

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

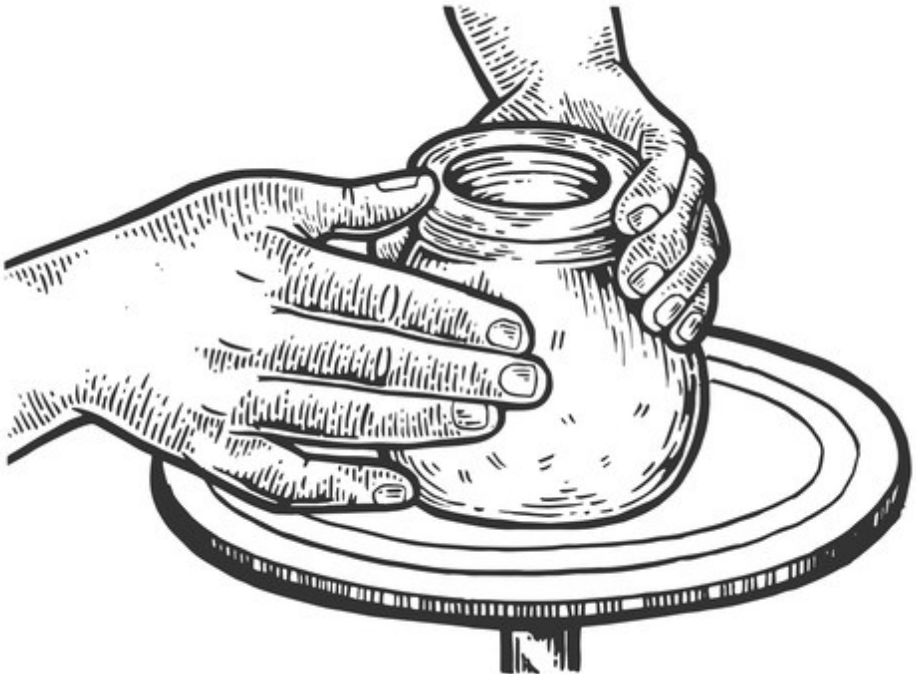
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Isaiah 64:8 O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.



BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

FOUNDED 1924

The Bible Study Monthly, published to promote knowledge of the Bible, sees the Scriptures as a true record of God's dealings with the human race, needing to be understood in our generation. It stands for the pre-millennial advent of our Lord, and His reign of peace and justice on the earth.

"Speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ." (Ephesians 4:15 NRSV)

The Bible Study Monthly is sent free of charge on request to all who are genuinely interested. It should never be sold for money.
Secretary & Treasurer: Nicholas Charcharos

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

Isaiah 64:8 *But now, O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.*

Pottery is a very skilled job, one I was not suited to when I tried it last year. Others in my family group seemed to be much better. Our heavenly Father is the master potter and hence able to mould us to be the right shape and useful for his plans and purposes for us. But we have to learn to co-operate with his plans and purposes for us knowing we are under his loving care.

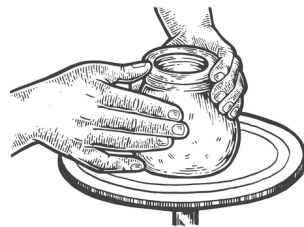
In a traditional dinner service there are many pieces—plates of different sizes, bowls for soups, sugar and cereals as well as jugs for milk, sauces and gravy and probably a tea pot or a coffee pot beside. Most of them are functional for daily use or Sundays and special occasions. Some more for display. There is much more that can be done with clay for everyday use although some pottery is really 'objets d'art.' Our heavenly Father can make each one of his children to be functional in His service.

Our characters are developed every day to be moulded to be like our lord and master Jesus. Like making a pot can seem a messy process. You have to take out a lump of clay that's rather tacky, throw it onto the wheel, water is added to help shape the clay, and then bear down on the middle of the lump of clay, but not too far down with the occasional muddy drop of water spitting out of the sides. Eventually a pot will emerge as do a pair

of dirty hands. The process may seem messy to us as our characters are developed. But just as God made our planet beautiful to our eyes something potentially beautiful and functional will result and all the moulding and mess will be worth it.

DISAPPOINTMENT

“DISAPPOINTMENT—His appointment,”
 Change one letter, then I see
 That the thwarting of my purpose
 Is God’s better choice for me.
 His appointment must be blessing,
 Tho’ it may come in disguise,
 For the end from the beginning
 Open to His wisdom lies.



