the vision itself.

According to chap. 8, verse 2, Daniel was "*at Shushan the palace in the province of Elam*". It is fairly obvious from the text that he was there only "in the spirit", not literally. Elam and Babylon were virtually in a state of war at this time and Daniel

could hardly have been in the capital city of the enemy. He might very well have been a visitor in his earlier years when the two countries were on friendly terms; official business might well have taken him thither, so that it may not be at all strange to think of him seeing, in his dream, surroundings which were already familiar, and realising, perhaps for the first time, that here was a future stage for later acts of the Divine Plan when Babylon had ceased to be a power in the hands of God. Shushan eventually became the capital city of Persia, and was the home of Queen Esther and the scene of the events narrated in the Book of Esther, some seventy years later on.

The vision itself was a vivid and clear-cut one, easily remembered because of its simplicity and restrained symbolism. A ram, having horns of unequal length, the higher coming up last, was butting its way irresistibly west, north and south — obviously therefore coming from the east — until it stood supreme and none challenged its authority. For a moment Daniel saw it thus, and then beheld a furious he-goat bearing one great horn advancing from the west, charging the ram, casting it to the ground, and stamping upon it. So the he-goat in its turn stood supreme.

Now the great horn was broken and in its place there grew up four smaller horns; but the force and power of the goat was not the same; it was spent. Then there appeared, budding out from one of those horns, a little horn, a little horn which began to wax greater and greater, turning itself toward the east and south, and towards the land which was always in Daniel's heart, the land of Israel. With that thought the background of the vision changed, and Daniel realised that the horn was some strong power that would arise; he saw that power reaching up to heaven as though to challenge God in his own domain, and tearing down some of the stars from heaven, and stamping upon them.

Now Daniel was in the land of his desires, standing in the holy city, Jerusalem, and beheld the Temple of his longings, rebuilt and purified, the morning and the evening sacrifices offered in their due order by the appointed priests according to the law of Moses, the fulfilment of all that he had waited and sought through so many years. Here, at last, was the

answer to his prayers. And he watched until that godless power revealed itself a ruthless despot which led its followers to bring to an end those morning and evening sacrifices, to profane and defile the holy Temple, to destroy and cast down all that was sacred to the One God, and persecute and slay those who maintained their loyalty and faith.

So the prophet's hopes and short lived joys were dashed as he saw the fair vision of Zion's glory crumble again into the dust and ashes of a ruined Temple and scattered people, as his fellows in Judea had seen it happen in reality forty years before. But that was all in the past, and God had promised that he would restore Israel and dwell again with them in the Holy place; this vision spoke of the future, and declared the heart-breaking truth that after that restoration had become an accomplished fact and Israel had been delivered from captivity, the forces of evil would again prevail. With what painful intensity must Daniel have listened for the answer to the angel's question (vs. 13), "*For how long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot?*" For what further long period of time must the desolation of the sanctuary and the oppression of God's people persist, before the final consummation of eternal glory for Israel? It was a gleam of hope; the desolation was not to be for ever; and Daniel listened anxiously for the answer.

"*Unto two thousand and three hundred evening-mornings; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.*" Two thousand three hundred omissions of the daily morning and evening offerings of the sacrificial lamb. After that the oppressor's hand would be lifted, the profaned and defiled Temple be ceremonially purified and re-dedicated and then the worship of God be resumed without let or hindrance. That was the message to Daniel and that the end of the vision proper. At that point the revealing angel came forward to explain to Daniel what it was all about.

"*The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia.*" That is a plain, categorical statement admitting of no argument. The higher horn, which came up last, is plainly Persia. Media as an empire came into existence at the death of Sennacherib, king of Assyria, in 711 B.C., when the Medes revolted from Assyrian domination and established themselves as an independent kingdom under Deioces. Persia owed its rise largely

to Cyrus more than a hundred and fifty years later, but in fact Persia did not become the acknowledged dominant factor in the Medo-Persian partnership until the time of Darius Hystaspes, the third king after Cyrus. Hence "*the higher came up last*". Daniel was perfectly familiar with the political set up of the nations in his own day and he would readily grasp the significance of this part of the vision. Next he was brought face to face with something that was still two centuries future, the overthrow of the Persian empire by Greece. "*The rough goat is the king of Grecia; and the great horn that is between the eyes is the first king*". That king is known in history, he was Alexander the Great, who led the Greeks into Asia round about the year 330 B.C. and subdued every nation in his path to the frontiers of India — and died at Babylon on his return journey a few years later. Thus was the great horn broken even as the prophecy foretold, and the empire built up by Alexander in those few years was divided between four of the leading generals. "*Now that being broken, whereas four (horns) stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation but not in his power.*" Continued strife between contending leaders, ambitious for power, was resolved at last in the formation of four separate kingdoms something like twenty-two years after Alexander's death. Macedonia passed into the control of Cassander; Thrace to Lysimachus; Syria, Judah, Babylon and Persia to Seleucus, and Egypt to Ptolemy. Israel was sandwiched between Syria in the north and Egypt in the south and her fortunes were bound up with these two contending powers. On this basis is built the further prophecies in Daniel picturing warfare between the "king of the north" and the "king of the south".

Up to this point this vision follows and amplifies both Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great image and Daniel's dream of the four wild beasts, but whereas those dreams only showed the succession of four empires, gold, silver, copper, iron; and lion, bear, leopard and strange beast, this vision gives certain distinctive details of the second and third empires and distinguishes them by name. In verse 22 of chap. 8 therefore we are brought in history to about the year 300 B.C. by which time the contending factions in the break-up of Alexander's empire had settled their differences and the four kingdoms were more or less firmly established.

Now the revealing angel ceases to use definite

names. The "little horn" which came out of one of the four horns is defined as a fierce king who will arise "in the latter time" of these four kingdoms and will be manifested as an enemy of God and a defiler of the sanctuary, but at the end he "shall be broken without hand" and it is here that possible interpretations vary. The most natural understanding of the expression "in the latter time of their kingdom" would appear to be the virtual ending of this four-kingdom set-up and its replacement by the fourth empire of prophecy, Rome, the iron of the image and the strange beast in Daniel's dream. In point of fact three kingdoms — Macedonia, Thrace and Egypt — were all absorbed by Rome during the century before the birth of Christ. Of the fourth, Syria and the terrain west of the Euphrates were added to the Roman Empire at the same time but the eastern provinces of the "king of the north" Assyria, Babylon, Persia, never did become part of Rome, but merged instead into the not inconsiderable empire of Parthia, the one great power Rome never did subdue. Parthia in turn disappeared before the Saracen armies early in the Christian era. It would seem therefore that the "little horn" in the "latter time of their kingdom" (the four-kingdom quartette), must have arisen during that century or so during which Rome was pressing inexorably upon them.

The Romans originated from Greece in the 8th century B.C. but built up their power in Italy for some four centuries before manifesting interest in the Eastern lands. The death of Alexander and the consequent confusion amongst the four subsequent kingdoms awakened their interest and about sixty years after his death the then ruler of Egypt sent an embassy to Rome soliciting their help on his behalf in his conflict with Syria, to which the Jews were at the time subject. From then onwards Rome had an increasing influence in Eastern affairs.

Fifty years later Rome sent an embassy to Greece and from then on increasingly interfered in the political struggle between the four successors of Alexander gradually bringing them under their own control. The process culminated after a couple of centuries with Pompey's capture of Jerusalem in 63 B.C. at which point the Jews passed from the control of Greece to that of Rome. A century later the Romans subdued Judah and Galilee, destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple and scattered the Jews all over the world.

Of the various interpretations of this vision which

have been current through the centuries three have to be noticed. The immediate one, current in Jewry immediately prior to the First Advent, and carried over into early Christian thought, was that the Syrian king Antiochus Epiphanes of the 2nd century B.C. filled the role of the "little horn" and the "fierce king" of this chapter. Prophetic writers have described his conduct in such detail that there is no need to repeat it here; the Jews themselves have never been in any doubt as to his place in this prophecy. Antiochus launched a furious persecution against Jewish worship; he plundered the Temple and desecrated it by offering a sow upon the Brasen Altar; this was the defilement from which the sanctuary was later to be cleansed. Plenty of calculations exist interpreting the two thousand three hundred days as the literal number of days — about three and a half years — during which the Temple was to lie defiled. It is a fact that the cleansing and re-dedication of the Temple by Judas Maccabeus in 165 B.C. was approximately three and a half years after its defilement in 168 B.C. It is claimed that the two thousand three hundred "evening-mornings" — repetitions of the morning and evening sacrifices — equals eleven hundred and fifty literal days, and this was approximately, but only approximately, the interval between defilement and cleansing. So far as can be discovered from the histories of the period, the actual time was about eleven hundred and ninety two days.

This interpretation, viewed from the present time, has one serious defect. Although not stated in so many words, it is implied that once the "sanctuary" is "cleansed", Israel's troubles are over and the Messiah would appear to establish his kingdom, sitting on the throne of the Lord at Jerusalem. At that time this could be held to be reasonable. According to Jewish expectation that event was to take place six thousand years from Creation, and their own Scriptures of that era claimed that the time was close at hand. Only two centuries later, when Jesus did appear at his First Advent, it is stated that "all men were in expectation". The reality was different. Christ did appear, but the time of his reign upon earth was still two thousand years away.

It is also true that the constant warfare between Syria and Egypt, between the death of Alexander and the Roman supremacy three centuries later, involved repeated acts of desecration of the Temple and robbery of its treasures. The Jews themselves were not without blame. Much of the severity of

Antiochus Epiphanes was due to his efforts to quell the fratricidal conflicts between the supporters of contending High Priests, each endeavouring to secure the coveted position for themselves, shedding much blood in consequence. It is said by dispassionate historians that Ptolemy Philopater of Egypt at much the same time was a greater oppressor of the Jews than was Antiochus Epiphanes of Syria.

The other major interpretation is that the "little horn" is Mahomet the prophet of Islam and that the defilement of the sanctuary occurred when at the Muslim conquest of Jerusalem in A.D. 637 the holy places were handed over to the forces of the Caliph Omar. This ignores the fact that at the time the Holy City had been in possession of the Christians for many years and in fact the Jews at the time were better off under the Muslims than they had been under the Christians. This hypothesis is a centuries old conception born of the detestation of the Muslims felt by the then Christian world and since from the nature of the case the end of the 2300 days must lie somewhere near the seven times of Gentile rule in the earlier account of the Babylonian king's experience, this explanation would appear rather irrational.

Somewhere during the three centuries the enthusiasm of those pioneers who returned from Babylon in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah faded away and was lost, submerged in a sea of self-seeking and violence between antagonistic parties under which true worship disappeared. The lesson of Babylon had not been learned; that was the true defilement of the sanctuary and that was more than two thousand years ago. Perhaps not only Antiochus, but also Titus, pagan Rome, the forces of Islam, Papal Rome, the powers of this world as they now exist, are all part of this little horn, this fierce king, who is to give way at the appointed time to a cleansed sanctuary. When Ezekial in his vision of the Last Days pictured the last great conflict, he declared "*so shall the house of Israel know that I am the Lord their God, from that day and forward*". In that case, although the end of the 2300 days has manifestly not yet come, it must certainly be imminent, in this our day when the world as we know it is going to pieces. The Kingdom for which Daniel looked and prayed is not now a long way off; it might well be "at the doors". So the most reasonable identification of the "little horn", arising out of the original four may well be Rome, originating from the Greek "horn" of

Cassander, defiling the "sanctuary" of Israel by wars and oppression through the centuries of Rome pagan, Rome Papal, until at the end the fourth world-empire seen by Daniel comes to its end at the coming of the Millennial Kingdom of our Lord. The cleansing of the sanctuary is then synonymous with the deliverance of Israel in the day of "Jacob's Trouble" at the end of this Present Age.

Suffice it that Daniel perceived from this vision the probably very unwelcome truth that even though Israel be delivered from the power of Babylon and Jerusalem be restored, the days of Israel's darkness were not ended; trouble and distress were yet to be their lot because of renewed unfaithfulness and apostasy. The end of all evil and the time of the kingdom were still a long way off.

The realisation came slowly. Even yet Daniel was not permitted to perceive the details of wars and rumours of wars which were to fill the long Gospel Age and terminate in a time of trouble which had not been since there was a nation. That was reserved for his final vision, the one that is recorded in his tenth to twelfth chapters, and that vision was vouchsafed to him something like fifteen years after the one we are now considering. Slowly, through the whole of his long life, Daniel was brought to realise that the ways of God, sure and unchangeable though they be, require for their accomplishment what seems to the mind of man, long and sometimes weary terms of years. One little human life is a very short span in the vast time-scale of the Creator's outworking purpose.

Perhaps that is the real lesson for us in Daniel chapter 8. Whether the little horn is descriptive of Antiochus or Mahomet or both; whether the mystic 2300 represents literal days or symbolic years, or only evenings and mornings, half-days, is all of very little consequence compared with the great central truth embedded in this chapter. The downfall of the Gentile powers which oppressed Old Testament Israel, the return of the captives to Jerusalem, the rebuilding of their Temple and their city, would not of itself abolish evil and bring in everlasting righteousness. Righteous zeal and true worship would flourish again, but it would flag and fade. Apostasy and iniquity would certainly return, and with it the distress and oppression which under Israel's covenant was the logical and inevitable consequence. Again must the rod of the Lord be wielded, and whether that rod be Antiochus the scourge of Israel

or Mahomet the scourge of Christendom matters little, for the principle is the same. Both Daniel's people and all the world must needs wait for two great things, both of which are necessary to bring in the golden age for which Daniel longed. One is the First Advent and the other is the Second Advent. In visions yet to come Daniel was destined to see each of those great events pictured and only with both of them accomplished facts did he at last see the glad vision of resurrection.

So it must be with us. We have been privileged, as Daniel was never privileged to know that we live in the days of the Second Advent but we do not see the

work of the Advent completed — in fact it is scarcely begun. Like Daniel, we still do not know "how long". Blessed are we if, again like Daniel, we rest firm in our conviction that, though it tarry, "*it will surely come, it will not tarry.*" Even though still like Daniel, we are destined first to "*rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days*". Daniel died in Babylon without seeing that for which his heart had waited his whole life long; we like so many of our forebears in the past, may have to do the same. Happy we if, notwithstanding that, we are found steadfast in faith until the end.

(To be continued)

T. Holmes

"AND NOW ABIDETH . . ."

4. Without envy or conceit

A series of studies
in 1 Cor. 13

"Love envieth not", but is generous, benevolent! In the Greek we have a word capable of a two-fold definition, the one beneficial, the other harmful, and we have to take care which bias we give to the word. The wrong bias will give us "envy" for our definition, the right one will give us generosity and benevolence to a great degree. The Greek original is *zeelos* and its two possible meanings come out as "zeal", as in John 2.17; Rom. 10.2 and 2 Cor. 9.2; and as "jealous" (jealousy) as in Acts 5.17; Rom. 13.13; Gal. 5.20; and James 3.14. In this latter passage it is quite clear what *zeelos* is intended to mean, because it is qualified by the addition of the word *pikros*, which means "bitter". The Diaglott translates it "bitter rivalry".

The primary meaning of *zeelos* is "zeal" of course, but that does not inform us to what end the zeal is being directed. It is only too easy for zeal and honourable pursuit to degenerate into a much meaner passion, and for two, or more, who together aim at the same objective (and in doing so become competitors) to become open enemies as well, and employ their zeal to promote open enmity. Thayer's Lexicon defines *zeelos* (a) as ardour in embracing, pursuing and defending anything, and (b) as an envious and contentious rivalry, jealousy, which cover, first, the stirrings and motions of the mind, and secondly its outbursts and manifestations.

When *zeelos* becomes degenerate it may reveal itself at two distinct levels; that of the mind, and that of the outward act. If opportunity serves, it may open

war upon the good it observes in another person, and try to defile and make it less good than it was; or if the opportunity for the open act does not present itself, there may be the desire or wish to make the good less good. "*He that is conscious of this wish*" says Trench "*is conscious of no impulse or longing to raise himself to the level of him whom he envies, but only to depress the envied to his own*". Contrariwise "zeelos", rightly directed, works the other way, and would prompt the man of good intent to seek to raise the less good man to the level of himself. Not only does it not manifest jealousy against the other man; it uses all its strength and energy to lift the less good to the standard of the good. Hence our definition of generosity and benevolence.

There had been much depraved jealousy in the heathen world. Their rival priesthood and rival ways of life had been replete with jealousy for centuries, causing much blood to flow and much sorrow to many aching hearts. There had been much of this evil quality in the Corinthian Church, to their great detriment spiritually. Their zeal had been directed to wrong ends and purposes, and produced undesirable results. There has been an intense zeal in God's thoughts and ways, but it has not degenerated to a jealousy intent on debasing what is good to the level of the bad. A glowing, burning zeal for righteousness has led him to formulate a great Plan for the overthrow of sin and impurity, and for the establishment of righteousness everywhere. All the resources of Omnipotence and Divinity have been brought to

the prosecution of this Plan, so that He might recover to himself the hosts of sinful men, for whose love and loyalty He yearns. This is "zeelos" as it stands revealed as a constituent of the *Agape*. Likewise in all possessed by the *Agape* there must be an ardent zeal, directed, like God's own, to the uplift of fallen men. To retain its place as a constituent of the *Agape*, it can never degenerate to rivalry, either in the Church or outside. It can never wish to depress the good, either in the Church, or in a brother's life, to the level of the contentious or the envious. It will not covet another brother's place, nor envy him in his natural gifts in the service of the Lord, but it will bring the energy and thrust at its own command to supplement that of his friend. It will never seek to "get and keep" only for itself; its zeal will always be to give and give again. Nor need there be any rivalry in their running for the "crown". No one is ever called to compete with his brother, for a crown has been set apart for every one who runs as to obtain. There is no envy therefore in Love, but there is a mighty energy of zeal. It is a mighty flow of generosity to each and all, prompting the least to emulate the best, and all to emulate the Lord, in the interests of the Plan.

"*Love vaunteth not itself*". There is not much help available on this word, either in the Greek classics or the Lexicons. Nor do other Scriptures help, for it occurs but this once. Such help as Greek usage gives indicates that it is used of self-adulation. To "vaunt" is to boast, to brag, to utter self-praise. And in this sense the Diaglott rendering is as good as any; "*Love is not boastful*". No child of God has any ground for boasting, except he shall make his boast in the Lord. He has brought nothing of value to the structure of the Plan: at his best he is no more than an unprofitable servant.

"*Perfect love is humble . . .*" It does not sound a trumpet before it. Its good deeds are not done to be seen of men, but would be done just the same if no one saw or knew but God only. It is neither boastful of its knowledge or of its graces, but in humility acknowledges that every good and perfect gift cometh from the Father, and it makes return for every mercy to him. Someone has truly said that Love saves a man from making a fool of himself by consequential conduct, and by thrusting himself into positions which betray his incompetence. Modesty and decorousness is the opposite of vaunting, and should characterise every child of God.

Nor is Love "puffed up". Here again is a word for which the Greek classics afford but a little help. And it is a noteworthy thing that of its eight occurrences in the New Testament, no less than seven of them are addressed to the Corinthians — six in the first epistle alone. The remaining one is found in Col. 2. 18, in connection with men who, puffed up by their fleshly mind, "*hold not the Head*". Its primary meaning is to "breathe" — and its Latin equivalent "inflatio" gives it its proper sense. "*Knowledge (gnosis) puffeth up*" said Paul (1 Cor. 8.1). It was just this factor that had made some of the Corinthians what they were, and had caused much of the trouble amongst them. While knowledge had inflated them with pride, Paul assured them that only the *Agape* could build them up. Not a little mild sarcasm went into that illustration, for all residents near watery places would know of a certain amphibian creature which, to appear more fearsome to its foes, inflated itself with air, increasing in size without increasing its effectiveness. But the *Agape* is as solid masonry; foundations, walls and roof built for usefulness and service.

It is one thing for God to say "*I AM that I AM*", for that is bedrock truth. If He says "*I am the Lord, I change not*" it is a statement of absolute fact. Again, if Jesus says "I am" it is also perfectly true. It was a just estimate of his proper place in the Divine scheme of things. To say "*I am the Way, the Truth and the Life*" was not over-stating the basic facts of his position before God and man. It is altogether a different thing for man to say "I am" or "I can". Facts have a way of belying the claim. No man who knows his need for grace to help, and for redemption by Jesus' precious blood can possibly be puffed up or proud. He will never dare to stand up in the sight of God and say "I can" unless he adds forthwith the words "*through Christ which strengthened me*". If he loves the Lord he will know his "place" is at his feet.

"*Love doth not behave itself unseemly*". The classical Greek writers define this word, "to act unbecomingly", without specifying in what way it is becoming. We have to turn to Scripture parallels to ascertain its more precise and definite meaning. A very helpful passage is given in Rev. 16. 15, which reads "*Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments lest he walk naked and they see his shame*". Here, the removal of the garments exposes the unwatchful to shame. Alongside this Scripture a statement in Rom. 1.27 may be placed, "men with

men worked unseemliness", a statement revealing utter shame. The thought we need seems to be — Love does not prepare disgrace for another soul by removing its garments, thus exposing it to shame. It does not take away its cloak of honour and integrity to leave the frailties of the soul exposed, as a sorry spectacle for foes to gloat upon. Instead of this, Love would hide known faults with a mantle of charity, remembering betimes that one's self might also be frail and full of faults. Knox translates this "Love is never insolent" but that is too negative a thought to state what is needed here. It is the grace which is the opposite of insolence that is wanted as Love's constituent. A more exact thought would be "Love is ever courteous and considerate". In this we have the standards of the Royal Court implied. Though we know that the many politenesses and points of etiquette may be insincere, it is the code of conduct in the presence of royalty — not the insincere pretences of man — which is the substance of our thought. Courtesy requires the strict observance of honour

towards all, forbidding any act or word which involves a fellow-courtier in shame. Among those who have access to the Heavenly Court by faith and prayer, this courtesy is specially appropriate. For any child of God whose interest is represented in that Court by our beloved Lord, to snatch away the garment of another brother's honour and good name, in order thus to reveal his weakness and expose him to shame, would be acting unbecomingly to an infamous degree. The "Agape" would never lead to that, for it is God's way to hide our weaknesses under a robe of perfect righteousness, and it is never He that strips that robe away. The "Agape" is ever courteous and considerate in the best sense of the word and its code of etiquette is always that of the Heavenly Court. There will be many weaknesses to cover up in the coming Age, and only those who learn the lesson good and true in this present Age will be adequate to grapple with the situation of that coming day.

(To be continued)

D. Nadal

GLIMPSES OF A PROPHET

*Reflections on
Jeremiah*

1. Appointment of a Young Man

When the disciples were asked by Jesus "who do men say that I am?" they replied "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets" (Matt. 16. 14). What was it about Jeremiah that they should remember him when wondering who Jesus was? Was it his miracles or parables or just the man and his stand for real piety and morality?

God called Jeremiah to be a prophet, in the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign which was the year 627 B.C. when he was still a very young man, no more than twenty years old, perhaps less. He was very conscious of his own lack of skills and experience in communicating God's message. Perhaps he believed like many people through the ages that a person must be old before they can do a responsible job. That is not God's way. Young Jeremiah had not been corrupted by worldly wisdom; he was still teachable and energetic and in any case his task for God was going to take more than forty years. When God needs work done he provides skills but He must have the right vehicle for those skills; a person with the right qualities of character and capable of being

spiritually trained.

God had watched over this instrument of his purpose from before his birth. Jeremiah was one of those special babies whom God is said to have known from the very beginning of his existence and had reared him for his own purpose. The Creator had formed him, like the potter to the clay and set him apart for a great work. This became so apparent in the years which followed and perhaps it is his singleness of heart and purpose which identifies him with the young prophet of Nazareth.

When Moses had shown reluctance to do God's work of redeeming Israel from Egypt he made all kinds of excuses for not going. He didn't want to leave the comfort and security of the Midianite pastures to become embroiled in conferences with Pharaoh. The Almighty Creator was remarkably gentle with Moses and sought to find ways around the excuses. Not so when He came to Jeremiah for the young man was told not to say he was too young or not able; God had made man's mouth and would provide him with the words to speak. He immediately warned Jeremiah of the tremendous work which

lay ahead of him. One might imagine from God's words about uprooting and destroying kingdoms that he was going to be a mighty general with an army. Was this young man to be violent, arrogantly crunching all before him as he spread his military might across the eastern world? Nothing could have been further from the truth either concerning Jeremiah or the Messiah that he prefigured. His comments in chapters eleven and twelve show quite differently, "*I had been like a pet lamb led trustingly to the slaughter*". In fact Jeremiah had creative work to do 'building' and 'planting'.

God was to give his servant visions and messages concerning the political upheavals which were about to take place. This was a time of great changes in the Middle East when ancient kingdoms disappeared and others rose to take their places. Israel had gone and Jerusalem and Judah were facing destruction by conquering armies. In the first vision or parable given to Jeremiah, the prophet sees an almond branch, the first blossom of spring. But here is a play on words between 'shaked' which referred to the awakening of new life and 'shoked' which means watchful and was calculated to strengthen Jeremiah's faith in a God who so cares about his servants and his people that He is watching every move among the nations. Jeremiah was not to feel left alone and uncared for as he went to deliver God's message, for the Almighty was 'watching'. He still watches world events and they are never beyond his control. Those who serve him now need have no fear of the dreadful environmental conditions which western nations are wishing upon the world. However strongly the storm may rage among world powers, God will keep his people from all harm. God's stewardship carries no 'diplomatic immunity' giving us freedom from human suffering as Jeremiah was to discover, but nothing can happen to God's people which is outside his plan for them.

The second vision depicted a cauldron or 'boiling pot' tipped in the direction of the south. The menacing contents of the pot seemed about to boil over with scalding liquid and steam moving in a particular direction. Commentators support the NEB translation of the pot being tilted away from the north, but this does not change the meaning of the vision in which the trouble spills over Israel. One of the most difficult situations which Jeremiah had to face was telling this message to God's people whom he so passionately loved.

Worse still he had to tell them now as a warning, yet it would not even begin to be fulfilled for twenty years and its completion would be twice as long. All through those long years, he was discredited because the word was not being fulfilled and because he was regarded as a traitor to his own people with such a message. He continued to show that Israel's sin in flirting with false gods was like a profligate wife always going after other lovers. In this respect Jeremiah used the same analogy of Israel's relationship with her God which Hosea had demonstrated in his own life. The everlasting faithfulness of God's love is impossible for the human mind to fully grasp. Israel's infidelity is hard to imagine. Yet through those years Jeremiah discovered the wonderful friendship available to those who seek God; nor did he ever lack loving loyalty for his own people. Jeremiah was reinforcing the messages which previous prophets had given (e.g. Amos 3. 2; Hos. 4. 9; Isa. 10. 5-11) that unless they turned from idols and false religions, their God, the almighty and eternal God, would have to bring judgment upon them. There was nothing retaliatory or vindictive about such punishment. God's hostility to sin is part of his redeeming love as Alan Richardson wrote in his Introduction to N.T. theology, and this is a remarkable statement of truth which became a recurring theme in the message of the prophets. God must act against sin to prove his enduring faithfulness and love. Yet He waits long centuries for the repentance and reform of his people.

Still in his early life, the king cleansed the land of its idolatry and 'high places'. In the cleaning up and repair of the Temple, workmen found the 'Book of the Covenant', which now is almost universally recognised as the Book of Deuteronomy. They took it to their king who quickly sent it to the prophetess Huldah. Evidently Jeremiah had not become part of the establishment like the lady married to the grandson of the keeper of the Royal wardrobe. Huldah may have been a woman and she may have been older than Jeremiah but she gave the same kind of answer to the courtiers, as Jeremiah might have given. From then on Josiah sought to re-establish true worship in Israel and from that would result a right attitude in behaviour toward each other and all people. The eleventh chapter of the prophecy might well have been part of a preaching programme by Jeremiah in his royal master's campaign to bring Israel back to God and the covenant which bound them

together. There can be no doubt that Jeremiah admired King Josiah and paid him the highest compliment in addressing Zedekiah when he said "He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Is not this to know me? says the Lord". Jer. 22.16.

There is another clue in chapter eleven to Jeremiah's support for Josiah's reform. Jeremiah's relatives lived in Anathoth, to which place his ancestors had been sent by Solomon after his conflict for the throne with his half brother Adonijah recorded in 1 Kings 2. God had told Eli that his family would eventually lose the great privilege of being high priests because they had so abused the sacred office. A century passed before that family finally lost its position. Abiathar was a descendant of Eli, High Priest under David but when the time came to support an heir to David's throne, Abiathar backed the wrong man and sided with Adonijah. When Solomon took power he might have killed Abiathar and family without a second thought but because the priest had been so loyal to David from the days of Saul, his life and family were spared but were banished to Anathoth where they remained for several centuries until their greatest son was born — a young prophet. To their dismay and anger Jeremiah sided with Josiah and therefore with the rival priestly clan, the Zadokites. How long does bitterness and jealousy prevail! Until then they had remained the provincial priests at their own local shrine but with the reform movement sweeping away all places of worship except Jerusa-

lem their status was threatened.

Thus in Jer. 11. 21-23 we read of how the people of Anathoth said to Jeremiah "Do not prophesy in the name of the Lord or you will die by our hand". God protected Jeremiah, while his relatives were frustrated in their effort to prevent the word of the Lord going forth. This was a time of national revival when many were turning to the Lord and Jeremiah and his friends made a real impact on the whole land of Israel. But it was not to last, for King Josiah in some strange mood went foolishly out to battle against Neco, king of Egypt. It was a time when he had no quarrel with Judah and could well have been left alone to fight Babylon. Josiah's arrogance proved his undoing. He apparently forgot to seek God's will in the enterprise. Judah and her kings had the idea that they were indestructible perhaps due to the promise made to David that his throne was established for ever (Psa. 89. 1-4). Their failure to appreciate that the promise was conditional was re-inforced by the remarkable triumph of Hezekiah over the besieging Assyrian armies a century before. So the young king who had come to power in such a blaze of glory, brought premature mourning to his people, and especially to those who had rejoiced sincerely in the spiritual reform he swept across Israel. On the day that Josiah died, Jeremiah lost one of his most valued friends. From then on Jeremiah's chequered journey would pass through many dark valleys.

(To be continued)

? THE QUESTION BOX ?

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 revelation, 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 4.15. 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 when he was told "*My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness*" (2. Cor. 12.9).

A.O.H.

A. O. Hudson

JESUS AND THE WOMAN OF CANAAN

Matthew
15. 21-28

The incident of Jesus and the Canaanitish woman is often misunderstood, and the surface reading of the text seems alien to the known character of the Lord. This woman had a daughter who was sick — possessed by a demon — and she appealed to Jesus for the girl's healing. At first, so says Matthew's account, Jesus refused to answer her plea; then he told her he was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel and that it was not fitting to cast the children's food to dogs. All Canaanites were "dogs" to orthodox Jews, but one hardly expects to find Jesus openly endorsing that attitude. The woman was quick with a reply: "*Truth, Lord*" she said, "*yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table.*" The text reads as if Jesus changed his mind on the strength of this quick rejoinder, and gave her the benefit she desired; her daughter was healed. There is an element of capriciousness about this view of the transaction, which cannot be squared with what we know of our Lord, and the whole story needs more careful examination than a mere cursory reading will afford.

The woman was a Canaanite, a descendant of one of the aboriginal races which inhabited the land before Joshua led the invading Israelites across Jordan fourteen centuries previously. (Mark's statement that she was a Greek only means that she was a non-Jew — a Gentile). That Jesus entertained no prejudice against her on this account is endorsed by his readiness to talk with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, and by his parable of the Good Samaritan.

Whatever the cause of this attitude on this occasion, it was not reluctance to heal a Canaanite.

The woman's faith has to be noted. "*Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David.*" Canaanite she might have been by birth; it is evident that she shared the faith of Israel and acknowledged our Lord's Messiahship in a manner refused him by many of his own countrymen. It was not lack of faith, or any impropriety on her part which led to the initial seeming refusal of her request.

Nevertheless, He "*answered her not a word*". And his disciples, concluding from his manner that He did not intend to grant her request, exhorted him to "*send her away; for she crieth after us.*" At this point the first pointer to the explanation of the whole incident is revealed. Jesus spoke, as if in reply to his disciples' request, but also in the hearing of the woman, "*I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the House of Israel.*" That statement was in strict accord with current Jewish theology and with the revealed plan of God also. Messiah was foretold to come to Israel, to raise Israel to a position of authority among the nations that they fulfil their destiny of being a light to the nations, to declare God's salvation to the ends of the earth. To the Jew first, and afterward to the Gentile, although Israel conveniently and consistently ignored the latter clause. They were not particularly interested in the conversion of the Gentiles, only in their own exaltation to power as the chosen of the Lord. So Jesus enunciated a prin-

ciple which all his listeners — except perhaps the woman — would heartily endorse.

The woman was in no mood for the theological niceties. She only knew that her daughter sorely needed the help she knew the Lord Jesus could give. So *"came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me."* By now the disciples and the bystanders were watching and listening interestedly, which was evidently Jesus' intention. An element of his teaching was about to be expounded, and in the manner that would leave the deepest possible impression. Looking on the woman, *"It is not meet"* He said *"to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs"*.

It seems a cruel thing to say, as it stands in the Authorised Version. The woman was in sore trouble, and Jesus had already in the synagogue at Nazareth proclaimed himself the One who should come to bind up broken hearts and give joy for mourning. Did He really say what the English words imply?

All Gentiles were commonly called "dogs" and thought of as such by Jews. The word is *kuon*, and denotes the animals which ranged the streets and fields in packs, often semi-wild, living on what food they could find, or was contemptuously thrown to them by householders. If Jesus had called the woman a "*Kuon*" it would by no means have been the first time she had the epithet thrown at her by a Jew. But Jesus did not call her a "*kuon*". In these two instances, Matthew's and Mark's accounts of the incident, and in these two instances only, the word translated "dogs" is not *kuon*, but *kumarion*, which means a little pet dog, such as might be the children's playmate, and live in the house. Jesus was probably the only Jew who ever referred to a Gentile as a "*kumarion*" and the fact that both evangelists, taking the material for these accounts from different sources, use the same unusual word, goes far to assure that Jesus did in fact use the word. And in this subtle fashion He indicated to the woman that in his sight she was not outside the pale; she was inside the family circle and even, though not on a level with the children of the family, at least had a definite place in the home. "*Ballo*" which is rendered "cast" is also correctly translated in other texts "put", "lay" and similar words, so that it is not necessary to visualise a contemptuous throwing of the food down to the floor, but quite reasonably the putting down of a meal for the pet dog of the family. Jesus had already said He was sent only to Israel; now He gave

the second part of the lesson by pointing out that because of this it was not fitting for the general dispensation of his work and mission, intended for Israel, to be extended also to Gentiles, occupying as they did at that time a lesser status in the disposition of the Divine purpose.

It was the woman who gave the third part of the lesson. Jesus, knowing her mind and her faith, knew that she would; for his disciples' sakes He made her rejoinder possible. *"Truth, Lord, your mission is to Israel; but the Gentiles may expect some of the crumbs."* That is what she grasped from Jesus' words and that is what Jesus wanted his disciples to grasp too. They were always suspicious when there was any question of contact with non-Jews, and Jesus sought in this incident a means of teaching them that whilst their conviction that his mission was to Israel was right, there were developments in the Divine Plan yet to come in which Gentiles were involved, and they would have a great part to play in those developments. And now that the woman, in her faith and insight grasped his meaning, had given the rejoinder which conveyed the principle he sought to illustrate, He did what of course He had intended to do all along. *"O woman, great is thy faith. Be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour."*

This incident illustrates an important aspect of the Divine Plan. Israel, bound to God in covenant relationship from the Exodus and the Law at Mount Sinai, was designated the chosen people of God. That was for a purpose, that there might be in a continuously degenerating world a nation which would, however imperfectly, stand for God and his righteousness and preserve his truth amid prevalent ignorance. The history of Israel and their preservation of the sacred Scriptures — our Old Testament — is evidence that they did at least achieve that purpose. But this condition of things was intended also to enable them to recognise and accept Christ when He should appear for the salvation of the world, and this they failed to do. The salvation of the world proceeded, but the honoured position of God's agents in the proclamation and process of salvation passed from unworthy Israel to *"a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof"* (Matt. 21. 43), the Christian Church. That transfer took place after the rejection and crucifixion of Christ by the Jewish nation, and their rejection of his apostles and their message, only a few years following Jesus' encounter with this

woman. Believing Gentiles, who could only expect "crumbs from the table" at the time the Canaanitish girl was healed of her affliction, a few years later entered into the full privileges of divine service and sonship, in equal partnership with their believing Jewish brethren, and the formal arrangement which made the whole nation of Israel, believer and unbeliever alike, the earthly representative of the Most High, was terminated.

The time of this change was marked by the conversion of the Roman centurion Cornelius, the first Gentile convert to be baptised into Christ. The considered conclusion of the Jewish congregation at Jerusalem, after considering the related circumstances, was "*then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life*" (Acts 11. 18). Writing to the Ephesians in later years, St. Paul, addressing Gentile believers, confirmed this position by saying, "*Ye, in time past Gentiles in the flesh . . . without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel . . . without God in the world, now in Christ*

Jesus ye who were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ . . . who . . . hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." (Eph. 2. 11-21).

Of course, the rejection of unbelieving Israel is not final, for as St. Paul says in Rom. 11. 29 "*The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.*" National Israel will yet achieve high destiny when at last the veil of unbelief is removed, and as a nation they turn to God. The final scene of the divine purpose for human redemption shows the Christian Church associated with the Lord Christ in heaven, and restored believing national Israel on earth, labouring together in the execution of God's intention to make known his glory to all men, that all may have the issues of life and death placed squarely before them, that "all who hear may live," but for the realisation of that purpose the world must wait for the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom.

B. J. Drinkwater

"THESE THINGS"

*A study in
2 Pet. 1*

The expression occurs no less than five times in eight verses. By "these things" Peter refers to the list of Christian virtues mentioned in verses 5 to 7, where he says "*giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and love*".

Note these five occurrences, and what the Apostle says about "these things" and their importance. The first is in verse 8. "*If these things be in you and abound they make you that ye shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ*". The marginal rendering for "barren" is "idle", and Weymouth's translation brings out the meaning better; "*if these things exist in you and continually increase, they prevent you being either idle or unfruitful in advancing towards a full knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ*". Each part of this verse is important. "*If these things be in you*" has in the original the idea of existing in you as your permanent property or possession, something that has become a part of yourself. These things are furthermore not only *to be* in us, but *to abound* in us. In the original, the word "abound" had in it the thought of "to multiply". They are to exist in us not as expres-

sions of a moral code, but as principles of an inner life. Where life exists there must be activity in the reproduction of itself, continually increasing, as Weymouth renders it, just as the cells of the living organism increase and multiply in the process of growth and development. The permanent possession of living principles like faith, virtue, etc., cannot but be accompanied by a process of multiplication in thoughts, words and acts in conformity with these principles. It would be impossible for such a life to be idle or unfruitful.

Notice, further, that the thought is not of not being barren nor unfruitful *in the knowledge* of Christ, as the Authorised Version has it, but of being neither barren nor unfruitful *in advancing towards a full knowledge* of our Lord Jesus Christ. As one writer expresses it, "the knowledge of the Lord is not the region in which their activity is to work, but the goal to which all that activity should be tending". This knowledge, the writer further points out, is the higher *personal* knowledge, in contrast with the lower *general* knowledge. We are exhorted to add to our faith, virtue, and to virtue *general* knowledge and all the other qualities mentioned so that we might be able

thereby to reach unto the *personal* knowledge and love of Christ.

The second thing that Peter says about *these things* is that where they are wanting it results in spiritual blindness. "*But he that lacketh these things is blind and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins*". A fable is told, how in the centre of a great forest a bird is perched on the topmost branch of a tall tree, singing with all his might. A fox at the bottom of the tree asks what it is making all the song about. The bird replies that it cannot help it, the view is so wonderful. "What do you see?" asks the fox. "I see mountains and meadows, a great dome of the blue sky and the sea far away." "I don't believe a word of it", said the fox, "I don't see anything but these trees. There isn't anything else to be seen". Spiritual vision is the ability to see far off, away beyond the things of sense and time, and such vision can only come from the possession of Christian faith and hope. Lacking *these things* no one can see beyond the "trees" of the present and the temporal. Only as the Spirit bears witness by *its fruits* that we are the children of God can there be any assurance that we are God's heirs. If we lack this assurance, there is no real ground for faith and hope, and there can therefore be no real spiritual vision.

Advancing years in natural life is often accompanied by failing eyesight. The reverse should be true of spiritual life. As *these things* abound in us increasingly the spiritual vision becomes clearer and clearer, until, as Bunyan pictures it in *Pilgrim's Progress*, the Delectable mountains are reached, from where it is possible to see the very gate of the Celestial City.

Continuing, Peter says that those lacking *these things* have forgotten that they were purged from their old sins. This implies not only a losing of sight, but an experience of moral relapse. People who are becoming defective in sight are sometimes apt to become negligent with regard to habits of cleanliness. When we lose the vision of God's holiness it is certain to be attended with negligence regarding holy living.

The third thing Peter says about *these things* is that by enabling us to make our calling and election sure they will secure for us an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Verse 10 says "*Wherefore the rather brethren, give diligence to make your calling*

and election sure". This follows naturally after the previous verse, where he has been showing how that the doing of *these things* will give clearness of spiritual vision, urging us on to apprehend that for which we have been apprehended. The candidate for parliamentary election makes his *calling* sure when he accepts nomination and subscribes to the rules governing the election. He makes his *election* sure when he gains the approval of the electorate as reflected in their vote. The child of God makes his calling sure when he gives himself in consecration to God and daily seeks to confirm that calling by a life of sanctification. He makes his election sure when he wins the final approval of God. Of Enoch it is said that he was translated for the reason that before his translation he had this testimony, that he "pleased God". As God's approval was expressed in Enoch's translation, so will it be expressed in our "change" in the glory of the First Resurrection, when, called, chosen and faithful, we shall have made our election sure.

Continuing with verse 10, Peter says "for if ye do *these things*, ye shall never fall, for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ". The word for "fall" in the original means "to stumble". If ye do *these things* ye shall never stumble. This does not mean that they would never make a mistake, or have a setback. The thought in the Apostle's mind may be gathered from his use of the expression in the previous epistle, where he refers to Jesus as a stone of stumbling to those who stumble at the word, being disobedient. Jesus had come unto his own, and his own had received him not. Because they were not right at heart, they had stumbled, and so serious were the consequences that they had to be cut off from the favour of God. Stumbling as used here does not refer to the temporary slips of a man who is right at heart, for none knew better than Peter how easy it was to slip. It means rather the serious occasions of offence experienced by the man who at heart is at cross purposes with God. A man whose blood is pure can get quite a deep wound without causing permanent harm, but the person whose blood is unhealthy can develop blood poisoning from the merest scratch.

There is something grand about Peter's expression "for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly". It reminds again of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, and the stirring account of the passing over

of Valiant-for-truth. "When the day that he must go hence was come, many accompanied him to the river side into which as he went he said, "death where is thy sting?" So he passeth over, and *all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side.*" What an abundant entrance the Lord Jesus had; "ten thousand times ten thousand", and thousands and thousands saying with a loud voice "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing". The picture which the Bible presents of the Christian life here is that of an *abundant* life, comprehending a peace that passeth all understanding and a joy unspeakable and full of glory. In like manner it pictures a fitting end for such a life in *an abundant entrance* into the everlasting kingdom, when as more than conquerors we shall have a Divinely royal reception.

The opposite of an abundant entrance is that of being saved, yet so as by fire. Lot stands forth as an example. In the destruction of Sodom he lost everything with the exception of his own life and the lives of his two daughters. Our ambition should be to live the full life here that God has designed for us, experiencing the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ, and to win thereafter this abundant entrance. Do not let us be satisfied with anything less. What the glories are that await us there, neither tongue nor pen can show. One thing we know, "when He shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as He is". As the crowning feature of the life to come, Paul, speaking of it, ends by saying, "so shall we ever be with the Lord". This will be our greatest joy, and it is manifest that we can be prepared for those delights of his immediate presence only if the spiritual qualities that Peter has been describing, exist and abound in us, here and now.

Going on to verse 12, we have the fourth occurrence of "these things". Peter says "*wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them and be established in the present truth*". In this section Peter is telling us that the possession of *these things* is essential to an establishment in the present truth. Present truth is an expression we often use to denote the fuller light enjoyed in these last days. Peter, however, was speaking here of the truth which was present with, and enjoyed by, the believers in his day, and has been present with and enjoyed by believers ever since. That truth was vastly different

from the truth belonging to the old dispensation. It was different doctrinally, dispensationally and practically. Doctrinally it embraced all the new teaching associated with the ransom sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, and how the types and shadows of the ceremonial law were fulfilled in him. Dispensationally it comprehended all the new light regarding the ending of the Jewish Age and the opening up of the Gospel Age. Practically it contained all the new teaching regarding the possibility of deliverance from the law of sin and death, because of the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus. All these were vital fundamental differences and it is the last feature that Peter has been stressing in his emphasis on *these things*. Having a good understanding of the doctrines, and a good knowledge of the dispensational features of God's plan are not enough. To be established in the present truth one must possess *these things*. As this was true in Peter's day, so it is true today.

There is just one other occurrence, the fifth of the key note "*these things*" in this section. About thirty years before writing this letter, the Lord had given Peter a thrice repeated commission to feed his sheep. On the same occasion He had given him an indication that he was to die the death of a martyr. We find both of these ideas in the verses that follow. He says, "*Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle to stir you up by putting you in remembrance*" — performing thus to the very last the duties to a faithful shepherd. "*Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me.*" But Peter does not stop there. Like the Lord, whose spirit he has so richly imbibed, he thinks of the need of the sheep after he has been removed from them, and continues: "*Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance*". As if he would say, "this is the all important matter, as I have endeavoured to show by both my teaching and by my life. And now since I feel that the death by which I must glorify God is drawing nigh, I will do my utmost in the time that yet remains to impress this same truth indelibly in your minds". This is Peter's parting injunction. It was written not only for those who received it in his day, but for us living today. May we take it as a personal message from him, and may we each endeavour to have *these things* of such vital importance always in remembrance.

A. O. Hudson

DEMÁS

A character study

"Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world" (2 Tim. 4. 10). There is a world of sadness in Paul's regretful words. Demas, who was one of the brethren in the Roman church at the time of Paul's first visit to Rome, at the close of which he was acquitted by the Roman tribunal and set at liberty; now at the time of his second visit under arrest and eventual death, was no longer there — departed to Thessalonica. Demas, who had been so close to the Apostle during his first imprisonment that his name was added to those of Luke, Aristachus and Mark, Paul's closest companions, in sending greetings to the Asiatic Churches; evidently well accepted in the Christian community, had disappeared, *"having loved this present world"*. For Paul's companions and for the Roman church generally, no less than for the Apostle himself at this time of acute crisis, it must have been a bitter blow.

The defection of Demas is recorded in the Second Epistle to Timothy, the last letter to be written by Paul before his death in A.D. 67. Paul had probably arrived in Rome under arrest some time later in A.D. 66, probably only about six months before his execution. Whether Demas left him during this period or was already gone when the Apostle arrived is unknown. The severe persecution instigated by the Emperor Nero following the Great Fire of Rome of A.D. 64 falsely blamed on the Christians, may well have had something to do with it. Perhaps Demas, his fortitude failing, had quietly slipped away to Greece to get out of the way.

There is nothing whatever said of him beyond this allusion and the mention of his name in two other texts. He may have been a Roman, he may have been a Greek; it is actually the diminutive form of Demetrius, but although two individuals in the New Testament bear that name it is certain that Demas was not one of them. The most likely supposition is that he was a native Roman who had become a Christian and a member of the Roman church at some time prior to Paul's first visit, and become a close confidant of Paul so that his name would naturally appear in the greetings together with those of Paul's other close associates. The Roman church had been established at least some fifteen or more years before Paul came to them, and this perhaps is the period during which Demas became a convert. He would in that case have been in fellowship with Linus of

2 Tim. 4. 21, who succeeded Peter as "Bishop" or leading elder of the church. Linus himself was British, son of the Christian king Caracos — Roman name Caractacus — both being held hostage in Rome to guarantee the good behaviour of the Britons, under Roman rule since the days of the Emperor Claudius twenty years earlier. So too was the Christian daughter of Caracos, Gladys — Roman name Claudia, after the emperor Claudius who had proclaimed her as his adopted daughter — with her husband Pudens Pudentinus, an officer in the army of Aulus Plautius, the Roman general who overran and conquered Britain in the year 43. (Whilst so engaged in that rather difficult task, ably assisted by his second-in-command Vespianus, who eventually became Emperor after Nero he found time to court and marry another Christian, Gladys, the sister of Caracos, and she by now was at Rome with him under the name of Pomponia Graecina. All of which leads one to wonder how Christianity got to Britain so quickly after the Crucifixion).

Nothing more is known of Demas after his departure from Rome to Thessalonica, no mention of his name by the brethren in the latter city and nothing whatever in the annals of the Early Church. It is true that Chrystostom in the fourth century makes one mention of him in his writings to the effect that after his defection and flight to Greece he became a priest in one of the pagan temples, but he gives no authority for this statement and there is no earlier reference to this, so not much credence should be placed upon it. Much more likely it is that upon arrival at Thessalonica he did not attach himself to the local Christian community and spent the rest of his life in a different sphere. That comes back to the question, the answer to which is not likely to be found whilst this present Age endures, "why did he run away?"

There could be at least three possibilities. Paul's words *"having loved this present world"* could indicate that his new-found faith proved insufficient to wean him away from such attractions as this world has to offer. It must be admitted that Rome under Nero was not a particularly attractive place for the working classes of the day and Demas was probably one of these. The rich and opulent lived in luxurious mansions but the rest were mostly condemned to multi-story slums, with hard work and little of the amenities of life. Perhaps he never really

understood the call to be buried with Christ by baptism into his death, and rising to walk with him in newness of life, to take up his cross and follow him whithersoever that might lead. Perhaps his consecration was only on the basis of the coming halcyon days of the Messianic Kingdom which the Christians preached and promised, and when that kingdom seemed slow in coming he gave up hope and reverted to his former life. Perhaps failures on the part of a few of his Christian brethren to maintain their professed high standard caused him to decide that the Christians were really no better than the pagans from whom he had turned away and he might as well go back to them and find some enjoyment in the old life. These things have happened so many times in every century since and most of us can remember some who "ran well" for a time, and then departed and were seen no more.

A second hypothesis is that it was the Neronian persecutions, when so many Christians were thrown to the lions, which caused his faith to fail and evoked the determination to get away to a quieter place where he could keep his Christian feelings to himself and stay more or less out of sight. Greece was a long way from Rome, and there was little or no animosity to Christians there at that time. The persecution instigated by Nero, which subsided after his death in A.D. 68 was at its worst confined more or less to the city of Rome. Perhaps Demas was somewhat akin to what we in our day sometimes refer to as a "fair-weather saint", faithful enough when times are easy but not able to stand the storms of opposition. A lot depends upon the individual make-up, and our Lord must understand the make-up of each one who comes to him. Some are born fighters and some are more placid; maybe there is a place for each in his scheme of things.

There were two notable men of mediaeval times, co-workers and friends, Martin Luther and Desiderius Erasmus. Luther in his reforming zeal had been summoned to account for his actions; Erasmus was afraid that he was being unnecessarily provocative in advancing the cause for which he stood. "You are trying to walk on eggs without crushing them" Luther accused his friend. "I will not be unfaithful to the cause of Christ". "I will go to worms", shouted Luther, "though the devils were combined against me as thick as tiles upon the rooftops".

But the one clue, that he went to Thessalonica,

may perhaps point to the true reason. Thessalonica in Greece was an important commercial centre, conducting a lively trade with Roman Asia and the farther countries on the other side of the sea. A smart business man could achieve considerable prosperity in Thessalonica. When Paul first visited that city he found, a "seller of purple" in business at "Philippi not far away". She was evidently an importer of and dealer in the costly purple dye and associated garments which came from Roman Asia and the coastlands of Syria, obtained from certain shellfish found only on those coasts. Did Demas reason that under prevailing conditions a vigorous association with the traders of Thessalonica might be more pleasant and certainly more profitable than enduring the definitely more unpleasant life of a Christian in Rome? Did the attractions of this present world outweigh the promised felicity of which, at present, it would appear to be a problematical future world? "*Having loved this present world*" The words have familiar ring. How many of us can recall the youthful zeal for the Lord of one who in the first flush of youthful enthusiasm appeared to make rapid progress in the things of the spirit, who began to be helper and a father in God to others as they in turn entered the same calling, who gave his all in consecration to the Lord — and then as business life developed and earthly prosperity became his lot, found those business interests absorbing more and more of his time and attention, to the detriment of both his own spiritual life and his service for his brethren — and the bright vision fades away and is replaced by property and money and he is seen no more. And then, advancing age begins to preclude any more money-making, and the wealth and the property seem somehow to be of less account, and he realises the end is approaching, and he recalls the happy days of his youth, and, perhaps, even attempts to join up again with the friends of those days — but it can never be the same. He has pulled down many barns and built greater, but they are of no use to him now, and there is no treasure laid up in heaven. He never actually denied his Lord; he just failed to follow his Lord. The Lord will certainly have a place for him in the world that shall be, but — it is not the place he could have had. "*Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.*"

F. A. Shuttleworth

THE DEBT WE OWE**Part 4. Moses**

The affliction of Israel in Egypt brought to the fore yet another man whose name and deeds have inspired alike the cleverest of writers, sculptors and painters. This was he who stood barefooted before the burning bush, receiving his dread commission to deliver Israel from the power of a particularly ruthless, vacillating king. Joseph had brought them down for preservation, a growing family which, with the passing of more than a century since his death, had multiplied greatly in numbers and possessions, so much so that the new king felt them a menace to his power, for *"Israel are more and mightier than we"*.

There then followed one of the most ruthless suppressions of a people by slavery and infanticide which almost amounted to a policy of race extermination. As one king died another took his place, more cruel than the last. In desperation the people in their misery cried unto God and He heard their cry. This deplorable bondage had been foretold even to Abraham. That it was allowed to go on so long and to such an extreme of suffering raises a few question marks about the mysterious ways of God, to which He gives his own inscrutable answer; *"My ways are not your ways, nor my thoughts your thoughts"*; *"neither can the clay say to the potter, What makest thou?"*

That generation of Hebrews had fallen victim to a king with a craze for building and in them he found a plentiful supply of cheap labour. Taskmasters whipped them on to unflagging drudgery and the toll of life through illness and overwork must have been very great. Added to that the grief of women whose male children were thrown into the Nile, brought them to extremity. Tragically, people often have no desire to call upon God until they are reduced to this pitiful plight, when He becomes a last resort. As God had promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to bring them to a land which would be theirs forever and had used Joseph to preserve them, He was in honour bound to get them out of Egypt before successive tyrants destroyed them.

The timing of God for great events is always perfect and on time, never, late. A drama was to be enacted in that land, a conflict between two men whom he had raised up, the reigning Pharaoh and Moses the deliverer, who by a strange providence had been brought up in the Egyptian court. The babe

in the bulrushes watched by an attentive sister, discovered by Pharaoh's daughter and nursed by a devoted mother, has the same appeal as Noah's Ark and the manger at Bethlehem. No book produces such stories as the Bible. Truth is stranger than fiction. It still provides the best themes for the Arts; it is pseudo-cleverness which labels them as myths and fairy tales, for in each case they played a part in stupendous events which were anything but myths and bore no resemblance whatever to fairy tales.

At the time of the famine God needed a man in Egypt who could command the ear of a sympathetic Pharaoh for the preservation of his people. Never before nor since did two such men and such a set of circumstances meet together. Because of divine foreknowledge they served his purpose. When the time of deliverance came, Moses and the reigning Pharaoh were of a type of mind and character well suited to his intentions. There is a touch of irony in the rearing of the child of a Hebrew slave in the royal house of the very ruler who had issued the edict for the destruction of male infants. That Moses was ignorant of his own lineage until he was forty years of age, that he was educated and trained as an Egyptian prince and ruler seems evident. Such knowledge and such training fitted him to stand in later years in the royal court, to subdue the sorcerers, to expose the priesthood, to overthrow the false gods, to break the power of Pharaoh and to organise the orderly departure of an estimated two and a half million people.

The revelation of his identity must have been a shattering blow to a man in his position, to one of his arrogant and hasty temperament. To find that he was not the son of the king's daughter, but a son of the despised slave race, to be suddenly hurled from the top of the social ladder to the bottom, must have been a traumatic experience, a nervous shock, which may have left its mark in that slowness of speech of which he later complained. As Moses is accredited with the writing of the book of Exodus, much interesting, personal detail is absent. From what antiquarians have discovered of the courts of those days, it is possible that while undergoing certain temple rites as a possible heir to the throne, the jealous priests revealed to him his true identity. That there were well-known details of this phase of his life is

evident from the references of New Testament writers to the man "learned in all the wisdom and knowledge of the Egyptians, mighty in word and in deeds" who forsook or renounced all "the treasures of Egypt", his princely position, his wealth and all the honours of a royal house, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God.