“Disappointment—His appointment,”
 Whose? The Lord’s, who loves me best,
 Understands and knows me fully,
 Who my faith and love would test;
 For, like loving earthly parent,
 He rejoices when He knows
 That His child accepts, *unquestioned*,
 All that from His wisdom flows.

“Disappointment—His appointment,”
 “No good thing will He withhold,”
 From denials oft we gather
 Treasures of His love untold.
 Well He knows each broken purpose
 Leads to fuller, deeper trust,
 And the end of all His dealings
 Proves our God is wise and just.

“Disappointment—His appointment,”
 Lord, I take it, then, as such.
 Like the clay in hands of potter,
 Yielding wholly to Thy touch.
 All my life’s plan is Thy moulding,
 Not one single choice be mine;
 Let me answer, unrepining—
 Father, “Not my will, but Thine.”

Poems of Dawn

ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE

A Meditation

“Finally brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.” (Philippians 4:8,9)

We know that he works all things together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28)

“If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?...Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?...Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom. 8:31-32, 35-39)

Be thankful. Gratitude produces contentment in all conditions and it places a bridle on all one’s desires. It checks gloom, destroys envy and it returns with blessings on the head. We taste sweetness of a gift twice over when we are grateful for it. *Dr. H. Lockyer*

“See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men. Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearances of evil. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly... Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.” (1 Thess. 5:15-24)

“Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; submitting to one another in the fear of God.” (Ephesians 5:20-21)

“As for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, *to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.*” (Genesis 50:20)

“Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, and said, Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return...the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.” (Job 1:20,21)

If anyone would tell you the shortest, surest way to all happiness and to all perfection, he must tell you to make a rule to yourself, to thank and praise God for everything that happens to you...Whatever seeming calamity happens to you, if you thank and praise God for it, it turns into a blessing.
William Law

Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee.
Take my eyes and let them see everything as seen by thee.
Take my ears and let them hear thy voice speaking everywhere
Take my moments and my days, let them flow in ceaseless praise.
Take my hands and let them move at the impulse of thy love.
Take my feet, and let them be swift and beautiful for thee.
Take my voice and let me sing always, only, for my King.
Take my lips and let them be filled with messages from thee.
Take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold.
Take my intellect, and use every power as thou shalt choose.
Take my will, and make it thine; it shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart, it is thine own, it shall be thy royal throne.
Take my love; my Lord, I pour at thy feet its treasure store
Take myself, and I will be ever, only, all for thee.

F.R.Havergal (extended in line 2.)

Love absorbs trouble and distils kindness, is contented, lowly, self-effacing, well-behaved, outgoing, self-controlled, forgiving and forgetting, enjoying goodness, covering up for any and all, taking everyone at face value, always optimistic, willing to be on the bottom rung, persevering to the last, always succeeds. *After Paul* (1 Corinthians 13:4-8)

“Now unto him that is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations of the age of the ages.” (Ephesians 3:20,21 KJV/YLT)

“Jesus Christ yesterday and today the same, and for ever.” (Heb. 13:8 YLT/KJV)

Teach me, O God, so to use all the circumstances of life that they may bring forth in me the fruits of holiness rather than the fruits of sin. *JT*

THE POTTER AND THE CLAY

A consideration of Divine Right

1. Vessels unto Honour

“Hath not the potter a right over the clay, from the same lump to make one part a vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?” (Rom. 9:21 RV)

When Jesus began his ministry with the announcement *“Repent: for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand”* (Matt. 4:17) the message at once attracted great attention. About the time of his birth considerable expectation of great changes in the national condition had arisen, and the spirit of keen enquiry filled the minds of both the nation and its leaders. Uncertainty concerning the expiry of the “seventy weeks” foretold to Daniel (9:24) left all the people open to easy leading by anyone presuming to come in the name of the Lord. The word used by the angel, *“hebdomad”* (Greek)—seventy *hebdomads*—was of uncertain meaning when applied to the lapse of time. Literally it meant “seventy sevens” but whether these “seventy sevens” meant literal years (“seventy sevens of years”) no one could say with certainty. Then, if they did represent years, what kind of years were they? Were they lunar or solar years? Every false Messiah over a period of more than a hundred years used this Messianic time-prophecy, each one varying his basis of calculation to suit his own particular claims.