His identification with them, his study of their situation, his slaying of the Egyptian taskmaster, his intervention in the quarrel between two Hebrews and his subsequent flight into Midian did not take place all at once. The Hebrews knew him for a prince and ruler, an Egyptian, and they rejected him. Pharaoh, hearing of the angry blow which had felled an officer, would naturally be outraged and alarmed that one presumably of his house should espouse the cause of the detested Hebrews. The man who fled into Midian had received a shock and a severe lesson in self-humiliation. All that he learned was to fit him for leadership. Moses, forty years an Egyptian, became for the next forty years an Arab shepherd, wandering with the sheep in a wild land, learning something of the destiny of the Hebrews from Jethro, a descendant of Abraham by Keturah, and who became his good friend and father-in-law.

The conversations of these two men and the cogitations of Moses, while he watched and led the sheep in the land of Midian, may be imagined. When God at last called to him from the burning bush he was sufficiently instructed and disciplined to understand the import of the task he was asked to undertake, to realise the awful responsibility of taking this nation of slaves out of Egypt and the greedy clutches of Pharaoh into the land promised by Divine oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

After some pardonable demur, Moses accepted the commission. It cannot have been with any feelings of jubilation that he took his leave of the pastoral home, where he had known so much peace, to traverse again that weary road to Egypt. If he had any premonition that the rest of his life was to be spent wandering in the wilderness with a rebellious and stiff-necked people who would constantly sigh for the fleshpots and the graves of Egypt from which he was sent to deliver them, he must have arrived among them in a very sober and solemn frame of mind.

In due course that conflict began, not so much between man and man as between the powers of darkness and the forces of light; between the su-

premacry of God and the pagan idolatry by which Satanic agencies blinded and enslaved not one nation but the entire race of man. While the ten plagues were directed at the Egyptian way of life, the whole confrontation appears to symbolise a greater combat, to foreshadow a greater than Moses challenging the same forces of wickedness to "let my people go". The fight was God's, Moses the instrument through whom He accomplished so mighty a deliverance. Although the Pharaoh who had sought the life of Moses was dead, it is quite possible that he was personally acquainted with the Pharaoh of the Exodus who then occupied a position for which he himself had been trained. Those at court would be well aware that the man who now stood before them demanding, with all the signs of Divine authority, the liberation of the enslaved people, was a Hebrew who had forty years earlier been a prince and a ruler in the royal house.

This fact would help to harden Pharaoh's heart, to add contempt to his dismissals of Moses from his presence. If in the end it added fear, it also added rage and a malignant spite when he pursued Israel with destructive purpose to the Red Sea. Moses knew all the arts and magic of the sorcerers. They too must have been bitterly mortified when, having been put through their paces, they had to admit after the plague of lice, "*This is the finger of God*". Their humiliation was complete when the plague of boils smote them also and they could no longer stand before him. Once having given himself to the task Moses was not the man to look back or give in. Through all the years of wilderness wanderings, constantly aggravated by a discontented people who would much rather have returned to their bondage and the sensual pleasures of idol worship than go on to the promised land, there is no evidence that he ever regretted his past or was tempted to resign his office of leadership. Through experiences which made him "fear and quake", through famine, drought, pestilence, battle and rebellion; through snares, enticements and excursions of wrong doers he remained the firm head of his people through forty years of wandering in a desolate wilderness where water was an ever pressing need. Beside herds and flocks there had come with them out of Egypt a mixed multitude who often stirred up trouble. In spite of all these things he welded them into a nation, giving them laws which embodied the righteousness of God and the whole duty of man to God and his neigh-

bours, and a priesthood whose beauty and ceremonial foreshadowed better things to come.

Israel left Egypt a tribal people but they crossed the Jordan a nation, a commonwealth, a theocracy, fitted to inherit the land of promise, to be a holy nation, chosen and separate. The righteous principles of the faith were no longer in the custody of one man, or one family, but of a nation, brought out of affliction, moulded and hardened in the wilderness, taught and disciplined by Moses the administrator, the leader, the conqueror, the head of his house, whose total identification with them, whose submergence of self in them, whose total lack of self-interest, made him "the meekest man in all the earth".

Of all the prophets there were none who knew the Lord face to face as he did, who came from his holy conversations with the light of the God of Israel illuminating his face with a brightness which could not be looked upon. Although that nation was to produce many great characters of the faith, there were none between Moses and Christ who ever shone with the same heavenly glory or showed among men a more utter selflessness, and a readiness to lay down his life for others. At the end he was not allowed to cross the Jordan into that land to which he had brought the new nation. While still vigorous he was called to lay down his office, to pass to his successor some of his own strength and wisdom. His work was finished. None other could have done it. But the new young nation needed a new and younger leader, who would have to bear the brunt of the battle and the task of parcelling out the land. So Moses ascended alone to the top of Pisgah, to look out from that

mountain eyrie across to the land where his people would dwell.

That is the last picture of a great man, endowed with some of the sublime grandeur of the mountain upon which he stood, his last thoughts with the destiny of the people whom he had led and blest, whom he had exhorted and warned. Leaning upon his staff, with undimmed eye taking in the prospect, looking down the future with a prophetic vision, feeling in his heart something of the things yet to come to this chequered, wayward people but confident that in God's good time they would dwell at last in peace in the everlasting inheritance, he rendered up his account to him who had called him from the burning bush forty years before.

Life had begun for him "a goodly child", placed upon the waters of the Nile in a fragile basket. In three phases he had lived it, the Egyptian prince, the Arab shepherd, the Hebrew leader and law-giver. He had honoured the faith of Joseph, bringing his bones out of Egypt. In all the desert wanderings they carried the sacred relics of Abraham's great-grandson, who once ruled Egypt. They would cross the Jordan to be interred at last by Joshua in the parcel of land which Jacob bought at Shechem so long ago, land which became the inheritance of Joseph's children. But for Moses, whose intrepid courage, whose wisdom, patience and self-annihilation had brought Joseph's Israel in their thousands to the border of the promised land, a lonely end in a lonely place. None could venerate or claim the spot for none knew or ever would know where God buried one of his finest workmen.

(To be continued)

Cost of the 'Monthly'

Readers occasionally enquire about the cost of a subscription for the 'Monthly', and others wish to know how much it costs for printing and distribution as a guide for their freewill gift. The present expenses have been kept stable for several years by a helpful printer and other economies. Current cost of production for one copy for six issues in UK is £6 and for readers outside the UK — £8. This information is for enquirers. We **emphasise** that all costs are met by **spontaneous gifts** of those wishing to support the circulation of the BSM and its associated literature. They are sent free to all who sincerely wish to receive them.

"The Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand" is the title of a six-page leaflet recently re-printed. The text of the leaflet appeared as an article in the BSM May/June 1995. It emphasises that repentance is the only way to find new life in full commitment to God.

This attractively illustrated leaflet can be easily carried and passed to acquaintances as a means of *letting our light shine*. As with all Bible Fellowship Union literature copies of the leaflet will be sent free upon request. Please specify how many you may need when requesting from the BFU central address: 4 Manor Gardens, Barnstone, Nottingham NG13 9JL.

Printed by

Ian Loftus Printing · Unit 1 · Old Great North Road · Sutton-on-Trent · Newark · Notts · NG23 6QS
Telephone: (01636) 821850 · Facsimile: (01636) 821876



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

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

Vol. 74, No. 5

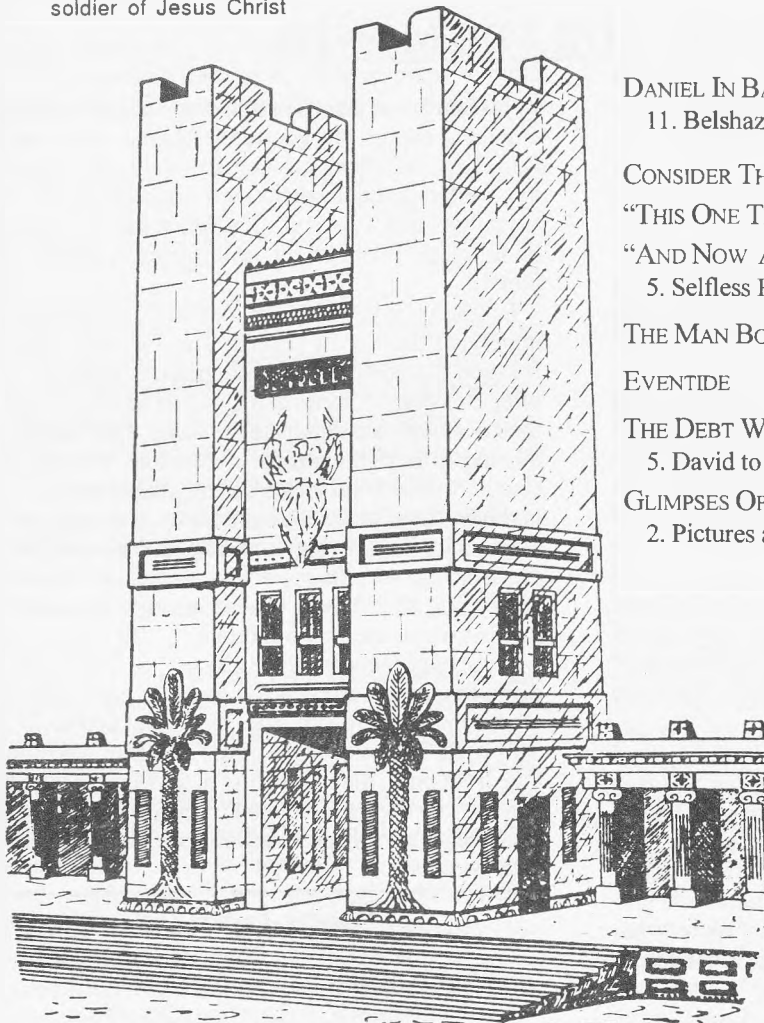
SEPT/OCT 1997

Published September 1st

Next issue November 1st

CONTENTS

DANIEL IN BABYLON	
11. Belshazzar's Feast	99
CONSIDER THE LILIES	103
"THIS ONE THING"	105
"AND NOW ABIDETH..."	
5. Selfless Patience	107
THE MAN BORN BLIND	110
EVENTIDE	113
THE DEBT WE OWE	
5. David to the Baptist	115
GLIMPSES OF A PROPHET	
2. Pictures and Parables	118



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

*This Journal is sent free
of charge to all who are
genuinely interested, on
request renewable annually
and is supported by the
voluntary gifts of its readers*

Published by
Bible Fellowship Union
4 Manor Gardens, Barnstone,
Nottingham NG13 9JL, England

Bible Study Monthly

FOUNDED 1924

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

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

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

Chairman: A. O. HUDSON (Milborne Port)

Editor & Secretary: D. NADAL (Nottingham)

Treasurer: R. J. HAINES (Gloucester)

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

"Fathers do not irritate and provoke your children to anger — do not exasperate them to resentment — but rear them (tenderly) in the training and discipline and counsel and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6. 4. Amplified). Although this is a paraphrased version it is a very good summary of a number of translations. The word provoke here always refers to someone being goaded to anger and carries the idea of exasperation resulting from arbitrary and unsympathetic control. It is fascinating that in this section of the letter (5. 21 – 6.9) about family relationships, writers and preachers all too readily emphasise what wives and children ought or ought not to do, while the Apostle places the weight of responsibility with husbands and fathers. They are supposed to take the lead in all matters domestic. In Roman times they had absolute control. However, the Lord Jesus when dealing with the arrogance and domineering spirit of the disciples said *"whoever wants to be first must be slave of all"*. Those who aspire to be 'head' should learn to be the servant of all. What a difference this spirit makes to the atmosphere of the home (office, factory or school room) when those 'in control' have the Master's attitude.

When writing to the church at Colossae (3.21) Paul says to fathers *"do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged"*. The word for 'provoke' here is not necessarily connected with anger. The apostle says don't exasperate children so that they *"do not lose heart"*. Sadly, many parents and others handling children do precisely this and like the disciples in the story recorded in Matt. 19. 14, they hinder children from approaching Jesus.

"Bring them up with Christian teaching and discipline" (Phillips). Bring them up, or raise them, literally means 'nurture them' and is used in the previous chapter (v.29). A father should take care of his children just as he takes care of himself and apply discipline in a manner which shows that he loves children. (Heb. 12. 4 – 11). This love

by husbands and fathers in Eph. 5 and 6 is not so much an emotional expression, good and right though that is. This is the love described in 1 Cor. 13 — self sacrificing and long suffering and illustrated in the parables of the 'Good Samaritan' and 'Lost Son'. The father's first interest must be to bring peace and joy to the lives of others before himself.

It is this spirit which makes (or breaks, if absent) a community of the Lord's people. The Victorian idea that children should be seen and not heard is absent in Scripture. This doesn't mean that children should always get their own way and dominate the scene. They get the best training by the right **example** of older folk. Yet their voices should be heard and their interests should be part of the involvement of the whole community. If they are not, the community is not living according to Scripture. *"Christian teaching and discipline"* like the words of that whole passage (Eph. 5. 21 – 6.4) need the right emphasis, and the first words are very important — *"Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ"*. Some assume that **discipline** means using a rod to cause pain. It is much more sensible to regard children as real people in their own right. If they receive gentle and firm discipline in love from birth, they will grow to understand that discipline is not a blunt instrument to relieve a father's feelings but 'finely tuned' positive action for their well being and eternal welfare.

D. N.

Gone from us



Brother R. Walton (*Pwllheli*)
 Brother H. R. Dunkley (*Coventry*)
 Brother C. Richards (*Yeovil*)
 Sister E. Halton (*Wallasey*)
 Sister N. Sutcliffe (*Hornchurch*)



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

A. O. Hudson

DANIEL IN BABYLON*The story of a great man's faith***11. Belshazzar's Feast**

The Feast of Belshazzar is one of the best-known incidents of scripture to the man in the street. This pagan orgy, interrupted at its height by the mysterious fingers of doom writing their dread sentence on the wall of the banqueting hall, presaging utter disaster soon to come, has gripped the imagination of men in every age and in every land to which the story has penetrated. To such an extent is this true that the expression "the writing on the wall" has passed into a popular proverb, and nowadays many men use it habitually to describe the foreshadowing of events soon and certain to come perhaps without even knowing from what source the expression is derived.

The seventeenth year of the reign of Nabonidus and the twelfth year of his son Belshazzar's joint reign with him was destined to see the end of the Babylonian empire, the "head of gold" of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. The armies of Cyrus had been abroad in the land for six years past and were now fast closing in on the doomed city. Nearly two centuries previously the prophet Isaiah had foreseen this day and spoken of this man by name. *"Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him. . . I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways; he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives. . . he is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure. . ."* (Isa. 44. 28 and 45. 1-13).

Although, in the days of Babylon, Persia was still an obscure province in the powerful empire of Media and owed allegiance to the kings of the Medes, yet for twenty years before Babylon's fall Cyrus the Persian had been steadily making himself the most powerful figure in the kingdom and by his military prowess had become in fact if not in name, the virtual ruler of Media. The second year of Belshazzar, when Daniel saw the vision of the two-horned ram, the greater horn coming up last, representing the kings of Media and Persia, commenced only a few months after Cyrus had waged successful war against Astyages the king of Media. Although Cyrus left a semblance of royalty to the defeated monarch, he was the real ruler from then on. As time passed, the victories of Cyrus reduced every country except Babylon to subjection, and the young king Belshazzar

was left increasingly to guard the city of Babylon whilst his father Nabonidus led his armies in the field against the Persian invader.

Daniel lived in the city during this period but evidently no longer held any kind of official Court office or rank. He was merely a private citizen. Belshazzar, not more than twenty years of age at his accession, was surrounded by an entirely different class of advisers. Historians describe him as weak, dissolute and licentious, and the story of the feast bears out that description. Daniel, comparing this youth's character with that of his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar, probably realised that even from the natural viewpoint the kingly dynasty of Babylon had had its day and could not stand for much longer against the disciplined energy of the invaders. Knowing how the outcome had already been prophesied by both Isaiah and Jeremiah in past years, and revealed to himself in more recent times, he must have waited calmly for the inevitable climax.

That climax came in the year 538 B.C. The Babylonian troops in the field were defeated and Nabonidus besieged in Borsippa, fourteen miles from Babylon. One of Cyrus' generals, Gubaru, marched swiftly to Babylon and laid siege to the city. And at that crucial time in the fortunes of the empire Belshazzar the king chose to hold a State banquet.

"Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father (grandfather) Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein. . . they drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone." (Ch. 5. v. 1-4).

Small wonder that Babylon fell so easily, when the man to whom had been entrusted its defence so dissipated the crucial hours. The enormous main hall of the royal palace shone with a blaze of light, the scintillating radiance from its many lamps illuminating the sculptured walls and the rich hangings. At the long tables sat the many guests, the nobility and gentry of Babylon, careless of the future, intent only on indulging themselves to the full in the encouragement offered them by the dissolute

youth who was their king. Up on the dais, at the richest table of them all, sat Belshazzar himself with his Court favourites and his wives and concubines, leading the revels into ever wilder scenes of excess and debauchery. In a final gesture of profanity he ordered the sacred vessels of the Temple of Jerusalem to be brought before him, to be defiled by liquor drunk to the honour of the false gods of Babylon.

The order given, the feast proceeded. The Temple of Bel-Marduk, the god of Babylon, in which those vessels had been placed by Nebuchadnezzar sixty years before, was nearly a mile from the palace and the messengers might well have had some difficulty in persuading the custodian priests to surrender their treasures. It might have been an hour later that they returned with their burden, an hour during which the silent, relentless Median soldiers steadily continued surrounding the city.

So the cups and flagons which once had ministered to the worship of God in his own Temple at Jerusalem were set out in that godless assembly and made the instruments of a wild orgy in which every false god known to the Babylonians — and they were many — was praised and venerated. The chaste craftsmanship which had been consecrated to the touch of holy priestly fingers became sullied now by the grasp of hands steeped in every kind of vice and immorality. And Heaven, looking down, uttered its decree: "This is the end."

"In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote against the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace; and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote." (Vs. 5).

The exactitude of Scripture is a constant marvel to the reverent mind. The remains of the Great Hall of the Royal Palace of Babylon are still there for anyone to inspect — ruined walls about four feet high enclosing a room a hundred and fifty feet long by fifty feet wide, the floor covered with the rubble and broken brickwork of the ruined building just as it has lain there for thousands of years — and mingled with the rubble there are pieces of white plaster, plaster which once covered those walls, the plaster mentioned in this verse, upon which those mysterious fingers wrote that fateful message. All who were present at that feast have long since returned to their dust; the empire which was theirs is no more; the glory that was Babylon has utterly passed away; but the white plaster upon which the cryptic message appeared that night in the year 538 B.C. lies still

under the ruins, mute witness to the integrity and accuracy of the narrative we are following.

What deathly hush must have silenced that riotous assembly as the eyes of all present followed the king's terrified gaze to the point high up on the wall where those fingers from another world deliberately traced their message. The brightly burning lamps cast the full brilliancy of their light upon the spot; this was no optical illusion, no trick of shadow and flickering flame. This was reality; there really was something up there, inscribing words of mysterious import. What could it mean? What strange intervention of the gods was this? Faces that a few moments ago had been flushed with wine now took on an unnatural pallor. Women who had been impudently flaunting their charms now drew their robes tightly around them and shivered. And still the hand wrote on.

"MENE; MENE; TEKEL; U-PHARSIN". The strange inscription stood revealed in its entirety. The hand was gone, but the characters remained, incised deeply into the plaster, written in the wedge-shaped cuneiform characters of Babylon. "*Numbered; Numbered; Weighed; Divided.*" The words themselves were simple, everyday words; it was the circumstances of their appearance which affected the superstitious pagan king so that his "*countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another.*" Perhaps, at last, he had been told of the marvellous happenings that had taken place in the days of his royal grandfather, when the Most High God intervened to save his servants from the fiery furnace, and made the proud king like unto a beast, and restored him again a chastened man. Perhaps, too late, he thought of the Median army outside the city, and of his own father in their power. He looked again at the mystic writing, and shivered.

The customary routine was put into operation. Before long, that motley assembly, the astrologers, the wise men, the soothsayers, were all trooping into the hall to go through the familiar rigmarole. This particular problem should have been well within their province; the explanation of a few words that no one else present could understand would normally have been easy work for these gentlemen. But on this occasion the usual glib exposition was not forthcoming. Verse 8 says that "*they could not read the writing,*" but this can hardly mean that they failed to comprehend a few Babylonian words written in Ara-

maic. Their normal educational level would have been quite equal to that. What is more likely the meaning of the phrase is that they could "make no sense" of the words themselves and, feeling that there was something behind this occurrence beyond their own understanding, preferred to have nothing to do with the matter. And that put King Belshazzar into a greater panic than he was in before.

It would seem that the hubbub and confusion into which the feast had degenerated came to the ears of the queen, and she made it her business to come in person to the banqueting hall (verse 10). This queen was the wife of Nabonidus, who was the true king at the time, their son Belshazzar having been associated with his father twelve years earlier and given the title of joint king. Nitrocris was the younger daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, and it was by reason of her marriage to Nabonidus, who was not of royal blood, that the latter became king. In the days of her childhood she would of course have been closely acquainted with Daniel, some fifteen years her senior, as he attended on her royal father, and the glowing eulogy of Daniel's wisdom and understanding which is accredited to her in verses 11 and 12 indicates that Nitrocris had by no means lost her esteem and respect for her father's one-time Chief Minister.

Belshazzar eagerly accepted his mother's advice, and Daniel was summoned to the palace. For more than twenty years he had been out of public life, and by now was evidently quite unknown at Court. This much is evident by the form of the king's greeting to Daniel when the aged prophet — now about eighty-four years of age — at length entered his presence. The first panic had probably subsided, but there would certainly be considerable anxiety mingled with the interest with which the assembled company looked upon this grave and dignified man of God, now standing in their midst.

Did Daniel's mind go back to that other scene in this same hall, nearly forty years earlier, when it had been his stern duty to proclaim the imminent judgment of God upon a previous king of Babylon; to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the tree, followed by his royal master's seven years of madness? But that judgment had been lifted and the king restored to his former glory. This time there would be no restoration; the disease was incurable; this was the end. The hour of doom had struck, and Babylon must surely fall.

The king offered honours to Daniel if he could

interpret the writing; he should be "the third ruler in the kingdom" (verse 16). This is another unwitting testimony of the accuracy of the narrative, for Nabonidus was first and Belshazzar second in the kingdom, so that to be the third was the highest honour Belshazzar could offer. Quietly and respectfully Daniel indicated that he did not need gifts and rewards as inducement; he would, unconditionally, make known the interpretation. But before doing so, Daniel had something else to say.

"O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father (grandfather) a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour . . ." In measured tones the prophet recapitulated the glory and power that had come to King Nebuchadnezzar, and then told how that when his heart was lifted up in pride, he was deposed, and driven from among men and made to dwell with the beasts. until he learned his lesson and knew that the Most High is the ruler of men and disposer of the affairs of nations. Then came the tremendous accusation *"and thou, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this . . ."* There was no excuse of ignorance; Daniel found no redeeming feature in the position. The king was guilty, and it remained but to pass sentence. It is significant that when Daniel interpreted the dream of the tree to Nebuchadnezzar he put in a plea for repentance and change of conduct; *"it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity"*; but to Belshazzar he addressed no word of hope or advice. He knew that the Divine decree had gone forth and could not be recalled, and he spoke in the light of that knowledge.

Now he turned to the mystic words, still showing up sharp and clear in the lamplight. He needed no supernatural guidance to understand their import and he did not have to retire to prayer to ask for the interpretation. Daniel's vision of the four world empires pictured by four wild beasts was twelve years in the past and during all those twelve years he had seen the enemy pressing more and more heavily upon Babylon. He knew the inherent weakness and corruption of Babylon and that Nabonidus, a rather indecisive man of over eighty years of age, and Belshazzar, a weak and dissolute monarch, were totally incapable of defending the empire against the active and war-like Cyrus. He knew that the enemy troops were outside the city, and the mysterious words glowed with meaning as he looked upon them.

MENE — measured. *"God hath numbered thy*

kingdom, and finished it." The word in Babylonian commercial usage meant to measure an article and cut it off to a determined length or size, or to measure out an agreed sum of money to conclude a bargain. Here, on this fateful night, the empire of Babylon, the "head of gold" of the image, had run full length and was to be cut off without compunction.

TEKEL — weighed. *"Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting."* A personal word to the king. Daniel had only to look around him at the evidences of the orgy which had been so abruptly interrupted, and reflect that this man should by right have been actively engaged in the defence of his city, to find the right words which fitted this part of the inscription.

PERES. Most readers are puzzled by the appearance of "peres" as the fourth word in vs. 28 when in vs. 25 it is given as "upharsin." The explanation is that "peres" is the singular form of the word of which "pharsin" is the plural. The "U" in front of "pharsin" is the conjunction "and", so that the inscription literally read *"Numbered, Weighed and Divided."* The word "peres" means "division" and the plural from "pharsin" by a play on similar sounding words could be made to sound like the word for "Persians." Hence Daniel was able to say on the basis of this word *"Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians."*

It was probably pure superstition which led Belshazzar immediately to honour his pledge to make Daniel the third ruler in the kingdom. He had flouted and dishonoured the Most High God and now that very God had caused this message to be sent him, this message of immediate and irretrievable disaster. Perhaps if he honoured the prophet of that God and restored him to the position he had occupied in the days of Babylon's glory, when all the nations rendered submission and tribute, the threatened disaster might even yet be averted. It might be that something of that nature was in the king's mind. We do not know. We only know that even while these things were being done and said in that brightly lit magnificent palace, the warriors of Media and Persia had gained access to the city in the darkness and were making their way through the streets, ruthlessly beating down such feeble resistance as was being offered by the citizens.

It is said by some scholars that the Hebrew expression in vs. 30, *"In that night was Belshazzar the*

king of the Chaldeans slain" does not demand that his death occurred on the same night as the feast, but only that it was at a time not too far remote. On the other hand, Herodotus and other historians declare that Babylon was captured at a time when the city was given over to feasting, and that Gubaru, the general who actually captured the city — for Cyrus was some distance away at the time — made his way to the palace and slew the king with many of his courtiers. It is very probable therefore that after Daniel had retired from the banqueting hall, and the company had begun to disperse, a swarm of armed men burst in and the last scene of the drama was played out to the end.

It was a long time before Babylon perished altogether. Daniel was yet to serve first a Median and then a Persian king for a few brief years before he was in his turn gathered to his fathers. He was yet to have the joy of seeing his countrymen leave for Judea to restore their native land. Some twenty years later, long after Daniel's death, Babylon made a final bid for independence under Belshazzar's younger brother, named Nebuchadnezzar after his illustrious grandfather, but Darius Hystaspes the Persian king laid siege to the city and this time destroyed the towering walls which had been the city's pride and confidence. Thus were fulfilled the words of Jeremiah, *"The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken, and her high gates shall be burned with fire."* (Jer. 51, 58). The river Euphrates changed its course and silted up, and the seagoing merchant vessels could no longer reach the city; two centuries later Seleucus the Greek king built his new city of Seleucia on the Tigris and the commercial importance of Babylon vanished; the citizens gradually drifted away to other homes and by the second century of the Christian era the great city which had called itself "the lady of kingdoms" was reduced to a barren waste of derelict and decaying buildings, the homes of jackals and owls.

"How is the hammer of the whole earth cut asunder and broken; how is Babylon become a desolation among the nations."

(To be continued)

Note by author, about the Great Hall of the Royal Palace of Babylon p. 100.

During the period 1970-1990 the Iraqi authorities at the instigation of Iraqi's ruler, Saddam Hussein, have been restoring some of the ruins of Babylon to create a tourist attraction; the main hall in which Daniel stood now exists more or less as it was in his day — but without the writing on the wall.

T. W. Watson

CONSIDER THE LILIES*Reflections on
Matt. 6. 28*

Many and varied are the lessons taught by the Master during his earthly ministry, and they never grow old. To the true disciple of Christ they are ever new, ever fresh. Whether He taught by the seaside or on the mountains or by the wayside, as He walked and talked with his chosen Twelve, his words of wisdom and grace come to us vibrant with meaning, pulsating with life, full of strength and power, cheering, encouraging and blessing our hearts.

To the people whom the master generally addressed, the matter of providing for the necessities of life was a very important one. He rarely had the very rich amongst his audience, generally the poor; and the poor in Palestine and other Eastern countries found it very difficult to obtain food and clothing. In many parts of the world to-day, as in India, there are people who scarcely ever go to bed without going hungry; and to these the necessities of life are a very important consideration.

Our Lord Jesus indicated that this was so in his time, saying that the important consideration with most people was, "What shall we eat and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" They were anxious and worried. "*After these things do the Gentiles seek*", said the Master. Their object in life was to procure food and raiment. That was the burden of their prayer. And even the Jews, though professedly the people of God, had not learned implicit trust in him, but were to a large extent grasping after the material things, seeking chiefly worldly gain rather than the true riches. Our Lord said that his disciples were to realise that God knew what things they had need of before they asked him, and should rest fully content in the matter of what God would provide respecting mundane things. Jesus wished them to be sure that God would so supervise their interests that they should not be in want of anything really good and needful to them.

This seems to be the whole lesson that our Lord was inculcating in bringing in this illustration from Nature — "*Consider the lilies of the field*". It was a forceful reminder that the things of the Kingdom were the things of paramount importance, and that seeking these things first, they might have the assurance that all needed earthly things should be theirs.

What is it that we are to consider about the lilies? "*How they grow!*". What does this mean? Jesus him-

self answers, "*They toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these*". That is, the lilies grow in a very reasonable way; they develop grace and beauty, and are adorned in robes of loveliness without putting forth unnatural, unusual stress or effort. They are not worried about growing. The lily does not wake up in the morning and say, "Now, I wonder if I can make another quarter of an inch to-day. I wonder if I shall be able to grow as fast and to look as beautiful as that lily over there; and I wonder what people will think about me". It simply assimilates what it can absorb from the earth, and from the atmosphere what God has provided for it there. It does not say, "I think that I shall go to another place, I cannot grow here", but it does the best it can wherever it happens to be.

The lilies of Palestine, to which our Lord referred, were not the flowers that we term lilies, but of another plant family, and a very numerous species, growing everywhere. Those who are accustomed to the flowers of Palestine point to a common reddish flower which they think was meant by "the lilies of the field".

Our lesson, then, is that since we have given our hearts to the Lord we are not to be worried, anxious, about the things of the present life. Nor are we to be over-anxious regarding our spiritual growth. We are simply to do our best, and trust the growing to him. But we are to be particularly engaged respecting the things God has promised us, that we make our calling and election sure and attain to the glories which our Father has in reservation. If we give our attention to these things, the Master assured us, the Heavenly Father will so supervise our affairs that we shall not lack any necessity of a spiritual kind or of an earthly kind. He will give us whatever of spiritual blessings and of temporal blessings we need as children of God that we may "finish our course with joy".

We are not to interpret our Lord's words to mean that we are to neglect proper duties in life; that He would not have us do any more spinning or toiling than the lilies do; that He would not have us labour with hands and brains in order to care for our family or home. Surely not, for these things are inculcated in the Word of God. Here, evidently, he is impressing us with the thought that while we are doing to

the very best of our ability in harmony with the surroundings and conditions which God has provided for us, we are not to be worried. We are to be as free from anxious care as are the lilies, to be fully content and to look up in faith to our Heavenly Father, expecting and accepting his providential care and overruling in all our affairs and interests.

God knows all about our circumstances. If we need to be transplanted to another place, into a different kind of soil, where our new nature can better thrive and expand, or where our reasonable, temporal needs can be better obtained, He can arrange for it. He knows just what is good for us, best for us, temporally and spiritually. It is our part to look for his leadings, not attempting to take the helm into our own hands, not concluding that the Lord will never change our conditions. If it is best for us that they shall be changed, He will change them, if we trust in him; and surely, if we are his children, it is his will that we desire, not our own! We are to be perfectly restful in whatever conditions or circumstances we find ourselves, restful in the thought, "*Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him*". (Matt. 6.8).

Will this not mean sometimes strong tests of faith and endurance, if the conditions of our lot are painful and hard to bear? It may be such, but if the Lord's providence does not for a time offer a way of escape, we may be sure that the test will prove one of the "all things" that will work out our good, if we

"But no accounting shall be asked from them for the money which is delivered into their hand, for they deal honestly" (2 Kings 22.7).

The fortunate men thus to be trusted with this large sum of money which had been contributed by the people for the upkeep of the Temple in the days of good king Josiah were the workmen, the carpenters, the builders, the masons, and the merchants supplying stone, timber and other raw materials, engaged for the extensive rebuilding and renovation of the sacred edifice which had become necessary. Solomon's Temple, one of the wonders of the world, was now nearly five hundred years old and sadly in need of drastic overhaul. Its original erection is estimated to have cost King Solomon — or rather the ratepayers of King Solomon's time — the equivalent of a hundred million pounds in our present currency.

That, perhaps, is a measure of the amount that must

submit to his will and wait for him to point out a different way, if it shall seem best to him. Let us, as lilies of his planting, bloom for the glory of the Heavenly Husbandman.

While Jesus tells us that we should ask, "*Give us this day our daily bread*", this is not a specification of what we would prefer to have in a temporal way. We are not to specify things that would be most pleasing to our palate. We are to leave that part to him. We are to acknowledge that we are dependent upon him, that we are waiting on his providence and will accept those things which his Wisdom provides as proper for us in connection with the instructions of his Word.

So on we go, growing daily, happy and content in God, and preparing for the Kingdom; for Christians who cannot learn now, under present conditions, to trust in God, would probably not be able to learn this lesson under other conditions. Present conditions are especially helpful, indeed, for those who would cultivate trust, dependence upon the Lord. In this respect we see that the poor have an advantage over the rich; and it was those who were poor, like the lilies of the field, that our Lord Jesus was addressing in the words of our text. And it is to those who are poor in spirit, who realise their own impotency, who long for the rest and peace that Jesus alone can give, who come to him for that rest, that all the Master's gracious promises and lessons of wisdom, comfort and instruction are given.

have been involved in Josiah's project, an amount which was expressly commanded not to be subject to auditors or cost analysis, nor yet wage bargaining compacts with the workers. The whole sum was handed over unconditionally in sure knowledge that the workers would deal justly and honourably in the matter and give the king a fair and just bill of expenses.

What bitter contrast with the condition of society today! The merchants, seeking by every artifice and sharp practice, not excluding bribery and corruption, to increase their gains; the workers vociferously demanding a constantly increasing share of the "kitty"! If this be progress, perhaps we had better try retrogression. Good it is to realise that the coming Messianic Age will in this respect at least partake more of the spirit of Josiah's day than of our own.

D. Nadal

"THIS ONE THING"*An appraisal of
Saul of Tarsus*

Saul of Tarsus was a promising young religious leader. A Pharisee, he seemed destined to play a part in restoring the former glory of his sect. He had been brought up by strict parents who were careful to observe the Jewish Law and traditions. A native of Tarsus in Cilicia, at the appropriate age he had been sent to Jerusalem to complete his education. There, in the centre of Jewish learning, Saul as a student had been instructed in the faith by the greatest scholar of his day. Thoroughly trained in the legal practice and religious philosophy of Judaism, he emerged from a brilliant college career fully prepared for a leading place in his nation. He was an enthusiastic young man and did with his whole heart those things in which he believed. So Paul narrates briefly the stages of his early life in Philippians 3, 4-6.

It is not difficult to imagine with what disgust this young Jew viewed the new sect of the Nazarenes. They were mostly peasant folk from Galilee, uneducated and lacking in the refinements of speech and manners of this graduate of the Temple. Jesus, the leader of the sect, had been hanged upon a tree, evidence to a Jew of the curse of God. To believe in and follow the hated Nazarene was the height of folly, a waste of life and the passing upon one's self the death penalty. They were, to his young mind, a blot on the Jewish landscape, a disagreeable interference in the religious life of his people, a source of defiance to their leaders. Perhaps afraid of the outcome of their preaching Paul was incensed against Jesus' disciples. He determined not to rest until, like their leader, they lay in the tomb. The Jewish rulers supported his cause and must have been delighted to have found one so able and willing to prosecute their plans. But God had another plan for Saul of Tarsus. His great career, so wonderful in the eyes of sinful men, was brought to an abrupt and premature end. He suddenly found himself face to face with Jesus of Nazareth!

From the moment when Saul met the Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus, he began to discover new values in life. Until then, life was human achievement and he calculated in material things. He could look back over the long history of his nation and family and trace his pedigree for two thousand years. He took pride in his home training and college learning. He had almost everything he could wish for from man's viewpoint, yet in God's eyes he was

poverty stricken. How different was the story of Jesus and Saul up to this time! Yet here was a man, possessed of a religious zeal for which he would yield up his life, thoroughly learned in Jewish theology, conversant with the Old Testament scriptures and able to argue in all the teachings of the Law and Prophets. These were things not lightly to be despised. *"But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord . . ."* Phil 3, 7-8 (R.S.V.).

When Paul wrote these words to the Philippian church he was sitting in a Roman prison, reflecting upon his early years. He was able to see his pride in true perspective. The Law and the Prophets which he knew so well had shown up the flaws in his character but they could not remedy his weaknesses. In his letter to the Roman church he revealed the conflict which raged in his sensitive soul (Rom. 7, 7-25). Moses had given the Law to the people of Israel, and if they obeyed, they would qualify for everlasting life. For so long as Paul trusted in the Law, he kept it scrupulously. Yet as the years passed he realised how utterly impossible it was to keep the Law perfectly. Outwardly he was a very respectable man and in the eyes of his countrymen he was blameless. Nevertheless within his mind there raged a battle between right and wrong. He knew that God was not deceived by any outward facade of words and actions. He knew devout Israelites, living in various ages, had struggled against their natural failings. But he saw that the power of sin was too strong for the good intentions and will power of men. Like him, the "holy men" of old were all under the penalty of sin. *"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, death by sin: and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned"* (Rom. 5, 12). The rule of conduct which Moses gave to the people of Israel was the highest moral pattern that men could understand and was much greater and more full of meaning than the ethical principles of Greeks and Romans. Yet that Law, given by God, was but a form of words. Saul, like his fellow countrymen through all the history of Israel, had tried in his own strength to please God; in spite of religious ritual and burnt offerings his conscience condemned him. Like many another religious person he had to learn that he could not earn God's approval. That which he inherited

from Adam, like all other human beings, was a sinful mind and body which made it impossible to be perfect. The lesson for him to learn was found in the life of Abraham, whose faith and trust in the promises of God and whose complete dependence upon him for everything in life had made him pleasing to God.

As Paul observed the Nazarenes he must have realised that in spite of their material poverty and their sufferings, they were possessed of that inward peace and calm for which he had longed and struggled. Was it possible that Jesus was the Messiah and had given to these men that which the Law had been unable to give? He quickly banished the thought. But his doubts were not readily dismissed. From the time of the death of Stephen until he travelled along the road to Damascus he was oppressed not only by his unworthy condition but by fears that his opposition to the Nazarenes was mistaken.

Just when Paul uttered the victorious cry in the last verse of Romans 7 is not easy to decide. He did not reach his ultimate goal in a single day, nor had he reached it when he penned those words to the Philippian church, "*I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*" (Phil. 3. 13, 14). The turning point was reached when Ananias visited him in Damascus. From then onwards only one vision filled his mind. No longer did he dream of a successful young graduate making a name for himself, but of Saul of Tarsus learning to be selfless, and being filled with all the

fullness of Christ. God used his wonderfully developed talents, and he became a source of strength and wisdom to the believers and a remarkable evangelist in converting Jews and Gentiles. Paul's greatness as a disciple of Jesus Christ lay not in his natural ability but in his humility and willingness to die to self, in order that the new life of Jesus might grow within him. The great passion of his life was that he might follow in the steps of his Saviour and suffer as He had done. He desired above everything else to have the companionship of Jesus and that the Lord's power would subdue his natural desires and strengthen him to preach the Gospel.

Human nature cries out to be praised and encouraged. Conceited hopes and cherished ambitions try to retain a small part of our affections, so that they need not be surrendered to Jesus. As long as we do not yield everything to him, just so long are we hindered in our progress toward the mark of the prize of the high calling. He demands our "unconditional surrender" in every phrase of life. When that is complete, the peace about which Paul wrote in Colossians 3. 15 will dominate our hearts and we shall experience a fuller and happier life. Sometimes the battle is long and weary, while we try, as Paul did, to fight it alone. Victory does not come to everyone in quite the same way, nor are we saved by one single act of submission at the cross. We are "more than conquerors through him that loved us "day by day". Thus at last we may say with Paul in answer to the question "Who shall deliver me from the bondage of this death? . . . I thank my God through Jesus Christ our Lord".

Gainsborough House, Milborne Port, Dorset

Christian Residential Centre for the Elderly Registered Charity No. 273736

The Bible Fellowship Eventide Trust, a parallel organisation to the Bible Fellowship Union runs this Christian retirement centre, primarily for those sympathetic with the views expressed in this journal. It still has vacancies.

Gainsborough House welcomes friends for country holidays and short visits in single and double guest rooms. It is situated on the west side of a delightful village 100 miles south west of London. Readers considering moving to a retirement home are invited to write for details to the Secretary: Derrick Nadal, 4 Manor Gardens, Barnstone, Nottingham NG13 9JL Tel: 01949 860416

A correction

The Editor regrets and takes full responsibility for an omission in the character study entitled 'Demas' in the July/August issue of the BSM on page 93 near the bottom of column 1. It should read:

"You are trying to walk on eggs without crushing them" Luther accused his friend. *"I will not be unfaithful to the cause of Christ,"* replied Erasmus cautiously, *"at least so far as the Age will permit me"*. *"I will go to Worms,"* shouted Luther, *"though the devils were combined against me thick as tiles upon the house-tops"*.

T. Holmes

“AND NOW ABIDETH”**5. Selfless Patience***A series of studies
in 1 cor. 13*

“Love . . . seeketh not her own.” This is not an easy passage to comprehend and explain, as may be seen from the wide variation in the translations available. In Marshall’s sub-linear translation it reads “love . . . does not seek the things of herself” but a literal translation gives “love seeks not that which is not her own”. This double negative, means “Love seeks that which is her own”. The primary sense and meaning of the phrase seems so uncertain to the translator that he took the liberty of adding the double negative to make the phrase agree with his conception of what Love ought to seek. Young’s Literal Translation is “doth not seek its own things”, and Rotherham agrees with this. Others translate the phrase “Love . . . seeketh not her own” (R.V.); “is not self-seeking” (Ferrar Fenton and 20th Century); “is never selfish” (Moffat and Weymouth is similar); “. . . does not insist on its own way” (R.S.V.); “does not claim its rights” (Knox). Obviously the precise thought is difficult to define, because the “things of herself” are not specified in particular.

Some of the difficulty arose, perhaps, because certain translators seem to have thought of the individual, and not the Master-Grace itself. Paul is outlining the elements of the *Agape* at their highest level, as they exist in the Love of God, and as a consequence, selfish love or self-centred love is ruled out from the start. But some of the translators seem to have taken it to be the much lowlier level as seen in man, where some self-centred disposition is possible. Evidently the Corinthian Church furnished some examples of this and it may have been to these that Paul addressed his negative, thus informing them that self-acquisition and self-aggrandisement were not accordant with Love, for Love sought not the things for which they craved. Now the fact is that Love is very much a seeking principle. From its highest expression in the heart of God, down to the lowest in the heart of the saint, it is always seeking its own. In God, this *Agape* is the activating cause in the formulation of his Plan to redeem and recover his erring sons. The Love that He feels for them leads him to seek for the restoration of the love they should feel for him. He desires the whole universal family to be complete, each part to love and be loved in return. Hence the *Agape* in him sets out most deliberately to seek that which was and is its due — “its own”.

That tiny spark of it in the Christian’s heart is most Godlike when it is active on the same quest. The saint also is seeking “its own”. It is this that prompts ready willing service, even to the point of self-sacrifice, and affords deepest joy when that service or sacrifice is more exacting and intense. To accomplish its great ends, it makes great demands. It required God to give his Son; it required that Son to give himself; it requires of the saints that they follow in his steps. All this is Love’s demand — not the Law’s demand. It is the “*Agape*” that called for all this, but its end in calling for this was the blessing of all the un-blest members of the universe.

Hence in the tiny circle of the Christian’s life in the home, in the mart or the ecclesia, that tiny spark from the heart of God is a driving, seeking factor, ever working onwards to the destined end, but always at the cost of sacrificing self. Under its urge the child of God can never be self-centred or self-satisfied. It confers no gratification to the flesh, no name, no fame, no pedestal, no wealth, simply because it cannot work just for the interests of one solitary individual. Its motto is “for all — and for all the greatest good”. Thus, Love can seek its own — its own ends and purposes, but in so seeking, it seeks the good for all. Love is thus “not selfish”, “not self-seeking”, “not self-aggrandising” but truly “seeketh not that which is not her own”, which, as said before, means “she seeketh only what is her own”.

“Love . . . is not provoked.” In this phrase the sense is indicated by the Greek word employed. It means “to irritate, to rouse to anger”. In the Septuagint the same word (in Hebrew thought) also means “to make angry”, “to exasperate”, “to burn with anger”. This provocation must be understood as men usually understand it, and as members of the Corinthian Church understood it, that is, provocation by personal slights, or libels. They appeared to have been provoked to anger frequently and scrupled not to take the offender to law. The *Agape* can be provoked, but it is to assist good works (Heb. 10. 24) and acts of kindness. It can be provoked to indignation (as Jesus was in Matt. 23) but only for the truth’s sake and for righteousness, and not for one’s own slights and injuries. For his Father’s sake Jesus was provoked to intense indignation, but for his own sufferings He uttered not a word.

"*Love . . . thinketh no evil*". The word translated "thinketh" really means "to take into account; to make account of". In a more strictly calculating sense it could mean "to pass to the transgressor's account the evil he has done". So far as the child of God, in these present times, is concerned, he passes this matter over into the hands of God, and leaves him to deal with it in his own way. God's way is to deal with it in Millennial days through his Son, when any un-requited wrong can be dealt with as the sinner finds a consciousness of good overcoming the evil in his heart. Love seeks to interpret the conduct of others charitably. If pure and good-intentioned itself, it prefers, and so far as possible endeavours, to view the words and conduct of others from the same standpoint. It does not treasure up animosities or suspicions, nor manufacture a chain of circumstantial proofs of evil-intentions out of trivial affairs. Love makes all possible allowance for errors of judgment, rather than impugn the motives of the heart.

"*Love . . . rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth.*" These two clauses stand in contrast and show that love has no pleasure in wrong-doing anywhere, but rejoices when truth gains its victory. This is true in the universal scale as well as in an individual sense. "My country right or wrong" has too often been the touch-stone of morality for centuries. Reduced to a local setting it would read, "Me first, right or wrong". In this way wrong-doing and iniquity have been made to abound as a cause of rejoicing by the unscrupulous. But the *Agape* finds no rejoicing in this. It finds cause of rejoicing only when truth prevails — the right as against the wrong, the good as against the evil, the pure as against the taint, the holy as against the vile. It rejoices if it sees the truth abound today in little things; it rejoices yet more as it looks forward to the coming day when Truth will abound universally.

"*Love . . . beareth all things.*" The word used here means, in part, "a roof or a covering". An old English equivalent to it would be "to thatch". Love provides a covering for the faults and frailties of a friend, and hides them from the light of day. Hence, in this sense, it can mean "to cover over with silence, or with charity; to keep secret and conceal". This is exactly God's way with our sins. He has provided ample means to cover our frailties and blemishes. In a very real sense He has made a roof and covering for our nakedness. He has made ready the same roof and covering for the whole guilty world

in its days of "drawing near" also. Placed beneath the over-spreading *Kaphar*, (or covering) of Christ's righteousness, the whole race of men will find protection from the rigours of exacting Law. Love "covers" a multitude of sins — and sinners too. But there is another side to the word which means "to bear up and sustain"; many translations prefer this meaning. We also should do the same in both senses of the word. We should cover up the frailties of a brother from the common gaze, and sustain him with our love to the best of our ability. Indeed, if that spark of burning fire which we have received from him is all aglow in our hearts, we can only do to others what He has done for us. It is a case of "like" resembling "like".

"*Love . . . believeth all things.*" This of course can only be taken in the sense of confidence in the other man — as when a man can say of a friend in time of strain and difficulty "well, I believe in him". It bespeaks an attitude of confidence in the struggling one's integrity, knowing he has it "in him", with help, to "make good". It is a great thing indeed for our fellow men, struggling under the law of sin and death, for Almighty God to say that He "believes" in them, that He has shown by his attitude towards them that He knows there is still a germ of manliness within them which, with help afforded, and Satan removed, can respond to the magnetic pull of his Love and fatherhood. That same thing goes for "hope" too. Though God once subjected the whole race to vanity, of his own sovereign will and decree, He did so entertaining a sure and certain hope in their future responsiveness to him, when, in due time, that "subjection decree" is revoked. (Rom, 8. 20-21). When man's opportunity to make free choice is restored, God anticipates that man will choose the way of life. And thus Love hopes on, and still believes in man's innate potentialities, spite of the havoc sin has wrought.

"*Love . . . endureth all things.*" Here we conclude on a note closely related to that on which our study of these constituents began. Here we have patience enduring unflinchingly to the end. This grace is closely akin to long-suffering, but there is a difference. Trench says that the Greek word here (*hupomone*) is to be compared to the Latin "*Perseverantia*" (perseverance) and "*Patientia*" (patience) both in one, or more accurately still to "*tolerantia*" (tolerance). He goes on to say "Long-suffering will be found to express tolerance in respect

of persons, patience in respect of things. The man, who, having to do with injurious persons does not suffer himself easily to be provoked by them, or to blaze up in anger concerning them, is exhibiting long-suffering. While on the other hand, he who under a great load of trials bears up, and does not lose heart of courage, is manifesting his patience or endurance.

This had been the attitude of God throughout the long dark reign of sin and rebellion. He has never doubted what the consummation would be, nor has He wavered in his determination to see it through

till righteousness is established throughout heaven and earth, for the *Agape* can never fail. It is fully competent to accomplish all that it has set out to do, for it is the warm solicitude of the heart of God, backed by the power of his strong right arm reaching down to lead the erring prodigal home.

We have now untwined the cord and examined every strand, but not one strand in itself is "Love" — for Love is the whole thing — the "amalgam" which embraces every minor grace.

(To be concluded)

BEYOND THE SHADOWS

FARTHER on - beyond the shadows
Falling darkly o'er my way,
There is home, and rest and shelter,
Where no storms can e'er dismay.

Though the way be rough and narrow,
And a cross must needs be borne,
Farther on - the night is waning
Soon will dawn the welcome morn.

Meekly to His will submitting
In His love secure and strong,
Jesus whispers, "Bide the shadows,
It is better farther on".

Farther on - O blest assurance!
How it thrills my raptured heart,
Just to know that I shall see Him
When the shadows all depart.

Let me still be strong and patient,
Trusting where I cannot trace.
Farther on - beyond all darkness
Faith can see God's smiling face.

Only waiting, ever praying,
Let my heart be filled with song.
Sweet the promise Jesus gives me,
"It is better farther on".

Lizzie C. Ramsdell

Psa. 55.22

In Psalm 55.22 there is a word which is full of rich suggestion. We are bidden to "Cast our burden upon the Lord". In the margin, however, is the word gift — thus reading — "*Cast thy gift upon the Lord*". So our burden is God's gift to us. This is true whatever the burden may be — duty, sorrow, pain, loss, care. Being God's gift, there must be a blessing in it, something good, something we could not miss without sore loss. It may be a blessing for ourselves, or it may be for others — in the garden it was the blessing of the world's redemption in the cup that was pressed to the lips of our Lord. In every case, our burden is God's gift, and it would not be a kindness to us if He were to lift it away.

But there is more of the promise. We are to cast our burden upon the Lord and He will sustain us. That is, He will give us strength to carry our load, to endure our suffering. The story of Paul's thorn in the flesh illustrates this. The torturing burden was not removed, but instead there came grace sufficient — the strength of Christ to balance the human weakness, so that Paul was enabled to rejoice in his infirmities because of the blessing which came to him through them.

*"We must live through the weary winter
If we would value the spring;
And the woods must be cold and silent
Before the robins sing.
The flowers must be buried in darkness
Before they can bud and bloom;
And the sweetest and warmest sunshine
Comes after the storm and gloom."*

A. O. Hudson

THE MAN BORN BLIND*A study in John 9*

It was Jesus who saw him first, the blind beggar standing by the wayside. His affliction and his poverty had aged him beyond his years; on closer inspection it could be seen that he was still a comparatively young man, doomed by his blindness to a life of utter hopelessness. He had never seen; he had been blind from birth, an unhappy victim of the dirt, disease and ignorance so characteristic of his day. Now he stood by the wayside, probably only partially conscious of the milling crowd, waiting mechanically for the clink of the occasional coin as it was carelessly cast into his little bowl. Thus had he stood for more years than he could well remember; thus would he stand for as many more without circumstance or event to vary the dull monotony of his days. He was evidently a recognised member of the local synagogue; in a day when everybody, practically without exception, observed the formularies of public worship on the Sabbath that would not in itself be surprising. There were many of his kind in Judea, and no one took very much notice of them.

For once, this one was noticed. The disciples, moving down the road in converse with the Master, made the beggar the subject of a question. It would appear that some of them at least were acquainted with him and his history; at least they knew that he had been blind from birth. They do not seem, at that moment at any rate, to have done anything to mitigate his misery by way of almsgiving. Their interest in him was theological rather than benevolent. They propounded a question which has been repeated myriad times since. "*Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?*" (John 9. 2). In how many different forms has that question been cast, by the devout and cynical, the student and the atheist? Why do the innocent suffer; why does the consequence of one man's sin fall upon another? Men have evolved a variety of answers but outside the Christian faith there is none that is really satisfactory. Even within the general popular understanding of the faith the answers are all too often only suggestive or frankly hazy and uncertain. It is only against the background of God's eternal purpose that an outline of the answer can be traced, and even then it is not good that we be too dogmatic or precise about our definitions. There is much yet for us to learn about God and about man before we

can look at this matter clearly from the Divine standpoint and fully understand why.

Jesus gave an immediate answer, of a nature which was as much as his disciples could be expected to understand and perhaps we also. "*Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him*" (vs. 3). Both the R.S.V. and the N.E.B. make the reply a little more accurate by rendering "*It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him*". It is a mistake to assume, as some have done, that Jesus meant God had deliberately caused this man to be born blind so that in after years he might become an example of the Lord's saving power; the operation of the law of sin and death had produced plenty of blind men in Israel at that time suitable for such an example without the Lord having to create one specially. And the idea savours of a callousness to human infirmity and distress which does not square with the loving character of God. Our Lord's words conveyed a deeper meaning and had a wider scope than that. The disciples in putting their question, with this man as the particular subject, really embraced the entire problem of undeserved suffering. Our Lord answered in similar vein; the whole purpose of God in permitting the reign of evil under which the innocent must inevitably suffer was and is that his purposes should be plainly revealed and made known to man. Because from the beginning men refused to learn in any other way, God has ordained that they shall experience for themselves the evil effects of sin, and by comparison with the good effects of righteousness make, at the last, the irrevocable choice — for life, or death. The whole purpose of the permission of evil which God could so easily have restrained, but did not, is that his wisdom and justice and love and power, all that the Apostle Paul in Eph. 2. 7 calls the "*exceeding riches of his grace*" should be demonstrated openly to all intelligent creatures who have or will ever come from his creative hand.

Whilst the onlookers were pondering the meaning of that remark Jesus moved into action. Unlike the disciples, He had consideration, not only for the theological question to which the incident had given rise, but the physical needs of the man himself. That man,

at least, could hardly be expected to join in a dispassionate discussion on the relation of innocence to blindness with the underlying assumption that any way one day it would be all well with them that feared God. Whether he was conscious of the power of the One who stood compassionately before him we do not know, but he was certainly conscious of his own pitiable condition. And now Jesus was doing something to him: He was anointing his sightless eyes with a damp clay made from the dust at his feet, and He was telling him to go to the Pool of Siloam and wash it off. Whether he had real faith that he would thus be healed of his blindness does not appear from the record; the later part of the narrative shows that he did not at this time recognise Jesus as anything more than man. Perhaps the calm authority of that sympathetic voice, perhaps some inner glimmering that this was no ordinary man and no ordinary incident; maybe he was something of a God-fearing man despite his affliction and poverty: at any rate something there was which led him unhesitatingly to obey the command, and he made his way the half mile or so to the Pool outside the city walls, and washed, and came seeing.