Each unit of the “seventy sevens” were made to vary and represent from nine to eighteen months, by these false Messiahs, to suit their case, the shortest period covering about three hundred and seventy years, while the longest spread over seven hundred and forty years. One of these Messianic claimants had made his appearance about B.C.3. Another followed in A.D.6. Both are mentioned in Acts 5:36-37. Consequently, Messianic expectation had reached a high pitch about the time Jesus was born. After the disappearance of these two claimants, expectation subsided considerably, until John the Baptist came on the scene calling the nation to repentance because the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand. (Matt. 3:2) Crowds of people flocked to his ministry, and were baptised so as to be in readiness for the appearance of the King. When John disclaimed that honour for himself, the people realised that he was no self-seeker, and rated his credit at a high level accordingly. John’s claim to be only a voice in the wilderness proclaiming the way of the Lord kindled the fires of expectation again, and fanned them to white hot flame.

Six months after John began to teach, Jesus came with the same proclamation: *“Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.”* Jesus went

about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of disease and all manner of sickness among the people. And the report of him went forth into all Syria and there followed him great multitudes from Galilee and Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and beyond Jordan. (Matt. 4:23-25) The common people followed him eagerly, because so many of them benefited from his healing ministry, but the rulers followed only from afar. Some of them, like Nicodemus, conceded that Jesus must be a prophet sent from God, otherwise He could not have done the great things which He did (John 3:2), but the rulers were not too ready to accept him in any higher sense.

In the course of time a conference was called to which came the Pharisees and the doctors of the law from every village of Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem—a national church council, in reality. In the midst of that representative assembly the power of the Lord to heal was with Jesus. A palsied man was let down through the roof into the midst of the conference. Seeing the evident confidence of the paralytic's friends that He could heal this sufferer, Jesus said to him, "*Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.*" (Luke 5:17-25) Immediately the Scribes and Pharisees began to remonstrate. To forgive sins in that way was blasphemous. That could only be done in the prescribed manner and place. Only in Jerusalem, and only by the Priest, or by the High Council in conjunction with the Priest, could such a thing be done. "*Who can forgive sins, but God alone?*" they said. To approach God required the Priest's intercession, at the place where God was reputed to dwell. "*Whether (which) is easier,*" asked Jesus, "*to say, Thy sins are forgiven thee; or to say, Arise and walk?*" Receiving no answer, Jesus said, "*But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins*" (He said unto the palsied man) "*Arise, take up thy couch, and go unto thy house.*" (RV) Immediately the man rose up, gathered up his bed, and walked out of their midst.

From that time the attitude of the rulers stiffened against Jesus. This was not the type of Messiah they wanted. Talking about sin, instead of talking against Rome was unacceptable in their eyes. Forgiving sin instead of exciting the populace to rebel was contrary to their expectations. They wanted to throw off the foreign yoke, and were waiting for a prince who would lead them to war and victory. Then his interference with priestly prerogatives was not to their taste, His action on that point was revolutionary and dangerous. If that attitude spread and infected the common folk, where would it end? The central power at Jerusalem would be broken, and their authority at an end. They did not mind revolutionary things

happening so long as they could direct the storm. But it was against Rome, not Jerusalem, that they desired the lightning to strike.

Little by little their attitude towards both Jesus and his acts of mercy became more hostile, till they determined that He was too dangerous to be allowed to live. Either He or their power must die. During this phase of their gathering hostility, Jesus became more revolutionary still in act and utterance. Openly He derided Priests, Levites, Pharisees, Scribes, and rulers of the people. He taught them what the nation's elite ought to do, and showed them how far the rulers came short. He publicly exposed the Temple authorities, and himself drove out the mercenary traffickers from the Temple courts. As time went by, the subject of his discourse changed. He spoke less of the Kingdom, and more about his sufferings and the purpose to be served thereby. When the mother of two followers desired prominent Kingdom honours for her sons, He told them they had not understood the changes under way. Did they really want to enter with him into Kingdom power—if so, could they enter into his baptism first? Could they drink also of his Cup? Blessing Peter for his confession—an understanding bestowed from Heaven—though He were the Christ—the long-expected Messiah—yet He was soon to be smitten in death and not crowned with majesty. If any man would be his disciple, let him too take up his cross, and follow him into death. (Matt. 16:24) The objectives of his teaching changed; no longer did He address himself to the nation as a whole, but to the little group, who, in spite of the official frown, still clung to him and his words. He had come, at first, to his own as a people, but they received him not. Only a “little flock” had accepted him, and even they did not fully understand. His words and actions baffled them. Of the Priesthood He said, their house was to become desolate; of Jerusalem it was to be laid in the dust; of his followers, He would covenant unto them a kingdom then He should return from heaven. It was hard for them to believe that their nation would be rejected and overthrown, while they, insignificant as they were, should be accepted to a throne.