This story is intriguing for the many details it does not record. Did the disciples who asked the original question realise that the man's blindness had been cured? We do not know. The New English Bible points out that the chapter division between John 8 and 9 may possibly be in the wrong place and that the last verse of 8 and first verse of 9 may reasonably be taken as reading that when the irate Jews took up stones to stone Jesus He hid himself and escaped their notice and this ends the verse, and that then the account should read "*He left the Temple, and as he went on his way he saw a man blind . . .*" If this is right then the man probably went the half mile to the Pool and made his way to his home while the disciples remained with Jesus in the vicinity of the Temple so that they did not see him cured or after his cure. The next development was with this man's neighbours and friends, when he got home. There was considerable discussion and speculation as to what had happened to him; some of them refused to believe that he was indeed the same man and he had to assure them of his identity. Once convinced, they wanted to know all about it, but all he could tell them was that "*a man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the Pool of Siloam, and wash; and I went*

and washed, and I received sight" (vs. 11). All that he seemed to know about his benefactor was his name.

This man has been criticised in many a sermon for not going straight back to Jesus to express gratitude for the miracle. Maybe that criticism is unjust. Modern cases are known in medical history where a person born blind has gained sight, by surgical operation or otherwise. In such cases it is usually weeks before the patient is able to recognise and distinguish objects properly; there has to be a sense of association to be acquired and powers of focus to be developed. It was probably some considerable time before this man was able properly to make use of the sight he had been given; he looked upon things the shape and appearance of which he had formerly been quite unable to visualise. He almost certainly found it more difficult at first to make his way along the street than he had done in his blindness. So it would not be surprising if he quite instinctively made his way home first, back to the only refuge and place of security he knew, until all the implications of this tremendous thing that had happened to him had sunk in. By that time, if he had the impulse to find the man who had done this and thank him, he was not to be found. That at least is what he told his neighbours. "*Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not.*" (vs. 12).

The neighbours did the obvious thing. They took him to the Pharisees. In the old days, under Moses and the Judges and the Kings, when a man of Israel was healed of any grievous disease, he went to the Priest with a thank-offering to God. Now the Pharisees sat in Moses' seat and arrogated to themselves the avenue of approach to God. So they received the little deputation with their usual superciliousness, listening with faint contempt as the story of the miraculous cure was unfolded, a contempt that abruptly changed to angry attention when the hated name of Jesus was brought in as the one who had done this thing. Apparently it was on the Sabbath day that the incident occurred, and after hearing details the first reaction of the Pharisees was indignation. "*This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath day*". Some of them were not so sure. "*How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?*" Before very long the Pharisees were involved in an argument between themselves and that did not improve tempers. Failing to reach agreement they resolved the matter by turning to the blind man and asking his

opinion. That Pharisees should demean themselves by seeking the views of a beggar-man on any subject at all indicates a definitely serious state of affairs and shows how deep the cleavage between them must have gone. The healed man did not intend to be drawn into their quarrel; he stated, simply and succinctly "*He is a prophet*". No one could find much fault with that definition for the office of a prophet in Israel was hallowed by antiquity.

Balked at this fence, and unwilling to accept the evidence, the Pharisees called the man's parents, and demanded of them how their son was now able to see. The parents had no more intention of being drawn into the controversy than had the son. "*We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not; he is of age; ask him; he shall speak for himself*" (vs. 20-21). Any comment which could be construed as an expression of faith in Jesus could result in excommunication from the synagogue, and they had no intention of risking that. Round Three closed with the Pharisees still on the losing side.

The Pharisees were getting rattled; somehow or other they had got to discredit the Nazarene but so far they could find no weak point in the case. They called the man again. "*Give God the praise*" they told him "*We know that this man is a sinner*". This was a subtle move to put the unfortunate beggar in a tight corner. The formula "Give God the praise" was an expression making it incumbent upon the person addressed to answer as if in the sight and hearing of God and as if it was God who was demanding the answer; such an injunction made it obligatory upon the one concerned to give a truthful reply. Now if the man refused to admit that his benefactor was a sinner, he could be arraigned for blasphemy, for — in theory at least — all men were sinners. If he did so admit, then the healing was no miracle and merely a natural event and their purpose would be achieved. The man, however, was still one jump ahead of his interrogators. "*Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see*" (vs. 25). To the chagrin of the Pharisees, Round Four ended with no better result than before. The beggar had very neatly side-stepped the question which had been framed with the intention of incriminating him one way or the other.

In desperation they returned to the original question. "*What did he do to thee? How opened he thine*

eyes?" (vs. 26). His answer shows that he had all the time been leading them on; he was much more astute than they had imagined. At this point he shifted his ground entirely and assumed the offensive. "*I have told you already, and ye did not hear; wherefore would ye hear it again? Will ye also be his disciples?*" (vs. 27). The sarcasm was not lost upon his interlocutors; anger at being so neatly trapped led them to lose self-control; they roundly abused him and referred to their own association with Moses. "*We know that God spake unto Moses; as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is*" (vs. 29). That vicious remark was mistake number two; they had laid themselves wide open to a crushing retort from the opponent they had so greatly underrated, and the retort was not long in coming. "*Why herein is a marvellous thing*" — the irony of the words penetrate even through the English translation — "*that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened my eyes. Now we know that God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing*" (vs. 30-33). That was probably one of the most telling sermons ever preached to Pharisees by a layman, and every word in it stung them to fury. All pretence of finding a valid reason for rejecting the miracle was cast aside, and in their rage and resentment they shouted at him "*Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?*" and there and then excommunicated him. They could not disprove the miracle; they refused to admit it; so they solved the dilemma by getting rid of the man whose continued presence in their synagogue would be a constant evidence of the reality they denied.

No wonder Jesus called them blind guides. The man had sight, and knew he had sight. The Pharisees were blind, but they did not know they were blind, and they resolutely refused to do anything to enable themselves to see. The man knew one thing, and one thing only; "*He hath opened mine eyes*". The Pharisees, at the end of the story, could only say weakly to Jesus, "*Are we blind also?*" The man received his sight because he was prepared to step out in faith at the start; the Pharisees adopted an attitude of antagonism at the outset and in consequence they never had their eyes opened.

Later on Jesus met the man. It was at that meeting

he realised for the first time the identity of his benefactor. Verse 35 in the A.V. renders Jesus' question "*Dost thou believe on the Son of God?*" but some ancient manuscripts have it "the Son of Man". It matters little either way; either expression meant one thing, and one thing only, to the man. It told him that his deliverer was in fact the long-promised Messiah, the One for whom all Israel watched and waited, and he believed, and he worshipped. One cannot resist the conclusion that in this man Jesus had found a disciple of sterling worth, and although, so far as can be discerned, he never again appears in the Scrip-

ture record, there is little doubt that he must have become one of the stalwarts who pioneered the new faith after the tragic events of the Crucifixion had passed into history, and perhaps for four or five decades after that historic Sabbath gave evidence that not only were his natural eyes opened that day, but his spiritual eyesight glimpsed a vision which inspired and led him for the rest of his life to serve with joy and tenacity of purpose the One who first saw him standing begging by the wayside, as He passed by on his way from the Temple.

T. Holmes

EVENTIDE

*"So He bringeth them
into their desired haven"*

How restful and serene was the Master's heart. Nothing could disturb its peace and trust in God! Look at his quiet confidence at the close of that searching day when He said to the twelve, "*Will you also go away?*" The crowd had ebbed away dissatisfied, and now only these twelve stood near him. Would the searching words He had spoken prove too hard for these to hear and understand? Only yesterday He had fed the hungry multitude, giving them satisfaction in an hour of need. Out of a handful He had created more than enough. "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world" was the verdict that passed from lip to lip. Like Moses, whose words they had in mind, he had provided bread in the wilderness, with hunger appeased, approving tongues began to talk. "This is the man we need for our King" — this was the conclusion of all. Only Jesus' adroit withdrawal from amongst them frustrated their plan (John 6. 15). Now they had found him in Capernaum again, but instead of breaking bread He drew the deeper moral of the occasion yesterday for them. He told them that He was the "bread of God" — of which, if they would eat, they would have life indeed within them. With yesterday's repast in mind they eagerly exclaimed "*Lord, give us this bread*". In response Jesus said "*I am that bread of life. He who comes to me shall never hunger. He who believes in me shall never thirst*". In conversation and discussion the Jews pondered over what He said. Taking up the theme again in their synagogue (John 6. 59) Jesus amplified the former utterances, and said that the Bread which God would give would be his flesh, and the drink would be his

blood. (vv. 52-58). A hard saying indeed! How could it be done? "Bread and fish religion" they could well understand, but food for the deeper nature was too hard and abstruse. He was not after all to be their King. And so with scornful lip they turned away and went back to their drab way of life, while He was left with none but the twelve attending him. Was Jesus unduly perturbed at this? Not a bit of it. Enthusiasm created by "loaves and fishes" was not the kind He had come to create. He wanted men who were ready to take up a cross and follow in his steps.

It was not an easy thing for Jesus to watch them depart, for He knew what the end of this would be. The Man of Compassion who could feed them with bread perforce had to watch them drift towards the rocks of doom. The trends of thought which led them soon to take his life had already set in — and, in due time, led them also to clash with the might of Rome.

Jesus stood among them as the "Gift of God", yet notwithstanding that, there was nothing He could do to save them from that impending crash. No word or act of his could change the trends of self-interested religious thought. It was not easy thus to stand beside the quickening currents and watch them accelerating down the rapids to their final plunge — and He himself at peace and unperturbed. Only a heart at rest in God, and in his promises, can look forward from the darkening scenes, and know that an "afterwards" is provided for in which the broken hearts, beyond the cataract, can be hushed to quietness and sanity again.

We too have that same experience to-day. Another

generation, amid the closing scenes of another age, with that same fateful ability to believe, is rushing with quickening impetus to its final plunge, and we, who know the gift of God, stand powerless to avert the inevitable. No effort of tongue or pen can turn aside the deep-drawn tide that bears our generation on its crest. What of ourselves? Does it sap our peace of heart and mind? Have we learned, like Jesus did, to leave our people — with our own loved ones, perhaps in the midst — to the hands of God? It is a lesson still not easy to be learned, to have to stand on-looking and see the fateful drift, yet unable to lend a hand. Day by day we see and feel the cold reaction to God's gifts of grace. Everywhere, the wide world through, awakening nations say, "give us bread, give us fish", here and now — not in God's way! Whether the channel be democratic or totalitarian, the sequel is the same. The Son of God is not wanted either as the Bread of God or as a sacrifice for sin!

But if we would know the peace which in his day

kept the Master's heart at rest, we must also bide within the Sovereign Will of God, knowing, the while, that his way is best. At close of day, let us therefore retire for a little while with him to permit the fret and worry from the world's cold callousness to subside. Has this been a day of worry and perplexity? Let the "*blood of Jesus whisper peace within*". Have we been "*bythronging duties pressed? To do the will of Jesus — this is rest*".

Perhaps our path has had "*sorrows surging round . . . On Jesus' bosom naught but calm is found.*" Have we "*loved ones far away? In Jesus' keeping we are safe, and they.*"

Let us leave them there, assured that Jesus has vanquished death and all its powers — and that He is on the throne!

*"It is enough: earth's struggles soon shall cease
And Jesus call us to heaven's perfect peace."
"O rest in the Lord, wait patiently for Him, and
He shall give thee the desires of thy heart."*

Euology 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 climbs through darkness into light.

F. A. Shuttleworth

THE DEBT WE OWE**Part 5. David to the Baptist**

Between Moses and Christ there are many portraits of men who kept the faith, who were moulded by it into something approaching greatness. Judges, prophets, kings, and many from lowlier walks of life look down from the corridors of ancient days upon their twentieth century counterparts, earnestly contending for the faith; a great cloud of witnesses of whom the world was not worthy. Time does not allow a detailed observance of all these excellent people any more than it did the writer to the Hebrews long ago.

There is one however which commands attention, that of David, King of Israel. Shepherd, poet, musician, warrior, prophet and monarch, never did such a versatile man occupy a throne and rule a people to its best advantage. The youngest of eight sons, he was, when Samuel the greatest of the Judges anointed him as Israel's prospective king, "*ruddy, of a beautiful countenance and goodly to look upon*" (1 Sam. 16. 12). His exploits as a shepherd in the fields of Bethlehem, his slaying of the giant Goliath and his years as an outlaw, hunted by the jealousy of Saul like a partridge in the mountains, have so captured the imagination of hero-worshippers that his name has become a legend. He lives in poetry, music, sculpture and painted art as a handsome, deeply fascinating character, whose warm humanity, undaunted courage and un-wavering religious devotion still have the power to inspire men to better things.

David was known as "*a man after God's own heart*" which has caused some critics to question the judgment of God, seeing that he was a shedder of blood, a man who grievously sinned over the matter of the beautiful Bathsheba and the unsuspecting, valiant Uriah her husband. In his defence it must be said that God judges not as men judge who look only on the outward appearance. He reads the heart, knowing what is in the human creature, made unwillingly subject to the frailty of the flesh. Perfection although encouraged is not expected from the imperfect. It is the resolute purpose which never wavers from that goal, which defeated and baffled rises again from penitence and remorse to renew the struggle, which earns Divine approval. Such a man was David, who testified to the mercy of God, "*Though a good man fall he shall not be utterly cast down, for the*

Lord upholdeth him with his hand" (Psa. 37. 24).

Whatever his personal faults throughout his life David never deviated from his trust in God. Military genius he may have been, by his prowess overthrowing the enemies of Israel, winning territories which made for them an empire qualified to take its place among the nations. He gave them a capital city set on a hill and gained for them a respect, even an admiration from the kings of that generation. With it all he remained humble, obedient, worshipful, acknowledging at all times the justice and wisdom of God. If at times he failed to live up to the law of God which was his delight, none was more penitent than David.

He gave to religion songs which are the embodiment of true devotion to God. They have been a far richer legacy than the great wealth he bequeathed for the building of the Temple, nothing of which now remains except the massive foundation stones at which generations of Hebrews have mourned the loss of their former greatness. His son, the glorious Solomon, with his inherited wealth and gifted wisdom, added to David's empire all the splendours of the court of an oriental monarch. Yet it is to the psalms of David, which have endured the assaults of time where empires, palaces and temples have vanished, that those tried by the perplexities and vicissitudes of life constantly return for comfort and encouragement, for the joy of singing unto the Lord with a cheerful voice.

David's youth, spent in the fields leading the sheep by day, guarding them by night under the starlit heavens, made him an observer and lover of nature. It gave to the world the incomparable twenty-third psalm, which has been such a source of consolation and hope to all classes of people. The poetry of David abounds with appreciation of God's creative works, leading to adoration, affectionate trust, communion with God, walking before him in uprightness of heart, rejoicing in a vision of the future when the heavens and the earth will be renewed in beauty and strength, when the world will be stabilised under the rule of a righteous government. His faults, which were those of his times, are eclipsed by his virtues which were many. He served his day and generation with a liberality which has spilled over every succeeding

century. Every Christian has been enriched by his life, and by his words which are a rare and valuable literature, part of the choice inheritance of the house of God.

When Saul his predecessor was advised to seek music to charm away the black mood which often came upon him, one of his servants recommended the young man David, saying, "*Behold I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, cunning in playing the harp, a mighty man of valour, a man of war, prudent in speech and a comely person, and the Lord is with him*". This was the combination of qualities which made David the beloved. His friends and soldiers loved him, risking their lives for him. Women loved him, singing his praises. Jonathan loved him with a love surpassing the love of women. Even Saul in his saner moments was thawed by David's charm, loyalty and magnanimity. And God loved him. He loved the lad He had chosen from the sheepcote. The sincere heart, the fearless courage, the uprightness and integrity which took him through the struggles of his middle years, the constancy, the desire to serve and honour God as well as his house and people, to give something to both man and God, were all endearing qualities. Jerusalem became David's city also, the holy city, the living symbol of the heavenly Jerusalem for whose righteous rule mankind yet waits. Many great cities of the earth have exalted themselves and fallen to dust or faded into insignificance but the much besieged city of Jerusalem still commands the eyes and ears of the world. "*For the Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest forever, here I will dwell, for I have desired it*" (Psa. 132. 13-14).

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem, the lowly monarch who inherited David's throne, the crowd who went before him cried "Hosanna to the Son of David". He was never hailed as the son of Abraham, or the son of Moses. Great David's greater son was the king whom David had prefigured, who would occupy his throne and rule from his city with a righteous and just rule never yet experienced by any nation. To David God had sworn, "*There shall not fail thee a man to rule upon the throne of Israel*". When the throne was overturned and the people sent into Babylonian exile it was not destroyed but left vacant "*until he come whose right it is and I will give it to him*" (Ezek. 21. 27).

When David came to the end of his life the theme of the dying king was that of faith, of God's justice and man's reverence. His parting words to Solomon enshrouded advice all rulers might well have heeded for their own safety and the good of the ruled. "*He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God*". Herein lies the whole peace and happiness of man. Even Solomon, satiated with all that wealth could give, with all under the sun that a man could see or have to do, concluded the whole matter, "*Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil*" (Eccl. 12 13-14).

* * *

Since looking upon the portrait of Abraham to whom God had pledged himself to give the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession we have wandered two thousand years down the long gallery of time, observing the prophets, kings and priests of the dynasty he founded. Far from being proud owners of the land, they were oppressed tenants, ruled by Rome, paying tax to its notorious Cæsar, their priesthood a formality, their religious pride a stumbling stone. There were plentiful signs of a national breakdown. Even the pagan world, drunk with excesses of cruelty and moral degradation, lurched unsteadily along. Society was full of sinister shadows which turned the thoughtful away from its words and ways. Those who retained the faith could only look on with dismay, sick at heart, a prey to doubt and fear, wondering what sort of future lay ahead for them and their children.

It was at such a time that the voice of a prophet was heard once more in Judea. A cry rang out with bell-like clarity from the banks of the Jordan, "*Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*". The voice startled the haughty and stirred the disconsolate. People went to see and hear this remarkable young man who daringly denounced the sins of the age, who declared the axe already laid at the root of an old tree, a worn out system. He was in no doubt about his own mission. He was more than a prophet, more than a voice crying in the wilderness. He was the herald of the King, making straight the way before him.

He was born for his task. Dedicated from birth to the service of God, schooled in the wilderness, solitary in the desert, separated from the daily life of

men, he was tutored and disciplined, chosen and fitted to prepare Israel to receive her king. In the portrait gallery of faith he is an arresting figure; a man standing at the meeting place of two great ages, foretelling the end of one and the beginning of another, yet privileged to share the spoils of neither. His mission ended, his life ended not in triumph but by the caprice of a wanton woman whose way of life he had condemned.

He was the last of the prophets. Of all who had gone before him there were none greater than this young man who appeared like a denizen from another world. Unshorn, bronzed with outdoor life, clad in his coat of camel's hair, primitive in habits and appearance, challenging the lip-serving priests with his burning invective, he followed the Divine pattern of the startling and the unexpected. His whole life, his preaching and his ardour, was a total rejection of the show, the trappings, the rites and ceremonial which society thought necessary to successful living. The old ways were doomed. None could enter upon a new order without first shedding the past. This, many were eager to do, wading out into the cool swift waters of the Jordan river for baptism at the hands of John, known to history as the Baptist. Among these there stepped down one day for baptism another young man whom he recognised as the One whose way he had been preparing.

In the river pool they stood together, one dedicating the other to his long awaited office. What emotions must have stirred the breast of the ardent young prophet as he baptised the sinless Saviour, as he saw the Spirit of God descending in dove-like form and heard the heavenly voice proclaiming, "*This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased*" (Matt. 3. 16-17).

This was the one greater than himself whose shoe's latchet he felt unworthy to unloose. "*He must increase. I must decrease*". Humbly the morning star paled before the rising sun. Pointing men earnestly to "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" the dauntless, fiery Baptist slipped unobtrusively into the background, passing from the dawn of a new day through the dark portals of a gloomy prison to a lonely dungeon, to languish uncertain, undelivered, until at last the executioner's axe ended his brief career. History added one more martyr to its rolls. From Abel to John the blood of the prophets had been spilled; the price of allegiance to the invisible God and recognition of that code of conduct which demanded justice, humility and love for

God and man.

Evil had its victories but the eternal spirit of good went forward in the person of him whom John had proclaimed the Lamb of God. In Jesus of Nazareth John had recognised him of whom all the prophets had spoken, the Messiah, the King for whose rule of righteousness the whole world waited. He had clearly seen the end of the Jewish age and the advent of a new era in the earth, the kingdom of heaven. Later incarcerated in Herod's fortress like a caged eagle, the eye of faith dimmed. Sending some of his disciples to Jesus he expressed his doubt in the question, "art thou he that should come or do we look for another?". In common with his nation he may have been expecting deliverance at the hands of his king. Freedom from tyranny was the uppermost thought of those who had suffered its iron grip. National independence, restoration to former greatness and future usefulness was the persistent dream of patriots. The answer to his question may have been as unexpected as the events which later baffled the disciples of Christ. Great things were expected of Israel's Messiah. John's messengers returned with the news that "the blind saw, the deaf heard, the dead were raised, the poor had the gospel preached unto them".

This was kingdom work, the evidence that He who should come, had come. His deeds were his credentials, his letter of introduction from God to mankind. He was not concerned with thrones and kings, with pomp and power, with politics and priestcraft. Life was the central theme, about which his whole ministry revolved, life more abundantly for every man everywhere.. He had come to fight a greater foe than Cæsar, to overthrow a craftier tyrant than Herod, whom he dismissed as "that fox". Men were in bondage to Satan in whose power even pagan tyrants were but pigmies. Injustice, poverty, cruelty, greed, sorrow, suffering, disease, ignorance and despair were some of the giant tentacles of sin which held the frustrated race in a deadly grip from which One alone could deliver them. Jesus knew what He had come to do. No doubt John knew too after he had received the answer of him whom he had dipped in the water of Jordan with such grave submission, and knowing, he went out to meet his end with satisfaction of having fulfilled his part, dying with the taste of victory sweet upon his lips and the vision of Messiah's Kingdom bright before his eyes.

D. Nadal

GLIMPSES OF A PROPHET

*Reflections on
Jeremiah*

2. Pictures and Parables

The colourful picture language of the prophets was familiar to Hebrew ears. Jews of the first century had no excuse for not understanding the parables of Jesus. His stories were not intended to make his teaching difficult to understand. He illustrated his ideas to make them simple and clear and more readily remembered, but as in our day, 'there are none so blind as those who refuse to see'. Jeremiah used parables, even acting out some of them, to warn the people of Judah that if they turned away from God they would suffer the consequences. Centuries before, Israel had made a covenant with God and promised to obey his rules. It had been made clear that if God's people broke the covenant they would reap a harvest of trouble. God was not venting his fury upon Israel over one mistake. He did not rule his kingdom as a tyrant but was full of mercy and patience whatever the human response. However, his faithful love must uphold the principles of that which is right. To go on permitting rebellion against his laws, would not be an expression of kindness but in mercy He longed for their repentance.

The people of Judah turned back to pagan idols after the death of Josiah, because their religious reform had only been skin deep. They frequently went to the Temple to perform ritual and ceremony. They enjoyed making animal sacrifices but Jeremiah had warned them more than once that the Lord required obedience rather than sacrifices. Revival of the covenant did not bring revival in the heart. They avoided the moral implication of God's laws and they did not develop the loving relationship with God implicit in the covenant. Foreign gods and the inevitable immorality of those religions lingered from the days of King Manasseh. They clung to the belief that so long as they invoked the name of the House of the Lord in the words "*the Temple of the Lord*" (Jer. 7. 4.) they were safe from enemy invasion. Outward religion and superficial knowledge have always been a snare to those who claimed to worship the true God. True piety begins in a changed heart, that is united to the Living God, and totally ethical words and actions result from that relationship. All else is hypocrisy. In Jeremiah's day the people of Judah believed they could do what they liked in arrogant selfishness and God would still fulfil his promises.

They tried to take advantage of God's patience and mercy. It is, however, only logical that the fulfilment of promises by God must always be conditional upon obedience to the rules to which both parties have agreed. Failure to obey must sooner or later bring disaster.

In some respects Jeremiah must have felt confused. If a person does what is right he could expect to have some reward and protection from God. If a person does evil and breaks God's laws it could be equally expected that he will be punished and suffer for his sin. But God did not always react immediately as expected and the prophet asked the age old question "*Why does the way of the wicked prosper?*" His question was not answered but he was told that his troubles would get worse (Jer. 12). The severe discipline due to opposition from his fellow countrymen was to become even tougher. The problem of why God permits evil and why He doesn't stop bad people from hurting innocent folk cannot always be solved in the 'here and now'. It is a question that must be pondered in the light of the whole vast purpose of God, which drama is still being played out in the world. Before Jeremiah's prophetic visions were ended he was to see 'light at the end of the tunnel' and hear God speak of things that yet shall be. The human story will not end in darkness and whilst in the immediate future the prophet's task was to relay God's warnings of destruction, the distant prospects were of restoration, peace and prosperity.

Telling Judah of the trouble she was bringing upon herself was a heart breaking task for Jeremiah who dearly loved his people; but he loved God much more and was determined to obey his word. So, recorded in Jeremiah 13 we have messages that warned of the destruction of Jerusalem. One of the most astonishing things in that very exciting life, was for the prophet to walk to the River Euphrates and back, twice. The journeys totalled over a thousand miles and would have taken many months. Going to the Euphrates may have been connected with the invasion of Israel by Babylon. Jeremiah was told to go to the great river and hide a 'loincloth'. This linen 'waist cloth', which possibly had a priestly connection, was an intimate piece of underwear which clung closely to the person wearing it. He hid

the 'cloth' in a crevice among the rocks in much the same way as a swimmer might hide his personal clothing while he goes for a swim. Jeremiah, however, left his underwear among the rocks by the river bank and returned home to Israel. Later he went back to fetch it and discovered that it was spoilt and no longer fit for any further use. Israel was to the Lord like that loin cloth had been to Jeremiah, an intimate clinging garment, and to God a garment of glory and praise. But like the loin cloth, Israel had become spoilt, good only for throwing away.

The next warning is a picture about wine storage and use. In those days, because of the quality of water there was little else to drink and wine was in greater demand than it is now. Drunkenness was frequently an even greater problem than it is today. Jeremiah reminded the people of Jerusalem of a saying that wine jars should be kept filled and their sneering rejoinder was that he should tell them something less obvious. Jeremiah is very serious for he has seen the vision of Israel's religious drunken state that can only lead to confusion, loss of control and ultimate devastation. Such an intoxicated condition was physically prevalent in Canaanite worship and it pictured the spiritual state into which Israel had fallen by imitating pagan worship. God was leaving this headstrong people to their stupid behaviour.

Israel's waywardness in seeking pagan gods was like a traveller wandering on the mountainside as dusk falls. The guiding lights of a town in the valley below are obscured by gathering mists as the night air cools. The wanderer stumbles in his search for land marks and falls to destruction. Israel had lost her way, she walked in darkness stumbling among religious idols, attracted by one enemy after another. The vision recalls the words of Jesus *'If any one walks in the night he stumbles'* (John 11. 10 R.S.V.) Jeremiah was grief stricken that Jerusalem must pass through this terrible ordeal and none could stop her folly. That too is reminiscent of the cries of their Messiah over Jerusalem six centuries later; he who would have 'gathered' his own to himself, but they refused.

Israel continued to slip further into the mire of false and sinful religion, and material wealth and pleasure was the objective of their lives. So Jeremiah found himself more and more isolated. God forbade him the security and companionship of a wife and children. He was told to avoid social gatherings such as funerals and weddings. He had to accept disci-

pline and suffering few were called upon to endure. By so doing God prepared Jeremiah to be his messenger and the message was to be given in one of the great parables of the Bible. He went to the house of the potter.

The picture of the Creator as a potter began way back in Creation itself. Genesis 2. 7 says *"the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground"* and the verb **'formed'** is related to the noun for potter. The idea is taken up in Psalm 119.73 which reads *"Your hands made me and formed me"*. Isaiah 29. 16 takes the thought further when that prophet exclaims *"How you turn things upside down, as if the potter ranked no higher than the clay! Will the thing made say of its maker, 'He did not make me?'"* (REB). Later, Isaiah expresses a more conciliatory thought *"Yet, O Lord, you are our Father, we are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand."* In the New Testament when Paul was writing to the Church at Rome he too used this analogy of a potter and the clay in much the same way as Isaiah (Rom. 9. 19-21). Jeremiah was dramatic in presenting the parable of the potter for on God's instruction he went down to the craftsman's house to watch how pots were made (Jer. 18). There he saw the potter at work 'throwing' the pot on his spinning wheel. The soft clay did not always respond to the potter's hand in the way he required it, so he would crush the unfinished pot into a lump once more and begin to re-work it again into a different shape, a utensil more pleasing and of greater value than before God's message to Israel was that although they had sinned and become mis-shapen like the clay in the Potter's hand at first, he was able to remake his people into a cup or jug of honour to his name. He is sovereign Lord, with complete control over the destiny of Israel and all nations. Our God is the Master Potter and can remake that which He at the first created not because there is any defect in his workmanship but He has given freedom of action to his intelligent creation and they have abused the privilege and rebelled against him. Later in his ministry Jeremiah was to exclaim the wonderful truth *"Lord God maker of the Heavens and the Earth by your great power and outstretched arm, nothing is impossible for you"*. The restoration of Israel after seventy years or much later in the history of the world is possible if the Almighty Creator so wills. It is a lesson for us all, for at times in our lives we are just like that clay in the potter's hand — we feel we have failed to reach

up to the demands of the Master craftsman and that we are fit for nothing. It is not so, for God requires only the repentant and contrite heart to turn back to him and He is able to squash and re-mould us after his own image. No matter how great the fall, or how far reaching the sin, nothing is too hard for the Lord to put right — except first we must yield to him.

The parable of the pottery was not finished in chapter 18. In chapter 19 we read of how the prophet collects some of the leading men of Jerusalem and takes them to the city gate where the potters threw away their rejected pots. He had previously obtained a finished 'flask' and taken it to the meeting at the "Potsherd Gate". There he smashed it in front of those leaders and priests to demonstrate what God was about to do to Israel because of their apostasy. If a finished 'fired' pot was rejected, it was beyond re-making and fit for nothing but the scrap heap. Jeremiah told those important gentlemen that there was no possibility of avoiding the terrible destruction which was coming upon Jerusalem. God had repeatedly warned and waited. Countless opportunities had been given to them through the words of the prophets. The significance of this latter part of the parable of the potter was that in the nature of moral responsibility, God allows his people to suffer the consequences of their own actions. Israel had

reached the depths of depravity and refused to repent of the idolatry and immorality.

For bearing God's message to them and warning them of the coming disasters upon Judah, Jeremiah was arrested and put in the stocks. His twisted body and the threats of death had been terrible to bear, but the feeling of treachery from his friends, and failure as a prophet amid all the reviling against his ministry, were almost too much to bear. The rich poetry of chapter 20 is a conversation with God, where the depression and despair of his mind are opened up to his Maker, comparable only to Job. He had no choice but to go on, for God's message burned within him. He had a zeal and clarity of vision which none of his contemporaries and few members of his prophetic calling ever had. From these fiery trials Jeremiah came forth toughened and tensile like steel, able without cry to bear even more suffering for the God he loved and served. He was a man who revealed the living God in unparalleled depth, spoke of splendid things of a future kingdom, and was an example of what God demands from his choicest vessels in the here and now. He points to the Messiah, the suffering servant, by the life that he lived and lights the way of those who have followed Jesus through similar trials through two thousand years.

Forsaking all for Him

"For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him." Phil. 3. 8, 9 (RSV).

Wherever there is life, there is a continual interchange of taking in and giving out, receiving and restoring. The nourishment I take is given out again in the work I do; the impressions I receive, in the thoughts and feelings I express. The one depends on the other, — the giving out ever increases the power of taking in. In the healthy exercise of giving and taking is all the enjoyment of life.

It is so in the spiritual life too. There are Christians who look on its blessedness as consisting all in the privilege of ever receiving; they know not how the capacity for receiving is only kept up and en-

larged by continual giving up and giving out, — how it is only in the emptiness that come from the parting with what we have, that the Divine fullness can flow in. It was a truth our Saviour continually insisted on. When He spoke of selling all to secure the treasure, of losing our life to find it, of the hundred fold of those who forsake all, He was expounding the need of self sacrifice as the law of the kingdom for Himself as well as for His disciples. If we are really to abide in Christ, and to be found in Him, to have our life always and wholly in Him, — we must each in our measure say with Paul 'I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, . . . that I may gain Christ, and be found in him.' RSV

Andrew Murray (Abide in Christ)



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

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

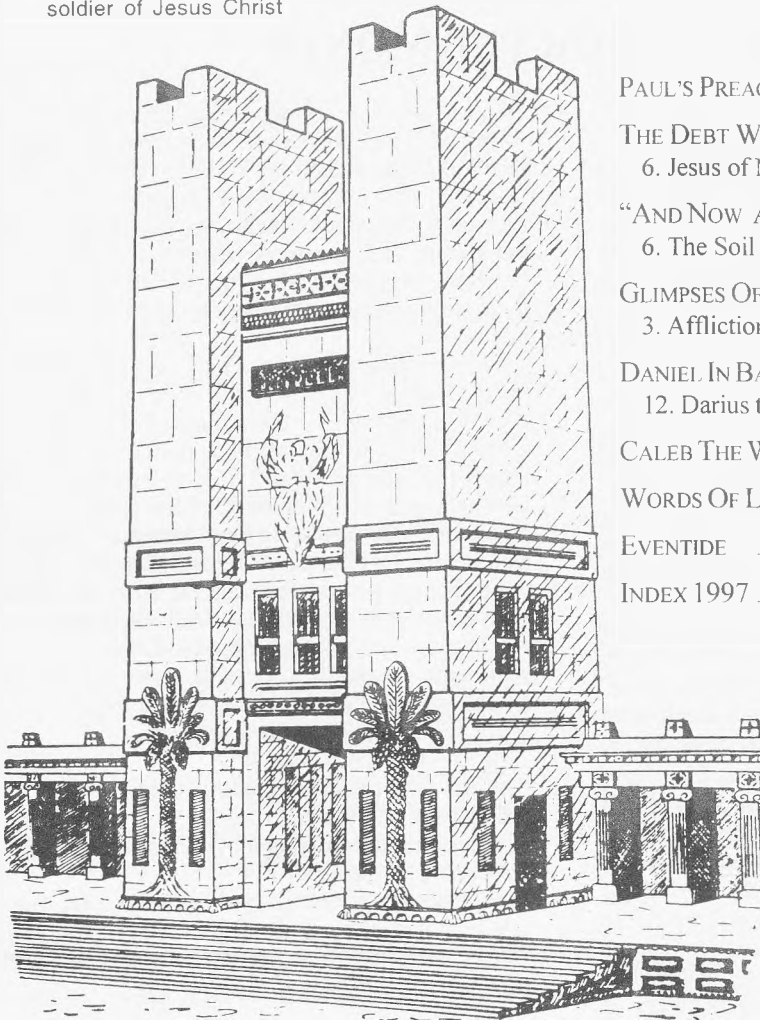
Vol. 74, No. 6 NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1997

Published November 1st

Next issue January 1st

CONTENTS

PAUL'S PREACHING	123
THE DEBT WE OWE	
6. Jesus of Nazareth	126
"AND NOW ABIDETH"	
6. The Soil and the Fragrance	128
GLIMPSES OF A PROPHET	
3. Affliction and Bitterness	131
DANIEL IN BABYLON	
12. Darius the Mede	134
CALEB THE WARRIOR	137
WORDS OF LIFE	140
EVENTIDE	142
INDEX 1997	144



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

*This Journal is sent free
of charge to all who are
genuinely interested, on
request renewable annually
and is supported by the
voluntary gifts of its readers*

Published by
Bible Fellowship Union
4 Manor Gardens, Barnstone,
Nottingham NG13 9JL, England

Bible Study Monthly

FOUNDED 1924

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

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

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

Chairman: A. O. HUDSON (Milborne Port)

Editor & Secretary: D. NADAL (Nottingham)

Treasurer: R. J. HAINES (Gloucester)

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased!" Luke 2. 14.

There can be few stories that have been dramatised more than the event in Bethlehem 2000 years ago. Yet if Celtic Christianity had been allowed freedom to develop in England we might not have had the kind of celebration known today. A hundred years ago Christmas was hardly known in parts of Scotland, and it was very subdued in England for a time in the 17th Century.

Yet this festival gives the Christian church an opportunity to tell the pagan world what it was like for its Saviour to come into the world. It was a stupendous event for the only Son of the Almighty Creator to enter our sinful human world. As we examine those who in any way took part in that drama in Bethlehem we find that they make a fascinating group. On the one hand there were some devout folk who were looking for the 'consolation of Israel' and on the other hand a ruthless king and his soldiers who had more than their share of selfish brutality. Somewhere in between were some shepherds from the bare Judean hills and Magi from Persia struggling to discover the light.

The unique event took place in the city from which King David had come. It was the place where the matriarch Rachel had died. It was an area where the sheep and lambs used for sacrifice in the Temple at Jerusalem were pastured. Was Jesus born in a stable or a cave or just a peasant home? Houses of poor people were sometimes built into the caves in the Middle East. Peasant homes frequently had mangers as part of the furniture because animals were sheltered in them at night. To this strange scene angels proclaimed the birth of Jesus to the world. Did they sing? And interwoven in the story of shepherds and 'wise men' there were priests and lawyers talking to King Herod the Great. There were tiny children dying at the com-

mand of that same king. Yet in Jerusalem also there were two inspired people who gave testimony that this baby was indeed the Messiah promised so long ago. They didn't question the strange place of his birth nor the odd characters who played out their parts in the drama. They praised God for the mighty privilege of seeing this child. Mary and Zechariah also added their contribution to the worship of God in beautiful poetry.

We may find the glitter and exploitation of Christmas revolting. We may not find much pleasure in the countless children's presentations of the story. But the birth of Christ was an event to remember (even if we haven't got the date right). It is an event about which we can sing and remember that the promise of peace on Earth which has yet to be redeemed — God promised it — it will happen. The world is still weary and the Babel sounds have not ceased. Men are still at war with each other and will not hush their strife but we can join the angels in praising God and know that He will cause mankind to beat its swords into ploughshares and its spears into pruning hooks.

For lo! the days are hastening on
By prophet bards foretold,
When with the ever-circling years
Comes round the age of gold;
When peace shall over all the Earth
Its ancient splendour fling
And the whole world send back the song
Which now the angels sing.

D. N.

Gone from us

— ◆ —
Sister Judy Oakley (Warrington)
Sister Kathleen Scott (Worcester)

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

B. J. Drinkwater

PAUL'S PREACHING

*God's method of
communication*

2 Cor. 4.5 defines part of the work of a minister of the gospel. It was a phase of the Lord's work to which Paul was very partial — that of evangelism. Not for him the staying in one parish tending the needs of one flock. He did not despise those duties but he himself was ordained to preach the good news in many cities and countries. In his day much depended upon the integrity of the preacher, due to lack of education and lack of parchments. Blessed were those Bereans who were able to search the Scriptures daily to see if the things proclaimed by the apostles were so; but few had that opportunity and for several centuries believers had to rely on their teachers. Hence the teachers were mostly preachers and they had, as in Nehemiah's day "to read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and give the sense, and cause them to understand the reading". Paul's own procedure in similar service is expressed in vs. 2 as "*not handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God*". Extra care devolved upon the Apostle, because not only was he an exponent of revealed truth, but he was called upon to disclose new truths and hopes consequent upon the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Having new and added truths to announce he would choose preaching in many cities as the method for himself. He had a message based upon the word of God: the book of Acts details his activities in conditions and hazards. We know from Acts 20 that he preached lengthily, which presupposes that he had much to say and an audience willing to hear. The preaching of those days would seem inordinately long by modern standards and few nowadays would think Paul's long preaching allowable. We know from 2 Cor. 2. 12 that he went to Troas expressly to preach Christ's gospel and we may assume from 2. Tim. 4. 13 that he was so occupied with his message that he forgot his cloak on departure. He had glorious truths to proclaim and preaching was the Divinely ordained mode of promulgation. Today Christians seem to prefer short periods of preaching and it is a moot point whether we are better served by it. Possibly we think preaching has served its purpose and now that we are able to read the words of God at home we should have shorter sermons, shorter lectures, shorter expositions and shorter exhortations. But the question will arise — has preaching served

its purpose? Does the Bible hint that preaching would be discontinued as a method of circulating the gospel? And, in passing, it should always be remembered that when Christians meet to hear the gospel, at the same time they join in prayer and praise in a way they lack when not assembled together. Whatever be the answer to the question as to length of sermon or address, it is certain that there is a need of good preaching in these days. It is a sign of the times manifest in the speaker and the hearers. Perhaps the worshippers are not so patient as former Christians; perhaps the audience is wiser than its teachers; perhaps the preachers have less to say about the Word; perhaps the meeting wants smooth things; perhaps they do not want to be bothered; perhaps radio supplies an easy substitute which can be switched off if not to taste. Let us be quite sure that we do not hinder the means God has chosen to declare his purposes.

He could have devised another and far-reaching way of spreading the truth, and one that would never be affected by the frailty of human nature. He could have commissioned such as Gabriel, or he could have blazed it across the sky for all to see; and had his plan been the quick conversion of the world some such method may have been chosen. Instead He chose the way which was foolishness to the Greeks, a way which required the listener to give attention to the words of truth and by that means He found those who had the hearing ear. Today we have preaching in printed form and though it reaches believers far afield it lacks the personality of the speaker.

In 2 Cor. 4. 5. Paul regards himself and his fellow preachers as servants of the Church. He had high rank in the service of his Master but still he is servant of all; and ostensibly all ministers are servants of the flock. They are not servants in the sense that they could be at the beck and call of those they serve, yet they voluntarily spend their powers in the furtherance of the faith. Like the Apostle himself they have at times to fill the role of leader and ruler rather than servant: they have decisions to make for the good of all, often under criticism and when it would be so easy to be free of it all. They serve out of love for the truth and the church without waiting for instructions from those they serve and frequently before the flock has realised its needs.

In addition to declaring the truth, Paul was definite as to the message the servants of the church must

proclaim. In his parting advice to his successor Timothy he emphasised the preaching of the Word, and to Titus he wrote God has "*in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed to me according to the commandment of God our Saviour*". He wished these two evangelists and all preachers to follow him in heralding the word of God. For this there is no substitute; and preaching without ample reference to the Bible lacks conviction. Too often the preacher dilates on some trivial happening or anecdote and occupies his times weaving moral teaching upon it, when right before him are the words of life! It will help preachers and listeners if we recall what Paul himself preached, and this we can do by noting his points when he uses the phrase "we preach . . ." They reveal important truth from which we gain assurance and faith in God's purposes for mankind.

A verse which instantly reveals Paul's message is 1 Cor. 1. 23 "*We preach Christ crucified . . .*" All knew that Christ had been crucified, and the meaning of it all was the apostle's message. He had two opposing parties to convince. The doctrine was a stumbling-block to the Jew, partly because he believed he was covered by the sacrifices of the God-given law of Moses and partly because the Jew had been responsible for the death of Jesus on the cross. The idea that the judicial death of Jesus of Nazareth at the hands of Pilate (though prompted by the Jew) was in fact a sacrifice for sins, and at that, for the sins of the whole world, was indeed a stumbling-block, or as some would translate it, an offence. And to the world of the Greeks the message of the cross was foolishness; the truth is foolishness to the wise of to-day and all those who because of superior knowledge and culture think that they are able to work out their own salvation. How did Paul deal with the situation of unbelief and opposition that he encountered? His downright methods are a lesson to us all. Upon receiving back his sight at Damascus he "*straightway preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God*" (Acts 9. 20). There we have it — straightway he preached! And in 1 Cor. 1. 17 he writes that the preaching of the gospel was his calling rather than baptising. Further, he did not speak with the wisdom of words lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect. Paul could have used wordy argument (at Lystra they called him Mercurius) but he chose direct declaration of truth supported by scripture as the better way to spread

the truth. We are well-advised to follow him — how often have we heard eloquence and the wisdom of this world before the cross of salvation! Again we have Paul's directness revealed in 1 Cor. 15. 3 "*I delivered unto you first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures*". His opening theme was ransom atonement, the basis of every Bible hope and the kingdom of God. All our hopes are centred in the truth that when man was utterly unable to free himself from sin and death and we were without strength, God sent his Son to be the saviour of the world. The subject is somewhat old-fashioned in the view of some modern speakers, and all will notice that their words lack conviction. But let us also note the words of Paul in 1 Cor. 1. 21 that it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. Thus we have another truth additional to the primary truth that we are saved by the sacrificial death of our Lord. And by these words we may know that not only is preaching the Divinely appointed way of circulating the gospel, but that God actually has pleasure in the method which was foolishness to the Greek and a hindrance to the Jew. And by the apparent foolish method He finds those who in the latter part of the chapter Paul refers to as the weak of this world; and in choosing and ennobling them we have proof of his power and wisdom.

Closely following the truth of Christ's atoning death must come his resurrection. And this also Paul said "We preach" in 1 Cor. 15. 4-11. It is expected, for Paul knows that if Christ be not risen then preaching and faith are vain (vs. 14). The remainder of the chapter provides us with one of the grandest portions of Scripture full of sanctified reasoning and giving basis for eternal hope. The hope for this world rests upon the associated truths of the death and resurrection of our Lord, and therefore they must be the foundation of all Christian preaching.

Allied to these points of Paul's gospel we have one which some think to be peculiar to him, that of faith. This message we find linked to the death and resurrection of Christ in Rom. 10. 8-15. He pointedly explains it as "*the word of faith, which we preach: that 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*". Note that Paul connects belief in the heart with spoken confession of one's belief. To him belief in the heart is a truer proof of the Christian than belief in

the head. If the heart is touched with the two truths that Christ died for our sins and was resurrected to glory to appear in the presence of God for us, and that the believer expresses his belief by word of mouth, we may be sure that we have found a true Christian! Then Paul follows in his reasoning by emphasising that this is equally true for Jew and Greek for the same Lord is rich to all that call upon him. But then he propounds some questions. How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? — How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? — How shall they hear without a preacher? — And how shall they preach except they be sent? And thus he has got back to his topic of preaching and the word of faith.

These are the truths that Paul consistently preached and wrote in his epistles; the death and resurrection of Christ and the word of faith: and as we read we see how loyal he was to the message committed to him. He was loyal and thorough in his mission because he knew that the god of this world had blinded the minds of them which believe not lest the light of the glorious gospel (and to him it was a glorious gospel) should shine unto them. But that God who commanded the light to shine had shined in his heart that he would pass it on to others. This was the treasure he had in an earthen vessel, and none knew better than he that the excellency of the power essential to his service was of God and not of themselves.

Another truth preached by Paul and found in his epistles concerns the Church. This he did so well that whenever we seek information about the church which is his boy we promptly refer to him. The Christian church probably owes more to him for his faithful service than any other apostle. In referring to his writing the believing Christian finds that the promises of God's word reveal that he may be associated

with his Lord in the church which is his body. Previously he may have thought that the church is an association of believers. He finds it is much more than that. He learns from Paul that he is now a son of God, that the standing of sonship carries with it heavenly prospects undreamed of when he first heard the gospel. He reads that the promises relative to this calling reach fulfilment at the Second Coming of his Lord, when he and the faithful members of the past will all be eternally united with their Lord and commissioned to direct mankind and dispense God's blessings to them. He finds that his Father's purposes for his sons are described as being a sacred secret, long hidden but now revealed. And he reads that the fluent-of-speech apostle cannot find words to describe the glories, present and future, of this church of God.

Of the many words of Paul on the subject we select those where the expression "We preach" occurs. Col. 1. 28 closes the fine chapter which speaks of Christ's creative work of long ago; his redemptive and reconciliation works; his resurrection and work for and within the church. We see in verses 23 and 25 that Paul was specially called to preach this mystery among the Gentiles, and he briefly sums it up in the phrase "*Christ in you, the hope of glory: whom we preach warning every man and teaching every man . . .*" Yes, Paul's preaching also included encouragement and warning to his fellow-members in Christ. His was a great responsibility and by the grace of God alone was he able to proclaim the fundamental doctrines of the faith as well as guide the church during her many trials. His words are with us to-day and among his printed preaching we have advice and help for our own trials and doubts. How grateful we should be that heaven raised up such a champion for the gospel!

Introduce to a friend

Your continued interest and support as a reader is greatly appreciated. Why not introduce the Bible Study Monthly to a friend? We shall be pleased to send the 'Monthly' to any name and address that readers submit to us for a six-monthly trial.

Booklets listed in the March/April issue are sent free — they would make a pleasant addition to your seasonal greetings. Please address all such enquiries to:- Bible Fellowship Union, 4 Manor Gardens, Barnstone, Nottingham NG13 9JL.

Acknowledgement of gifts to Bible Fellowship Union

Postage is a large item in the BFU budget. To reduce costs, acknowledgements will be sent for gifts of £5 and over (\$10 overseas). A receipt will be sent willingly for any gift where it is required — please make a note on your 'renewal'. Another means of economy is the sending of acknowledgements with the next issue of the BSM. If a more urgent receipt is required please let us know. Please make sure cheques are payable to Bible Fellowship Union.

THE DEBT WE OWE

Part 6. Jesus of Nazareth

No authentic portrait of Christ exists. His character, revealed in the gospels, has been for centuries the inspiration of artists and writers. By them he has been presented according to individual imagination. But where is the imagination, the skill which could adequately portray in one person the qualities which are attributed to this unique personality? Many of these portraits of Christ adorning the walls of Churches and galleries of art are almost repellent caricatures of One who combined in himself resolution and strength; gentleness, compassion, love, enthusiasm, confidence and the piercing glance which saw through every pretension by which men sought to project a false image of themselves upon society. Jesus claimed the Fatherhood of God. His life spark came direct from God, not through the imperfect race of men. He was the only begotten of the Father, but his designation of himself was, the Son of Man. He was flesh and blood, born of woman, setting a standard before man of what man had been, an image of God, an example of what man could be by the grace of God. The meanest member of the race can look on him, and be encouraged to imitation.

Christ inspires love and devotion. He was 'tempted and tried' at all points of human nature. He was one of Adam's race with a human body, a human heart, a human intelligence and he lived to share the struggles of men, the sorrows of women, the innocent joys of children.

There is no doubt that he disappointed the Messianic hopes of patriotic Jews, anxious for their country's freedom and exaltation. He never wore the outward trappings of kings, conquerors or priests. Simplicity was the keynote of his life. He owned nothing, he built nothing; he never laid down hard and fast rules. He invited men to follow him but he did not interfere with their personal freedom, nor would he arbitrate in their disputes. Man was free. The Son of Man respected freedom, taught freedom. "*Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.*" Born in a stable, reared in a village carpenter's shop, he took his place among the poor, the despised, the toilers. As a wandering preacher he owned nothing but the clothes he wore, for which the Roman soldiers later cast lots. He was sold by one of his own followers for the price of a poor slave, yet he was never a beggar. Dignity marked every step of his

way. "*Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's*", was advice he himself practised.

Jesus was a Jew, born of a Jewish maiden in a Jewish village. He was of the tribe of Judah. His appearance was that of manly, maturing beauty, the olive-tinted skin, the dark eyes, the dark waving, luxuriant locks of uncut hair common to Semitic peoples. His face refined by thought and natural ability; his glance direct, his smile full of charm, his voice vibrant with all the ringing tones of enthusiasm for the kingdom of God, which he preached upon the hill sides or from a boat on the lake of Galilee. Tenderness, mingled with compassion for the sick, 'the heavy laden', calling with power on the prisoner in the tomb to 'Come forth', exhorting the multitudes, condemning hypocrisy, blessing the children, communing privately with his friends, addressing himself to the problems of women, replying with dignified restraint to the high-priest, to Pilate; what cadences rose and fell in the voice of him who spoke as no other man has ever spoken!

There was no vainglorious display about his dress. He would wear the seamless striped tunic common to the East, girdled at the waist, with a blue outer robe which served as cloak and protection during those nights he spent upon the hills seeking solitude in prayer or rest. Foxes had dens, birds had nests, but the Son of Man had no pillow for his head other than that provided by Mother earth. His sandalled feet trod the dusty roads, his head protected from the eastern sunlight by a white *keffiyeh* which flows down over the shoulders and is bound by a black fillet round the head. He wore no halo other than that of the grace and truth which filled his being with inner radiant glory, it made him the light of the World.

He went about doing good. His work was one of mercy. He was touched with pity for human suffering and misery. A healing hand laid on a leper publicly an outcast, brought soundness of body. Fingers in the ears of the deaf, on the eyes of the blind, restored contact to a world of sound and sight. A command to the lame to walk, brought back powers of locomotion. Had he been as other men he would have made money out of his power to heal. He would have demanded a house and a salary for his power to preach the everlasting gospel. As heir of David's royal line he could have commanded a throne, a crown,

an army. That he did none of these things, that he refused pomp and honour, wealth and office, all the commonplace trappings of commonplace life, lifts him up above the rank and file of men.

Had he accepted any of the baubles of this life he would have been lost to the race as a man above all other men, the one altogether lovely. He who never lived in palaces, who never rode in chariots, who never fared sumptuously or dressed extravagantly, was a king above his fellows. The royal dignity of unsullied manhood was evident through the simplicity of his contacts with the throngs which pressed about him daily. Discerning women envied the mother who had borne so grand a son. Even in his last hours of anguish, scourged, insulted, weary, mocked and confronted by a yelling, bloodthirsty rabble of his fellowmen, there was that about him which commanded the admiration of the hardened Roman who set him before them; the priests and the people, with the unforgettable exclamation: — "Behold the Man".

Since Adam, no such man had ever walked the earth. He was the second Adam, tried at all points, yet without sin. The first man failed on one point. This man was pressed without measure but he fulfilled the whole law, the only one of man's race who had obtained the right to life, a life voluntarily forfeited, that through his gift others might live. Life is the gift of God. Out of all the tangled maze of theology this one thing stands out strong and clear. It is the most precious and sacred thing, which man cannot create or obtain for himself or extend indefinitely in a whole sound frame of body and mind.

Christ had life in the fullest measure, a life freely yielded to the service and needs of men. "*He poured out his soul unto death.*" His physical energies were spent in giving health, peace and life until they finally expired on the cross. To say that "*He was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might become rich*", is no overstatement of what on thoughtful consideration becomes an obvious fact. The willingness of Christ to give, to bear insults and false accusations in silence, is a contrast to the greed of the avaricious, the loud denials, the plentiful excuses of guilty men.

The courage of Christ, going forward willingly to a known agony of public ignominy and dying; to loss of friends, to misunderstanding and misrepresentation, makes him a spectacle to angels and men. Forsaken, betrayed, mocked by rough soldiers, derided by

shameless priests, gloating in the cruelty of the deed they had contrived, taunted by the jeering, ignorant crowds who find pleasure in such barbarous spectacles, the innocent Son of Man in his submission to the hands of wickedness is an example of love, humility and bravery which has no parallel in all the long history of men.

In the garden of Eden all the joys of life had been lost in one selfish act. In the garden of Gethsemane the iniquity of the race was laid upon one stainless heart. The evils and sorrows of humanity crushed the Son of Man to the earth in an anguish of pain which racked his whole being. "*He was made sin for us, who knew no sin.*" Hostile antagonism, hateful wickedness, treachery and human weakness, were all arrayed against him. He who was innocent was made guilty; he who was right was made wrong; he who was all love was despised, rejected, hated without a cause.

"*Crucify him! Away with him! We have no king but Cæsar!*" Pilate went through the ceremony of washing his hands of innocent blood to the cry "*His blood be upon us and upon our children*".

Shudderingly the curtain falls. The earthly career of the Son of Man entered its final phase with the Roman command, 'Get ready the cross'. With heroic fortitude the Man of Nazareth went forth to die, shouldering the instrument of torture, crucified between thieves, "numbered with the transgressors".

Jesus upheld and fulfilled the law, expressed in the two great life-preserving commandments of supreme love for God and unselfish love for man. For that he was sent to his death by the lipserving rulers whose own self-preservation in luxury and prestige meant much more to them than justice, mercy and love to fellowmen or obedience to God, who had given the golden rule by which men should live in harmony with himself and with one another.

A few understood and responded, but He would have no illusions about the future, or the effects of the gospel of the faith upon the then unborn masses of mankind. Though history was an open book before him, his mission to the end of the age was with the few.

(To be concluded)

“AND NOW ABIDETH”

6. The Soil and the Fragrance

*A series of studies
in 1 Cor. 13*

In our consideration of the supreme Mastergrace each one of its constituent elements has been passed in review, some briefly, others at greater length. It has already been stated that Love is not any of these elements alone, but a synthesised compound, in which each and every element is present in balanced equilibrium. It is this very synthesis that makes Love so hard a thing to define. It is composed of parts each of which has its own special characteristics, but because of its blended and interfused qualities it is not only a greater thing than any of its parts, it is also a different thing. It might be compared with a wheel, complete with all its constituent parts, hub, spokes, felloes and rim, and thus a different and more serviceable thing than any of its parts alone. It has been styled by some “the greatest thing in the world” — the “*summum bonum*” of all things. That is as though it were one of several things — all great, but of which the *Agape* is the greatest. Love is a greater thing than either faith or hope when these things are viewed as parts of our present heritage in Christ; inasmuch as faith and hope are also listed as constituents of the greater thing, it leaves the Mastergrace to occupy the whole field alone, without any other of the great things to challenge comparison with it. It thus becomes the only moral good. It becomes not merely the greatest thing, but the altogether incomparable thing — a thing unique. But we must not forget that we are speaking of the perfect thing as seen in God and in our Lord, towards which the followers of our Lord have to grow and mature. It is that dynamic thing which alone of the moral forces of the world is competent and adequate to win an erring world from sin; to acquire that competence the pilgrim on the narrow way has to grow up in stature to full manhood in Christ — a persistent life-long development into a likeness to Christ. In this, the final section of our survey, it is that growth and development which will claim attention.

The quality of Love which must grow and develop in the saint is a sacred dowry from God, given to those who become “joined to” his Son by baptism unto death and resurrection into a new life. It is “shed abroad” by the Holy Spirit as a heavenly gift. It has previously been likened to a spark from the Divine Flame. Let us never forget that it is a gift from God, a sign-token that He has already called and justified

us in Christ, and that in this gift He has commenced the process of “glorifying” us, of transforming us into the image of his Son. In the depths of his intuition and foreknowledge He has adjudged us capable of taking on that image-likeness, which, in other words, means that He is fully satisfied that with his help we can grow up into the full stature of perfect Love, even here this side the veil, needing only our “house from heaven” to replace this present tenement (2 Cor. 5. 1-5) to make us spiritually complete and entire.

At an early stage of this discussion Love was compared to a fragrant garden of floral gems. That same thing of beauty and delight will now be used again to illustrate our growth and development into full maturity in Christ. Another thought recalled from former pages is that our knowledge must abide, and constitute the soil out of which our love must grow. It was shown that knowledge, of the right kind, was the antecedent factor behind every motive and every act of our Christian life, and that it is by constant repetition of the gracious act that Love, in its elements, must grow. Tracing this chain of sequences back from the finished product — the matured Christ-like love — Love grows mature out of ten thousand kindly actions, and these from motives just as numerous, and all these motives from our knowledge of his Word and his purposes.

Our knowledge of the Divine Word and its revealed purposes as the antecedent to every motive and every act is as the soil out of which the graces grow. The motive may be likened to the root anchored and tethered to the ground. The act may be likened to the upper growth — the stem, the branch, the leaf and flower. Each floral gem will have its own distinctive shape, but all alike must exhibit form, texture, colour, and aroma. These are the things every horticulturist desires. Perfection in form, intensity of colour, delicacy in texture, and exquisiteness in fragrance is his goal. These qualities can only be achieved when adequate supplies of the right kinds of food, in right proportions, are present in the soil. Lack of these supplies can mar every feature of the plant. Form can grow faulty, colour pallid, texture coarse, and fragrance scant or lacking altogether. These same things are true in the Christian life. The Christian rooted and established in grace has a plenshed store-

house of nutritional precepts and promises. From this God-provided source he absorbs and ingests such nutriment and food as he needs. But he must send his rootlets deep into the heavenly soil and take therefrom the moisture and the minerals he requires. But every plant needs more than root supplies. There will be need for sun and air and rain and cosmic rays. These are of less density than soil, but quite as necessary for growth. Thus the Christian also needs things from heavenly sources, new and varied every day — supplies of grace from spiritual sources suited to each day and hour. To implement the succour from the promises and precepts of the Word he needs the sun, the air and rain and ray of Divine Providence to reach him every day. It is from the ingestion of this double store of nutriment that form and colour and texture and aroma must eventuate. Absorption of such nutriment means true development and growth; contrariwise, absorption of little nutriment means imperfect development and stunted growth.

Of course, no plant can provide its own stores of nutriment. That is the cultivator's responsibility. In the Christian life there is no lack on the Cultivator's part. God has promised ample nutriment in his Holy Word, while his daily oversight and Providence are in abundant evidence. But even with these rich supplies available, and with every circumstance overruled for good, a failure to develop may ensue. If our rootlets fail to go down into his precepts and promises, and our leaves to open up to his sun and air and ray, we shall starve, and wilt, and fade away. The Cultivator cannot do this thing for us. Absorption and ingestion dwell in the plant, and must constitute the plant's own contribution to the desired growth and development. It is just the same with us. There can be no growth in Love and Christlike character if there is scant assimilation of the precepts of the Word, or of the influences of the daily Providence. And sometimes, even after sound growth has begun, and alien factor may intrude and mar the development. A canker or a blight, an insect or a spore — intrusive deadly enemies — may appear on the plant, and the plant becomes spoiled thereby. Form, colour, texture and fragrance may all be lost and all its former growth be in vain. Something like this can happen in the Christian life, and lead to the undeveloped believer becoming a castaway.

The child of God, developing in Love, is not just as one single plant — he is as a whole plot of floral gems, amidst which, as we walk its winding path,

we now draw nearer to the rose: then to the snow-white lily; next to the musk or the forget-me-not, and by reason of the close proximity inhale its fragrance more easily than all the rest, yet not so strongly as to obscure them altogether. So in the Christian life to-day it may be long-suffering that may stand out, tomorrow humility, another day courtesy — and perhaps a different element with each passing day. Yet there will always be the background scent in addition to the outstanding odour. There will always be the remaining elements of Love to support the one under test. The long-suffering is never under strain alone. Nor is the generosity, nor yet the patience ever tested by itself. Actually it is the Love that is being tried and proved, and though the strain may lie more acutely upon this or that, the remaining elements will lend support throughout the test. Kindness, humility, faith, hope, will be there to help long-suffering to suffer long.

It is this interfusing and interplay of love's elements that causes God's child to resemble a whole garden in bloom. Today he is as the lily in its stateliness, tomorrow as the honeysuckle in its daintiness, again as the rose in its appealing charm — these and a thousand more — all grown and thrown together into one delightful ensemble; plants for both sun and shade, plants for December and June, each in its season lading the air with its charm, and the whole, withal, as elusive as Love to define.

No illustration can go all the way in the growth and development of likeness to Christ. The plant has no knowledge or perception of its identity. Its existence springs from natural determinations and chemical affinities. But the child of God is aware of his identity. To him, this knowledge is a vital thing, to which everything that attends his growth is an added factor. He knows he was called of God and placed on probation for joint-heirship with Christ. He knows he will receive help from God, if he will take what is offered him. He knows that all those things which are as sun and air and rain and soil and husbandman care, are provided to meet his needs, but such knowledge is unavailing unless there is, in his heart, the determination to grow thereby. He must be determined to absorb and ingest all these things, and by keeping in this way grow up into that "something" which is at once the sum and substance of them all.

The "Agape" as it is seen in God, is working to a Plan. That same "Agape", transplanted to our hearts,

enables us also to work to that Plan. Without its restraining influence amidst this sad world's woes we may be unable to wait till the suffering sinner's lesson has been learned. The very sight of earth's sufferings could predispose us to plunge right in today to seek to ease and heal her many breaking hearts. But that would not be evidence of the "Agape" — it would only be philanthropy! God knows about the world's sufferings, yet, in him, the "Agape" waits its appointed hour. He has seen earth's woes for centuries, yet He has waited, knowing always what is best. We also must learn to bide our time through a whole lifetime's contact with sin and suffering, though looking forward hopefully to the better day when Love will inaugurate its great campaign for restoring man to health and peace and life.

It is just this ability to wait that differentiates the *Agape* from philanthropy. God purposes to have the lesson of man's contact with sin learned once for all, and is thus prepared to wait until He "is inquired of" (Ezek. 36. 37) to do the releasing and restoring work for them. Indeed, He "waits to be gracious" (Isa. 30. 18) till the hearts of men have come to know their sense of need. It is when "at their wits end" they call upon him, that He comes to their relief and succour. (Psa. 107. 27-30).

But the waiting days are not lost. The dynamic power of the *Agape* is building up a great Redemption potential. Out of the tiny episodes of saintly life a mighty current of love is being built up. Every saintly life, every kindly act, every courteous gesture, every long-suffering groan uttered in his Name, adds to the voltage of that mighty surge that will sweep unrighteousness away and set men free from sin. Some better day God will throw the switch, and Love will come into its own. It will begin and consummate all that it has long purposed to do. That which is perfect will come, and Love's magnetic sway will draw all the wanderers home to God.

Beloved in the Lord, these are our apprentice days. We are learning the feel and use of the mighty tools that will reshape human hearts and remodel broken lives. We may call them minor graces if we will — we may think of their adorning charm if we will — but combined together into Christ-like wholeness, they constitute the great handiwork of God for time and eternity. Thereby He will make "The Universal Homestead" complete. It is our present privilege to try out our apprentice skill with these potent tools. May God guide our hands and hearts to his praise, both now and forevermore.

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*)

There is far less danger in an enthusiastic layman talking heresy than in a dull cleric talking dogma

Archbishop Temple

D. Nadal

GLIMPSSES OF A PROPHET*Reflections on
Jeremiah***3. 'Affliction and Bitterness'**

"I am a man who has seen affliction under the rod of his wrath" Lam. 3. 1.

Jeremiah's work for God passed through the reigns of five kings. He strongly warned Israel that the logical consequences of their rebellion against Him and their utterly corrupt ways would be destruction by Babylon. In Josiah he had an ally and together they began to revive the faith in Yahweh, but with the death of the good king in battle, Jeremiah was faced with one wicked king after another. Josiah's son Jehoahaz displeased his overlord Pharaoh Neco and was replaced after three months by his brother Eliakim, renamed Jehoiakim. However Egypt's days of mighty power were numbered and in 605 BC Babylon decisively defeated them at Carchemish. Shortly afterwards Judah became a vassal of Nebuchadnezzar. Pro-Egyptian Jehoiakim with his courtiers wanted to rebel against Babylon but Jeremiah warned them that to do so would mean certain destruction. Better far was it to go along with the immense power of Babylon. Political intrigue and manoeuvre was never part of God's purpose for His people. It was about this time that the now famous letter was sent by Jeremiah to the Hebrew exiles in Babylon recorded in chapter 29 urging them to cooperate and live peacefully with their Chaldean masters until God allowed them to return after seventy years. This letter together with Jeremiah's public pronouncements so embittered the king and his henchmen that they wanted to silence him. They began by banning him from the Temple.

Many times in the past God had warned Judah against their false religion and evil ways. He would leave them in no doubt about his intentions. He instructed Jeremiah to write on a scroll the warning messages which He had given him during thirty previous years. Thus we have a valuable historical record in chapter 36 of the prophet at work dictating 'the word of the Lord' to his scribe Baruch. When the task was finished Jeremiah sent Baruch to the Temple to read publicly the Lord's prophecy.

Evidently Baruch unlike Jeremiah was not debarred from entering the holy place and Jeremiah so wanted the people of Judah to hear again what the Lord had told him. This demonstrates that God is always ready to hear the cry of a penitent heart. Throughout Jeremiah's long ministry the offer of reconciliation with

God was made repeatedly, but for the most part it was rejected.

This was a time of national crisis because the Babylonian army was rapidly approaching. A large number of ordinary people had gathered for a fast and they heard the first reading of the scroll in the Temple but we know little of their reaction. The second reading of the scroll was to a body of men in authority who listened with quiet dignity and growing concern. They are described in Jer. 36 as 'princes' and some at least were of royal blood. So seriously did they take the warning in the scroll that they sent word to the King and his courtiers to take notice. They also made arrangements for Jeremiah and Baruch to be carefully hidden, possibly in what is a traditional concealed site called the Damascus Grotto just outside the city walls.

The third reading of the scroll was dramatic indeed. As it was read in the presence of King Jehoiakim, the wicked monarch listened to the warning and then deliberately cut off pieces from the scroll with a 'scribe's knife' and threw them into the flames of a nearby brazier. In fearful anger he sought to arrest Jeremiah and Baruch but his men were apparently unsuccessful in finding them. Instead the two godly men went on with the work and the scroll was re-written. God had planned more work for them to do yet and they were remarkably preserved by Divine providence until that purpose was complete. It is quite clear that the evil grandson of Manasseh would have killed Jeremiah if he could, just as he had arranged for the other prophet, Uriah, to be murdered.

It is a fearful thing to so despise the 'Word of the Lord' and his servants. That fateful day in Jerusalem is the first record of such a shameful act but many have sought to destroy the "Word" since without success. The 'scholar's knife' has often been used to exorcise those parts which do not fit the fashion of current thinking. To reject God's Word is to reject its Divine Author, yet he is beyond the harm of human fire and fury and His will shall be done. Soon Jehoiakim was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers and within a few months his son Jehoiachin was taken away into exile. How different the outcome might have been if the people of Jerusalem and their leaders had taken note of the message

of Jeremiah's scroll.

The final chapter in the drama of the people of Judah in the days of Jeremiah was now about to be played out under the royal leadership of yet another of Josiah's sons, Zedekiah. His Babylonian master placed him on the throne in Jerusalem, and as quickly removed him when the puppet refused to obey the 'strings'. Zedekiah twice approached Jeremiah for Divine help against the Chaldeans. Egypt made a short intervention which seems to have temporarily raised the siege of the city. During this time the prophet decided to inspect his property a few miles north of Jerusalem but he was stopped at the city gates on suspicion of deserting to the enemy. Zedekiah's weak and vacillating attitude was quite unable to contain the wicked 'princes' who had power at that moment. They were determined to keep Jeremiah in custody, a confinement which was very unpleasant. Clearly Zedekiah would liked to have followed the prophet's advice. Perhaps he even remembered the happier days of his youth when his father was still alive and Judah more faithful to Yahweh. The king enjoyed conversing with Jeremiah and for a while the prophet received protection and food from the royal household. Undoubtedly Zedekiah wanted to save Jeremiah's life.

The people of Judah must have been confused by the messages they were now getting from Jeremiah. To bow to Nebuchadnezzar's demands would have saved them from tragedy but that to them was treason. Human wisdom is frequently very different from that of Divine wisdom particularly in the midst of conflict. Selfishness and the desire for revenge make the ways of men so far removed from the principles of pure love by which God acts. Human decision is hurried and short sighted, concerned only for repressing immediate fears and anxieties. It lacks vision of wholesome and constructive ideals for living which produce an ultimate blessing for all. Frail humanity lives by the rule of 'save my own skin at whatever cost to anyone else' and is deaf to the words of Jesus, "whoever would save his life will lose it".

In spite of all that the king could do, and the conversations he must have had with Jeremiah, the prophet had some very rough treatment from the 'officials' whose intentions were brought to a head when they had him incarcerated in a cistern. These were common enough and had been used to store dry food or water since the time of the patriarchs. They were underground storage reser-

voirs, onion or pear shaped, with a cover over the small opening at the top. They were cement or plastered inside but could be unpleasantly muddy underfoot. In such a 'well' Joseph was detained by his brothers before they sold him. The Bible record is clear that Jeremiah was placed in very insanitary confinement and could have died from hunger or disease, otherwise known as 'natural causes'. The king seemed helpless to stop their murderous intent.

Jeremiah's plight was noticed by a servant of the king. An Ethiopian, Ebed-melech by name, was God's messenger in saving the prophet from certain death. He went to the king who was sitting in the 'city gate' – the place of administration and justice. There this intrepid foreigner pleaded with the king to countermand the orders of wicked leaders of the people. Zedekiah seems to have regained a little courage and gave the servant his wish. Ebed-melech went at once to the royal clothing store and obtained materials described as 'rags' which he used to soften the drag of the ropes on the elderly prophet's armpits as they pulled him out. So with the help of three other royal servants he drew Jeremiah out of the miry clay into fresh air. What were Jeremiah's feelings at that moment? Did he remember the words of David in Psalm 40, 1, 2 "*Patently I waited for the LORD; he bent down to me and listened to my cry. He raised me out of the miry pit, out of the mud and clay; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm footing?*" Perhaps Jeremiah as no other man could assess the merciful love and kind bravery which had driven Ebed-melech to take his life in his hands and undo the work of the rich and the powerful men of Jerusalem. Few stories even in the Bible, parallel that man and that situation. But there is one and it is found in Luke 10 and is the parable of a good Samaritan immortalised by the Saviour of the whole world. He too recognised the quality of an 'alien'. He too knew that love must be tender and brave. Perhaps as He told his wonderful parable He remembered the incident of an Ethiopian who cared enough to go out of his way to save a man of God. Ebed-melech put the people of God to shame.

Zedekiah, torn between what he knew to be right and what was being shouted in his ears by the leaders of Judah, failed to stop the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BC. As he talked on with Jeremiah all was not yet lost. Zedekiah, deep down, concerned only for his life, tried to flee from the stricken city of God. True to Jeremiah's warning he was captured, watched

his children killed before him and then he was made sightless. Nearly ten years after Nebuchadnezzar had made him king he took the King of Judah away from the land of Israel forever.

Jeremiah stayed on and lived among the people. Beruch and Ebed-melech too were saved from the destruction. Due to the intrigue and corruption which lingered on in Judah, the prophet was taken, against his wishes, to Egypt where he too died in exile from the land he loved. But he would have known, what so few of his compatriots believed, that their God was not confined to a land or a city. Wherever Jeremiah set foot his faithful Friend would be with him to comfort and to guide.

We cannot leave Jeremiah without looking back once more, not at the severity of his suffering nor even at the strength of his warnings of impending doom. Jeremiah looked forward to better things and

recorded them in that wonderful chapter 31. There he looked forward to an Israel restored and to a people living in peace. The covenant, of which he had been the earthly standard bearer, would be renewed in a way that Israel had never known before. There the true principles of loving justice would be enjoyed by all and humanity would come to know their God. Jeremiah's inspired declaration in that chapter enshrines the ideals of true religion and promises restoration of unimagined joy.

As we look at Jeremiah, we catch sight of a man who did not enjoy the honour and respect that should have been his. He suffered in his heart and mind as well as in his body. The influence of his teaching has reached across the world in every century since, more than most other teachers. By his godly life we can catch a glimpse of the Messiah who was yet to come.

The End

The message of Christmas 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 knowl-

edge 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.

A O. H.

A. O. Hudson

DANIEL IN BABYLON*The story of a
great man's faith***12. Darius the Mede**

"And Darius the Median took the kingdom being three score and two years old." (Ch. 5. 31).

With the capture of Babylon by the Medes and Persians an entirely new life opened before Daniel. At eighty-four years of age he could reasonably have expected to spend his few remaining years in leisurely retirement; the fact that for twenty years past he had been excluded from any official part in the administration of government affairs had without doubt led him to re-organise his life so that he could give his entire time to the study and consideration of the future purposes of God. That much is clear, from the accounts we have of his visions and dreams, and the celestial visitants who came with the revelations and interpretations which have been of such interest and importance to students of every generation since. It is not at all an unusual thing for a man who has led a full and busy life in some business or occupation to hail his retirement as an opportunity for the closer investigation of Biblical truths to which he has not been able to give the attention he would have liked while the responsibility of earning a living or discharging a public office lay upon him. Daniel at the death of his king and benefactor, Nebuchadnezzar, must have felt something like that. For forty-two years he had endured the obligations of high administrative office in Babylon because he knew it to be the will of God that he should thus serve; when upon the accession of successive kings who had no use for him he was deprived of office and allowed to retire into private life, he must have hailed the change as of Divine direction and gladly betaken himself to the more continuous and diligent study of the Divine purposes. And during the twenty years or so thus spent the fruits of his devotion were manifest in the dreams and visions and their interpretations with which we are so familiar.

Now the scene was to change again. The last official act of Belshazzar the last king of Babylon was to appoint Daniel third ruler in the kingdom and therefore the highest State official next to himself. At one stroke Daniel found himself restored to the position he had occupied under King Nebuchadnezzar. Almost immediately fresh responsibility was thrust upon him. The royal decree promoting Daniel to his new position had hardly been proclaimed when Belshazzar

himself was dead, slain by the Median invaders. When Cyrus, seventeen days after the capture of the city, came looking for someone who could formally hand over the civil administration of the capital and the empire, it could very likely have been to Daniel he came. Perhaps in that very hall where only a few days previously the supernatural writing had appeared on the wall, serried ranks of Median and Persian soldiers stood immovable whilst Cyrus, the invincible military conqueror, and Daniel, the gentle and yet firm man of God, transacted the formalities which even in those days, no less than in ours, marked the transfer of sovereignty from the vanquished to the victor.

What a tremendous stimulus to faith it must have been to Daniel, thus to witness with his own eyes the fulfilment of prophecy. Sixty-odd years previously he had stood in that same hall, a lad of nineteen or so, and declared to King Nebuchadnezzar *"Thou art this head of gold, and after thee shall arise a kingdom inferior to thee . . . the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure."* Now he beheld the fulfilment of that prediction. The second of the four world empires had stepped upon the stage to play its part in the drama, and the Kingdom of Heaven was that much nearer.

Happy indeed if we can see, in the vicissitudes of earthly powers, the fulfilment of prophecy, evidences of the onward progress of the divine plan and the approaching of the Kingdom. We are not usually called, as was Daniel, to be personally closely linked with the political affairs of the kingdoms of this world. Our observation of their course can be from a much more detached standpoint and for that we can give thanks to God. It is probable that Daniel would have preferred not to have been so closely connected with State affairs in the idolatrous governments of Babylon and Persia — but he was called to that position by God and he was too loyal a servant of God to avoid the consequences of that call. Perhaps some of the more orthodox and bigoted Jews, captive in Babylon, criticised his acceptance of high office under the State as disloyalty to the principles of Judaism and the Law Covenant. Perhaps we ourselves, in our rigid adherence to what we hold as the principles of Christian living may criticise another who undertakes responsibilities or obligations which we would not be

prepared to accept, and perhaps, in so doing we forget the Apostolic admonition. "*Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth.*" One of the hardest lessons we have to learn is that our Master has many varied tasks to be carried out on earth by his devoted followers and He must of necessity use various individuals in different ways. We must each serve and labour in accordance with the call that is given to us without expecting all our fellow-servants necessarily to serve after the same manner.

So Daniel found a new king to serve. "*Darius, the Median took the kingdom.*" Who was this Darius? It is so usual to think of Cyrus assuming control upon the fall of Babylon and immediately sending the Jews home to build their Temple that the fact of Darius coming between Belshazzar and Cyrus is often overlooked. Whoever he was he confirmed Daniel's re-appointment as Chief Minister of the empire, and that too requires some explanation. How comes it that a man in high office in the defeated Administration is preferred above all the Median and Persian notabilities who would in the ordinary way be considered proper choices for the control of the vanquished people?

What has been called "the enigma of Darius the Mede" has puzzled many a student of the Bible history in times past. This king is one of the few whose name has not been found in any contemporary inscription. A similar situation existed with regard to Belshazzar until toward the end of the nineteenth century, and it had been freely declared by some scholars that Daniel had invented the name of a king who never existed. Nowadays the acts and history of Belshazzar are almost as well known as those of Queen Victoria. Modern research and deduction has likewise succeeded in giving us a fair picture of Darius the Mede, at any rate sufficient to demonstrate the accuracy of the Book of Daniel.

To begin with, Cyrus was not the legal or acknowledged king of the Medo-Persian empire at the death of Belshazzar. The ruling dynasty was Median and Cyrus was not a Mede. The Median empire had its rise a century before the fall of Nineveh, and it was the joint invasion of Assyria by Cyaxares, king of Media, allied with Nabopolassar of Babylon, father of Nebuchadnezzar, which brought about the destruction of Nineveh in 612 B.C. and the end of the Assyrian empire. This friendship between the two kings was cemented by the giving in marriage of

Amytis the daughter of Cyaxares to Nebuchadnezzar the son of the Babylonian king. Upon the death of Cyaxares, his son Astyages became king of Media. Cyrus, who was a lineal descendant of the kings of Elam, now subject to Media, was a leading general of the Persian forces in the armies of Media, for Persia also was at that time subject to Media. Astyages had given his daughter Mandane in marriage to Cambyses I, the father of Cyrus, but he himself died without sons. Upon his death Cyrus possessed, through his mother, the best claim to royalty over Media, and so became the most powerful figure in the empire. Ten years before the fall of Babylon he virtually deposed Astyages and became the real ruler, thus bringing the Persian element much more into prominence. The Medes were still predominant, however, and Cyrus was not yet the acknowledged king. In any case he was still busily occupied subduing other nations and building up the empire.

It used to be claimed that Darius the Mede was the son of Astyages and so the last legal king of Media, this upon the authority of the Greek historian Xenophon many years later who gave this supposed son the name of Cyaxares II. This statement was repeated by Josephus but it is now agreed that this claim, unsupported by any other historian of ancient times, is without foundation. A number of more recent considerations, too involved to elaborate here, renders it likely that Astyages, who had already occupied the throne of Media for many years, now formally added the empire of Babylon to his already far-flung dominions. Cyrus, ambitious as he was, preferred to wait until he could legally claim the title. Hence when Babylon fell at the hands of Cyrus, it was Darius the Mede who "took" the kingdom. The word is significant. It has the meaning of receiving a thing at the hands of another. A similar expression occurs in Chap. 9, 1 where Darius is said to have been "made" king over the realm of the Chaldeans. Darius did not acquire the kingdom for himself, it was won for him by Cyrus.

Less than two years later Darius died without sons, and now Cyrus, by virtue of his descent from Astyages through his mother Mandane, had the premier right to kingship. From now on the Persian element came to the forefront, but it was not until the time of Darius Hystaspes, the first truly Persian king, seventeen years later, that Persia took precedence over Media. The Old Testament yields an interesting confirmation of this fact. The Book of Daniel,

completed by Daniel in the days of Darius the Mede and Cyrus, refers always to the "Medes and Persians", Medes coming first. The Book of Esther, describing events in the days of Xerxes, son of Darius Hystaspes, has it "the kings of Persia and Media", Persia now coming first.

Daniel in Chap. 9. 1 refers to Darius as the "son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes." Ahasuerus in the native languages concerned is the same as the Greek Cyaxares, and in the Apocryphal Book of Tobit is called by that name. Other ancient historians are definite in stating that a Median king succeeded Belshazzar and was in turn replaced by Cyrus the Persian. It can fairly be stated therefore that the "engima of Darius the Mede", although not yet completely solved, is, thanks to current research, not so much of an engima as previously.

"It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; and over these three presidents, of whom Daniel was one; that the princes might give accounts unto them and that the king should have no damage. Then this Daniel distinguished himself above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king was minded to set him over the entire realm." (Chap. 6. 1-3).

Three points in which the A.V. translation is inadequate have to be noticed. Daniel was not "first" of three presidents, but one of them. He was not "preferred" above the others but distinguished himself above them; and Darius had in mind his further promotion to be the Chief Minister of the entire Medo-Persian empire. The question naturally arises; why such honours to a representative of a defeated nation?

The answer, in the first place, lies in the fact that Daniel, and his sterling worth, were not entirely unknown to the Median king. The close friendship between the Median and Babylonian kings in the days of Nebuchadnezzar must have involved Daniel in some close contact with the Medes. It was the ambition of Cyrus and his Persians which attacked Babylon, not animosity on the part of the Median kings. Very probably Darius the Mede had a closer feeling for his royal Babylonian relatives than he had for Cyrus, whom he must have regarded as a usurper, even though Cyrus was his grandson. Amytis, Nebuchadnezzar's queen, was sister to Darius, and

Queen Nitocris, mother of Belshazzar, was his niece. In earlier and happier days there must have been plenty of going and coming between the royal houses of Babylon and Media. Darius might very well have been personally acquainted with Daniel in those days. What more natural thing, then, when he assumed sovereignty over the conquered people, to appease them and ensure peaceable submission by appointing as their immediate ruler the man who had been their chief Minister for forty years in times past, whom he knew personally and in whom he could place confidence.

It would seem that Darius made the subjection of Babylon the occasion for a complete reorganisation of the empire. He created a hundred and twenty provinces (which by the time of Esther, fifty years later, had become one hundred and twenty seven — see Esther 1.1) and appointed a local governor over each. Above these came the three princes of whom Daniel was one, responsible directly to the King. It would seem logical to conclude that these three princes were set over Media, Persia and Babylon respectively, Daniel being the appointed Minister for Babylon. The outstanding qualities of Daniel again marked him out for preferment and the king formed the design of promoting him to have authority over all three divisions of the empire, and at that the other officials took alarm and began to consult together to effect the disgrace of the hated Jew.

The indomitable spirit of this remarkable man nowhere shines out more brightly than at this point. At an age when most men would be considered past performing useful work for the community, he still made such an impression upon his fellows that he could be seriously considered for an administrative position that would tax the abilities of men half his age. Like Moses, Daniel's "eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated". Of him it could be truly said that he was immortal until his work was finished, and although, in the story, we are now within three years of the time when he leaves the stage, we see him, at the height of worldly power and influence, still the confidant of kings, still the object of unremitting hatred by powerful enemies, still, we may be sure, working quietly but energetically for the welfare of his own people, Israel, as yet held captive in Babylon. Here is an outstanding example of the mighty power of the Holy Spirit of God, entering into a man, inspiring him, sustaining him, rebutting all assaults of his enemies, prospering the way before him that through

him some vital part of the purposes of God might be carried out.

We do well to take the lesson to heart. There is no limit to what God can do with a man who is wholly and unreservedly consecrated to him. Such a man must be prepared to suffer with equal fortitude success and failure, prosperity and adversity, the favours

of men and their recriminations, serene always in the sure knowledge that all he does is for the furtherance of the Divine plans for all creation and that in the power of the Holy Spirit within him he must go forward and he cannot fail. That was Daniel's secret.

(To be continued)

A. O. Hudson

CALEB THE WARRIOR

*A man of faith
mighty in war*

A goodly number of outstanding men of war figure in the Old Testament narratives — not surprising, for those narratives cover fifteen hundred years of the history and the wars of Israel, a nation which is still celebrated for the courage and valour of its fighting men — but one who stands in the front rank of them all is Caleb the son of Jephunneh. Thirty-eight years of age when the people of Israel left Egypt under Moses for the Promised Land, he came into prominence as one of the reconnoitring party sent to explore the land of Canaan and bring back a true appraisal. Of the twelve men in the party, only he and Joshua dissented from the pessimistic majority report which confirmed the desirability of the land but insisted that the inhabitants thereof were too strong for Israel and the idea of entering it would have to be abandoned. Caleb, stalwart in his faith in Divine power, spoke for himself and Joshua when he countered the others with his resolute *"Let us go up at once and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it"*. He was never in doubt as to the verity of the promises of God and he believed with all his heart and that Israel would inherit the land because God had said so; his faith however did not prevent him from exerting his not inconsiderable physical prowess to the utmost when it came to waging war against the enemies of Israel.

Caleb was of the tribe of Judah. This is deduced both from I Chron. 2. 50 where he is shown to have been the grandson of Hur, and the fact that he was selected to represent Judah, as being a tribal leader, in the party sent to reconnoitre Canaan (Num. 13. 6). There was an earlier Caleb, his great-grandfather, mentioned in I Chron. 2. 18-42 and 2. 9, which fact has given rise to some confusion, especially since the later Caleb appears adjacent in I Chron. 48-50. This earlier Caleb, son of Judah's grandson Hezron, was brother to Ram through whom the royal line

descended to reach Boaz, David and eventually Christ, so that while the supreme prince of the tribe during the Exodus was Nahshon, grandson of Ram, Caleb was of only slightly lesser status as head of a parallel branch of the tribe. His father Jephunneh, son of Hur, is twice called *"the Kenezite"* (Num. 32. 12 Josh. 14. 6, 14) without there being any explanation of this appellation; it is possible that Kenez was the name of the particular Israelite village in Egypt from which they came. It may be significant that Caleb's younger brother and his grandson were both named Kenaz. Another point of interest is that he was first cousin to Bezaleel, who superintended the construction of the Tabernacle, the Sanctuary of God in their midst. These two men each served God in their characteristic fashion and according to their talents, the one as a soldier, the other as a craftsman.

It came about that two years after the departure from Egypt, Israel was encamped along the southern frontier of the Promised land. They had been told that by the exercise of faith in God they had only to walk over the frontier and take possession; there would be no resistance by the existing inhabitants. By way of preparation for the "take-over" God had told Moses to send a party of twelve, one from each tribe, to explore the land thoroughly and bring back a report of its extent, nature, natural features, growing crops, cities and towns, and inhabitants. Caleb represented the tribe of Judah, and his friend Joshua, a soldier like himself and at this time the right-hand man of Moses the Leader, represented the tribe of Ephraim. So the party set out.

It is probable that they did so light-heartedly and with considerable enthusiasm. They had heard so much about this land of milk and honey to which Moses was leading them, and although there had been a good many — too many — occasions on which the people had lost faith and cried to be taken

back to Egypt, the fact that they were now on the borders of the Promised Land made a big difference. Their troubles were in the past; God had been as good as his word and brought them to this lovely land where the sun was going to shine all day and the rain fertilise their crops and nourish their herds and all would be well. They gazed upon the vineyards and olive groves, saw the richness of the grain in the fields, pictured their own farms dotting these smiling valleys, and talked excitedly as they came across one object of wonder after another.

And then they saw the Canaanites!

It is true that some of the tribes of Canaan were of exceptional stature. The Philistines along the sea-coast were Bronze Age Minoans from Crete, something well over six feet, and their soldiers wore armour and big brass helmets. These Israelites had probably never seen a man in armour before. The Amorite tribes of the valleys were also a tall stock, likewise over six feet. And around Hebron and in some more northerly parts the intruders stumbled across a veritable race of giants, the Anakim, who from one allusion in the O.T. must have reached something between seven and eight feet. That was the last straw. They thought they had encountered the dreaded Nephilim who had wrought such havoc in the earth in the days before the Flood, and in sheer panic they made their way back to their own people with all their faith shattered and a message of utter and hopeless despair.

All, that is, except Caleb and Joshua.

"We be not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we" wailed the ten. *"All the people that we saw in it are men of great stature, and there we saw the nephilim, the Anakim"* Caleb peremptorily cut them short; *"Let us go up at once, and possess it"* he exhorted the wavering people *"for we are well able to overcome it. The Lord is with us. Fear them not"*.

But the people believed the ten, and they abandoned what they had of faith in God's promise, and they cried all night, and in the morning they planned to depose Moses and set up another leader who would take them back to Egypt. Better that, they said, than that we and our children should die in this wilderness.

And in the face of that abandonment of their high calling the Lord sentenced them to do just that. For thirty-eight years they remained in the wilderness.

within the sight of the Promised Land but unable to enter. Until all that unbelieving generation, all above twenty years of age, had died. *"And your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised."* Then the Lord turned to Caleb and Joshua and told them that because of their faith in him and his promises they alone of all that generation would enter the land.

Of that thirty-eight years exile in the desert practically nothing is recorded. The narrative is taken up again when Israel was commanded to leave the wilderness and make their way, not across the southern frontier of Canaan, but along its eastern border, and effect an invasion by crossing the Jordan at Jericho. It is soon after this that Caleb comes back into the picture. He still had his mind fixed on Hebron where he had seen those giant Anakims who had so frightened his fellow-scouts. He meant to get to grips with them and destroy them in the power of his zeal for God. And not only that; in the true spirit of the Israeli warrior, ancient or modern, he was eager to take the most dangerous task for himself. The fearsome giants of the south country were Israel's most formidable foes: he would lead the attack on them in person, and by the power of his God he would overcome. So he came to Joshua at Gilgal with his request. Because of his integrity and loyalty in the matter of spying out the land, Moses had promised him that Hebron should be his inheritance for ever. *"Forty years old was I"* he said *"when Moses sent me from Kadesh to spy out the land . . . and now, lo, this day I am four-score and five years old. As yet I am strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me; as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in."* Joshua, looking upon the doughty old warrior, honoured Moses' promise and gave him his request, and he went out with his followers to wage sanguinary war upon the Anakim.

Hebron was a sacred place to every Israelite, for it had been the headquarters of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in those far-off days before Jacob came down into Egypt, and it still held the revered tomb where those patriarchs and their wives were buried. That it should remain in the possession of the Canaanites was intolerable and it is understandable that the ferocity of the invaders was too much for the defenders and they were ruthlessly expelled. This was the most momentous victory gained by Israel at the time of

the conquest for with the fall of Hebron the whole of the south country fell into their hands. Hebron became the political capital of Israel from then on until it was superseded by Jerusalem in the time of King David.

Three miles west of Hebron lay the Canaanitish town of Jirjath-sepher, "the city of books". There is not much doubt that this was the library of the Canaanite civilisation where its books and records were stored. For all their valour and loyalty to God the avenging Israelites did a grave disservice to posterity when they destroyed this town and its contents. No one knows what valuable store of tablets recording the culture and knowledge of the Canaanites was destroyed in that furious orgy of destruction and slaughter. Some idea could be gained from the discovery in 1976, at Tel Mardikh in Northern Syria, of a similar store of more than 18,000 Canaanite tablets, casting considerably fresh light on much of ancient history. But Caleb and his men had no interest in history and no use for books; his mission was to conquer and destroy. He conquered, and he destroyed.

For some reason he did not lead this attack in person. Perhaps, after all, he was beginning to feel his age. Perhaps though, realising that both he and Joshua would not be leading the armies of Israel for ever, he wanted to discover suitable successors. So he threw out a challenge: "*he that smiteth Kitjath-sepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife*". To what extent the charms of this damsel were such as to incite to deeds of unusual valour it is not possible to say, but in the upshot Caleb's own nephew Othniel captured the city and won the coveted prize, who promptly told her father (Josh. 15. 16-19) that the south land — meaning desert land — he had given for her dowry was unacceptable and she wanted in addition land with springs of water. It would seem that the old warrior, perhaps better at settling issues in the field with his sword than negoti-

ating points of domestic disharmony, quickly gave in and awarded some suitable fertile territory to the newly-married couple and so all was well. He had, however, found his man. Years later, after both he and Joshua had gone the way of all flesh, and Israel had relapsed into crass idolatry and apostasy from God, and in consequence had fallen under the dominion of the king of Aram-Naharaim, it was Othniel who emerged as the first of Israel's national leaders, the "judges", to drive out the invader and restore Israel's allegiance to God. The military prowess of the uncle and his sterling faith in God re-appeared in the nephew.

After that, Caleb disappears. He probably died twenty or so years later, more or less at the same time as Joshua, at the age of a hundred and ten or so. With the passing of these two an era ended in the history of Israel. Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Caleb, the founders of the nation, were all gone, and Israel was on its own. Nothing is known of Caleb's sons — according to I Chronicles he had three sons by his unnamed wife and five more by his concubine Maachah; the name of one grandson is recorded. He was a strong and resolute man and firm in his conviction that he was called to fight the wars of the Lord. His strength resided in his faith and his faith never failed. Without much doubt he is included in those heroes of faith of whom it is said in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews that they "waxed valiant in fight, put to flight the armies of the aliens". Like the Apostle Paul in much later days, he fought a good fight, he finished the course, and he kept the faith. His achievements in battle have been overlaid by the ebb and flow of later conflicts time and again; his inheritance in Hebron passed into the possession of other invaders of other peoples in later history, but the sterling faith which characterised his life remains a beacon light, shining for the admiration and encouragement of all lovers of God for ever.

"He that hath received His testimony hath set the seal that God is true." (John 3. 33). "A friend gives me for the Orphanage a cheque, which runs thus: 'Pay to the order of C. H. Spurgeon the sum of £10'. His name is good, and his bank is good, but I got nothing from his kindness till I put my own name at the back of the cheque or draft. It is a very simple act: I merely sign my name, and the banker pays me;

but the signature cannot be dispensed with.

There are many nobler names than mine but none of these can be used instead of my own . . . I must myself affix my own name. Even so, each one must personally accept, adopt, and endorse the promise of God by his own individual faith or he will derive no benefit from it."

Spurgeon

C. T. Ward

WORDS OF LIFE**Part 1***A study in the
power of language*

"The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life". (Jno. 6. 63).

The Son of Man, speaking to the men and women about him, made this claim for his words. The words themselves were the ordinary, commonplace words in daily use, understood by the unlettered as well as the better educated Scribes and Pharisees. Coming from him the difference lay in their declaration, in the power of the Spirit with which they were charged, in the ring of truth, in the certainty of the knowledge they contained, for He taught them as one having authority. He spoke as no other man spoke and He claimed what no other had ever dared to claim, that his words were life, fused together by the power of the Spirit of God.

Words are the signs and symbols of communication; the agents of instruction; the vehicles of ideas conveying plans, intentions and methods from one mind to another. Man alone has the gift of speech. Animals and birds may understand each other's cries and calls but words are an important necessity to man. They form the small change of common speech. They are the foundation stones of religion, the root of all the arts, the source of all learning. They are the bricks and mortar of civilisation. By their means ideas and dreams have been translated into realities. Systems and cities have arisen through their agency and by that same agency they have been overthrown.

Without words life would be a dumb show. The events of life, the sights and wonders of the world, the thoughts, beliefs and emotions of the human being have urged both tongue and pen to put them into words. Speaking and writing are two remarkable means which convey pleasure, interest, information and inspiration from one human mind to another. Articulate man is the creature made a little lower than the angels. What would the world be without literature, its Psalms of praise, its Odes of joy its Sonnets of love and perfection, its stories which fascinate the young and enthral the old, its scholarly treatises which give the intellectual food for thought? Most of all, what would it be without the Law, the Prophets and the Gospels, the things spoken and written long ago that every succeeding generation of man might be educated in the true knowledge and wisdom of God and of life?

Every day an avalanche of words pours from the printing presses of the world, providing a fleeting knowledge, a trifling entertainment. Few of these words are either wonderful or wise. They are certainly not words of life. Like the grass of the field they are here today and gone tomorrow, most of them not worth the paper they are printed on. The trees of the forest fall to provide the material by which man reports the violence of his race and the sins of society, the intrigues of his world: creating confusion, swaying public opinion this way and that, so people think one thing today and another tomorrow. Senses are titillated by scandal and gossip, by those topics which appeal to the baser elements in human nature: in spite of the power and liberty of the printed page the amount of 'don't knows' and 'you knows' reveal a strange emptiness in the twentieth century mind. Far from lifting man to the noble stature of an educated, intelligent being who knows what he is doing, where he is going and why, the great spate of words by which he is daily harangued and bombarded produces a confused being, lost in the jargon of the printed and spoken word.

The comments of Jesus on the wordy, often worthless, arguments of the educators of his day, who taught for doctrine the commandments of men, whose lips and hearts were at variance with each other, are applicable to the vagaries and inconsistencies of what is termed, "this day and age". *"Let them alone, they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch"* (Matt. 15. 14). He had already pointed out that words defile the man; corrupt, unwholesome, misleading and contradictory words. Evil thoughts, expressed in evil words, incite men to evil deeds. All the useless quibble, the idle chatter, the vain, wordy profession without the conduct to back it up, has no power at all to combat the evils common to society, so tersely enumerated by the Son of Man. *"Hear and understand. Do you not yet understand!?"* He was trying to get through to a people so soaked in the traditions and teachings of men, so far from God in their empty formalities, they had ceased to know right from wrong. They tolerated in their midst evils which would have horrified them had they been in their right senses. Because their thoughts were shallow and selfish, their words

superficial and meaningless, they were offended at the clear cut brevity of speech which exposed their lack of understanding. For all their vaunted education they were ignorant. They went their own way, planting their own plants, as the modern world would say "doing their own thing", but such plants have short lives. They contribute little to the stability of society. What God plants endures, without God even the cultured become caricatures of his original design and intention to have man "*created in righteousness and true holiness*" (Eph. 4. 24).

It is here that God speaks to man, illuminating words of life which shine upon the darkened understanding, the confusion and the blindness, separating wrong from right, educating the mind to a full recognition of the sins which degrade and destroy, and the wholesome living which exalts and preserves. God had the first word in the affairs of men and he will have the last. That word is power, life-force. It was the creative energy commanding and it was done. The records of man's history and the revelation of God's purposes begin and end with the same Word.

"*I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, which is and which was, and which is to come: the Almighty*" (Rev. 1. 8, 11). Like a trumpet clear and strong the voice repeated, "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last; what you see write in a book". John wrote "In the beginning was the Word". What he saw and heard in vision while exiled on the island of Patmos he recorded. As John Bunyan wrote the Pilgrim's Progress while in prison so John wrote the Apocalypse while suffering for the faith. Both books have maintained their evergreen quality, fascinating and inspiring Christians of all ages, keeping theologians busy attempting to decipher the revelator's code. The Gospel of Jesus as written by his best loved disciple ranks among the immortals; here are set down the true words of spirit and life as they fell from the lips of one who spoke as no other man has spoken. His words have true ring of gold, he had the gift and the manner which brought crowds to hear him speak. They endured hunger and weariness that they might listen to words which warmed their hearts, which inspired them with hope and gave a new meaning to the complicated business of living, his words, plain and simple, but weighty with instruction, comfort and courage. They were full of good cheer, strong with confidence and authority; tender, compassionate words for the poor and weary, the sick, the outcasts, and the lost.

It was not just his words, thrilling though they were, but himself the Living Word which was important. When God would speak more plainly to man than at any other time he sent his Son into the world, "*that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life*" (John 3. 16). God had spoken to Israel at Sinai, he had written out his commandments with his own finger on two tablets of stone; he had spoken through the mouth of his prophets and they had written down the spoken words with inspired pens. When he would instruct them further, more fully show his character and personality to man, he sent them the Living Word whose deeds and spoken words fully portray his love for the human race, his desire for reconciliation and his fixed intention to bless them with his kingdom established on earth.

Jesus was a preacher. As Paul reasoned with the Romans, "*how shall they hear without a preacher?*" (Rom. 10. 14). How could people believe in the Kingdom of God unless they were told of it, taught to look after it, to alter their lives to a present conformity to its future laws. The first preaching words of Jesus were "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand".

Whatever the claims of the kingdoms of this world, they are far from godly. God's kingdom is the opposite of everything they were or are. In his parables Jesus plainly showed the contrast, and by his deeds of healing the sick, the blind, the crippled, and raising the dead, he revealed man's kingdom as sick in mind, diseased in body, ending at last in death and destruction. The world of man and the world of God were poles apart. For the few who could see and hear and understand, there was a way out of one into the other of which they readily availed themselves. By repentance they made a right about turn. By belief in Jesus as the sent-of-God they passed from darkness to light, from death to life, from weariness to rest, from anxiety to peace, from confusion to confidence, from despair to hope, from fear to courage. These moral and mental changes were the first rootlets of age-lasting life. "*He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.*" "*I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth on me though he were dead, yet shall he live*" (John 11. 25).

No man has ever put forward such a claim before or since, just as no one born blind had ever received sight. None had ever positively declared himself to be the fountain of living waters, the bread of life come

down from heaven, that a man may eat and not die; the good shepherd out of whose hand no power could pluck his trusting sheep, the resurrection and the life, through whom the believing dead should live again, and backed those claims by declarations and deeds. "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life." "All power in heaven and earth is given unto me."

He had the power to execute judgment, to forgive sins, to fulfil the Law and the prophets and to be infinitely greater than both. Even the winds and the sea obeyed his voice and the earth yielded her increase at the touch of his hands. All that Jesus spoke and did, John wrote, and the words and the life are there today with all the power of the Spirit in them, there for the taking, without money and without price. Jesus was the Master, dealing not with intellectual supposition but with facts, the facts of human life, selfishness, hypocrisy, oppression, weakness and disease. Against these facts he set others in simple, direct words; spiritual facts, plain facts, the only remedy for man's sin.

"You call me Master and Lord and you say well, for so I am" (John 13. 13). His words were laws, new commandments, life-forces. "My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish" (John 10. 27-28). He never suggested thus and so with any degree of compromise. He asserted, He commanded, He taught with authority, he

upheld the justice and purity of the Law, the faith of the prophets, and the Supreme Fatherhood of God. He rebuked and condemned hypocrisy, cruelty and violence. He had the right to claim to be the way, the truth and the life, for no other way of truth or life has shown to man the reason of his increasing dilemmas and the only solution.

Sin is an ugly word in modern ears. More palatable names for wrong doing do not lessen the evil consequences of those transgressions small and great which harm and hurt people and injure society. The chief mission of Jesus was to save the world from the dire results of sin and inherent selfishness. "*This is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world*" (John 4. 42). The world has not been saved and the cynical may say that at no time has it been salvable or worth saving. Only the word of God which "*is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword*" (Heb. 4. 12) can separate the world from the earth, society from its systems and man from his sin. Individuals have been saved during the age of the church, but the age of the Kingdom will salvage nations, lift up races and save men, not by the skin of their teeth but to "the uttermost". Where reformers and doctors, courts and prisons have failed, the man who told sinners to go and sin no more lest a worse thing befall them, will conquer the stubborn heart of man by justice, generosity and love.

(To be concluded)

T. Holmes

EVENTIDE

"So He bringeth them
unto their desired haven"

The day must have been one of considerable strain for Jesus. A great grief lay heavy on his heart. The Messenger "sent before his face" had been put to death because he had dared to rebuke royalty for a flagrant sin. Hearing the news, the Lord withdrew into a place of solitude there to ponder and pray. The crime had made a deep impression upon his mind, and He needed quiet and seclusion to think this tragic happening out in the light of his Father's providential permissiveness. A man devoted to the holy life had been stricken down by wicked hands, and Heaven had not interfered to stay the cruel blow. The act contained an omen and a warning to himself, for if resentment and bloodguiltiness began to flow they might yet become a raging flood which

would engulf his own and his disciples' lives.

Desiring greatly to reflect on this act of violence, Jesus had withdrawn from active work to this desert place, there to give himself to prayer. But it was not to be. The crowd had sought him out, and intruded itself into his grief and solitude. It was a hungry crowd — and the day was far spent! Taking the scanty store of food at hand, he blessed and broke and fed the multitude. The repast ended, He constrained the little band of disciples to take ship and go to the other side of the lake, reserving for himself the task of dismissing the still excited multitude. "*And after He had sent the multitudes away, he went up into the mountain to pray, and when even was come he was there alone.*" (Matt. 14. 22-23). Alone! — alone with

his grief! Alone with God, for now was come for him the hour and the opportunity for prayer! With the one example of his spoken prayer (John 17) before our minds we can well believe how his words would well up from the depth of his soul, seeking to know why this black deed had been done in Israel, and what it might portend. For four full centuries no prophet had arisen in Israel, and now the first to present himself with inspired lips had been done to death. Would the wayward nation never learn to turn its callous heart to God?

The great tragedy had brought the Man of Sorrows to the place of prayer unattended — alone. What a sight for angelic hosts to see! Did they bend down to hear what He would say? That we know not — but this was a scene they had never seen before, and even they, as well as He, had need to learn the deeper, darker things of Providence. Surely they watched the Man of Sorrows in his grief!

What an inspiration here for men. If He, who more than any other was daily the Father's delight, needed thus to pray, and in this way to be re-assured and comforted, how truly vital to lesser souls than his, must be this thing called prayer. And surely, if He, pure and sinless beyond reproach, in his hour of grief and pain, thus found consolation for his stricken soul, how vitalisingly potent is this act of prayer! Just the simple act of telling God about it all; just the elementary mood of trusting him to set the wrong thing right; just the humble unaffected attitude of resignation to his over-ruling Will. Just that — but in this act of prayer the soul is ushered into the hallowed presence of the Most High God, and God bends down to listen, to soothe and comfort, and to answer in his own way the ardent plea. Audience with God — yes, just that, an audience that deepens into confidence and communion with him! It was just that, when Jesus was alone with God in the mountain's solitude!

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

We too have our days of grief and pain, when tidings come which make us sad. We also have our days of blank defeat with scarce a single victory won. We look around and hear creation's groan — and groan, in turn, because we cannot give their burdened souls relief. Lives there one among us who never feels the plough-share of sorrow and remorse cut through his soul when frailty within, and world-suffering without, confronts him? That is just the time for prayer! That is just the object of prayer! That is just the theme for prayer! The need and the privilege co-exist together — the one fully commensurate with the other. When the need is deep so also is the privilege. And when both need and privilege call us thereto, how sweet the hour was spent!

Sweet hour of prayer! Sweet hour of prayer!

That calls us from a world of care.

And bids me at my Father's throne

Make all my wants and wishes known.

In seasons of distress and grief,

My soul has often found relief,

And oft escaped the tempter's snare

By thy return, sweet hour of prayer.

When therefore the pressing throng can be sent away, let us go at eventide into our mountain solitude and be there alone with God in prayer — opening up before him all the deeper burdens of our heart. And should the eventide of life be drawing on apace let that stand as an hour of greater need for being much alone with God. It is in these declining years that we need to seek the keeping power of prayer. As the mental aspects of our faith press with less insistence upon our minds, the need for that simple type of heart-assurance increases day by day, and prayer — fervent, simple prayer, is the ever present means to keep the anchor "grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love".

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

God is not sparing in his riches. He gives not a trickle but a torrent.

As his power is great, so is his grace. (2 Cor. 9. 8.)

INDEX 1997

EXPOSITORY

"And now Abideth...."	
1. Love is the principle thing.....	3
2. The Graces of Love.....	43
3. Love Suffers Long.....	65
4. Without envy or conceit.....	82
5. Selfless Patience.....	107
6. The Soil and the Fragrance.....	128
As it was Written.....	31
Caleb the Warrior.....	137
Daniel in Babylon	
7. Historical Interlude.....	11
8. The Beginning of Visions.....	34
9. The Ancient of Day.....	58
10. The Beginning of the End.....	78
11. Belshazzar's Feast.....	99
12. Darius the Mede.....	134
Debt We Owe. The	
1. Introduction.....	13
2. Abel to Abraham.....	46
3. Isaac to Joseph.....	70
4. Moses.....	94
5. David to the Baptist.....	115
6. Jesus of Nazareth.....	126
Demas.....	92
Doctrine of the Kingdom of God.....	5
Four Pictures.....	21
Glimpses of a Prophet	
1. Appointment of a Young Man.....	84
2. Pictures and Parables.....	118
3. Affliction and Bitterness.....	131
Jesus and the Woman of Canaan.....	87
God of All Space	
2. Extra-terrestrial life and Atonement.....	51
3. The Glory of the Celestial.....	40
4. Ages of Eternity.....	51
Man Born Blind.....	110
Paul's Preaching.....	123
Question Box.....	86
"Under Authority".....	67

HORTATORY

Ark of the Presence.....	61
Completeness of the Body.....	16
Consider the Lilies.....	103
Eventide..... 23..... 113.....	142
God our Saviour.....	75
In the Hands of God.....	27
In Wisdom You Made Them All.....	64
Kept.....	37
Rest - Today.....	8
"These Things".....	89
"This One Thing".....	105
Words of Life.....	140
World in His Hands, The.....	77

MAIN BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Ex. 17. 1-7.....	8
Ex. 33. 14.....	8, 61
1 Sam. 7. 12.....	2
2 Kings 22. 7.....	104
1 Chron. 2.....	137
Psa. 22.....	33
Psa. 31. 15.....	27
Psa. 32. 8.....	74
Psa. 52. 22.....	20
Psa. 96 11-13.....	7
Eccl. 5. 9.....	64
Isa. 11. 6..... 32. 1..... 35. 1.....	5
Isa. 53.....	32
Isa. 64. 8.....	29
Isa. 65. 17.....	51
Jer. 1.....	84
Jer. 13.....	118
Jer. 18.....	119
Jer. 19.....	120
Jer. 36.....	131
Jer. 38.....	132

MAIN BIBLICAL REFERENCES

(continued)

Dan. 5.....	99
Dan. 7.....	34, 58
Dan. 8.....	78
Mic. 4. 8.....	5
Hab. 2. 14.....	6
Matt. 6. 28.....	103
Matt. 14. 22, 23.....	140
Matt. 14. 35, 36.....	23
Matt. 15. 21-28.....	87
Matt. 15. 30.....	23
Matt. 19. 28.....	7
Mark 14. 21.....	31
Luke 17. 21.....	6
Luke 22. 25, 26.....	67
John 6. 63.....	140
John 9.....	110
John 14. 27.....	10
John 15. 4.....	54
John 17. 12.....	37
Acts 17. 28, 31.....	7
Rom. 9. 22.....	65
1 Cor. 8. 5, 6.....	76
1 Cor. 13..... 3, 43, 65, 82, 107, 128	
1 Cor 15.....	7, 41, 51
2 Cor. 4. 1-5.....	123
2. Cor. 5. 18-20.....	6
2 Cor 12. 7.....	86
Eph. 6. 4.....	98
Phil. 2. 10.....	45
Phil. 3.....	106, 120
Col. 1. 13.....	6
1 Tim. 1. 15.....	17
1 Tim. 2. 3-6.....	75
2 Tim. 1. 10.....	6
2 Tim. 4. 10.....	92
Heb. 3. 12.....	8
1 Pet. 2. 1-5.....	21
2 Pet. 1.....	89

Printed by

Ian Loftus Printing · Unit 1 · Old Great North Road · Sutton-on-Trent · Newark · Notts · NG23 6QS
Telephone: (01636) 821850 · Facsimile: (01636) 821876