This was the germ of the great theme which the risen Lord selected another Apostle to proclaim. After revealing himself alive to Saul on the Damascus way, the Lord sent him forth as a chosen vessel to proclaim his Name “*before...the children of Israel*” (Acts 9:15) and to suffer for his testimony. That “Name” and “testimony” denoted many things, many facets of Divine Truth. To those who could accept the testimony of the Lord it introduced them to wonderful opportunities and privileges. To those who would not accept that testimony it spoke of rejection, and of

ancient privileges withdrawn. Little by little they learned to think and speak of God's work as "Taking out a people for his Name" while the "Tabernacle of David" was to lie a while in the dust.

They learned that the church of God was to be built up into Christ as a remnant of individual believers, while the nation as a whole would stumble and fall to its doom. These things they taught wherever they went, both in public synagogues and private homes. As a consequence the ruling class, together with the Priests, became increasingly bitter and hostile to such as Paul. "*It is not fit that he should live,*" they said after hearing his defence (Acts 22:22). They would have destroyed Paul forthwith. Many thousands (Acts 21:20) sought to amalgamate the new teaching with the old, unable to see and realise that the two teachings would not blend. They could not detach themselves from the Temple and its activities so long as it remained, nor yet make a full, clean break from the services of the Priests. (see Acts 21:20, 25).

In every place where Paul found a little circle of believers and organised them into a church, this Judaising section sent their emissaries to override Paul's work and gather the fruits of Paul's missionary enterprise into their fold. They persecuted Paul and his little band of helpers everywhere, even going so far as to plot his death. (Acts 23:12-14) Paul waged his side of the conflict by voice and pen, using his clear insight into the dispensational changes, and his great intellect, to speak and write incessantly to bring home, were it possible, to his erring brethren their great mistake. They would not allow themselves to realise that God had set aside the nation as a whole, rulers and people alike, and was now taking out from their midst only such as believed in Jesus and were ready to follow in his steps. That the Mosaic system could be superseded was more than they could accept. That the Aaronic Priesthood should be terminated and the Temple service fail they could not believe.

In the peak days of this controversy Paul purposed to visit Rome. In Rome were many Jews, who, though not then hostile to Paul, had heard many things about the Christian sect. (Acts 28:22) Also, a community of Christian believers had been established there. Both these and they Paul desired to see, to tell them the good news of Christ.

Knowing the Christian community there would have the same dispensational and doctrinal difficulties as their brethren in the Asiatic churches, Paul wrote for them an outline of the Christian faith as taught by himself everywhere he went. Discussing first the great themes of Redemption and

Reconciliation, he next tells them of their privileges in Christ. He explains to them the deep things concerning baptism unto Christ, into his death, leading up to a grand climax concerning the call of many brethren, who, by Divine Power, would be conformed to the Image of God's Son.

Passing, then, to consider dispensational facts, he opens up the great theme that raised contention in every Judaizing community. Had God set aside his ancient nation? And was He now gathering only a small remnant from them? Had God decreed that if it refused Jesus the nation should fall, and only a small selected company be saved? If this were so, the Judaizers said, God was unrighteous and unfaithful to his ancient promise! In view of the great promises of bygone days God could not cast off or set aside his nation, so they said. Were they not still observing his ordinances, and maintaining his Temple in their midst? Paul meets these arguments by his parable of the Potter and the Clay, and shows that of the same lump of clay God could indeed take a portion and make it into a vessel of surpassing honour, while setting the remainder aside to be made up according to his sovereign Will some later day.

Paul's doctrine gathered up the teaching of his Master and set them out with great force. The nation was to be rejected and left desolate, while a little flock, baptised with and into his baptism, were to be made like him; and with him, and "in him," constitute God's Anointed, God's choicest vessel of all time.

To be continued
TH

Effective Preaching

ONE day, St. Francis of Assisi said to a young disciple, "Let us go out and preach today." Together they left the quiet monastery and went to a nearby town. St. Francis visited the various shops, made some purchases, spoke with an acquaintance here and there, and did several other errands. At last they returned to the monastery. The young disciple, thinking his master had forgotten the original purpose of their excursion, asked, "Sir, when do we do the preaching?" St. Francis smiled as he said, "My son, we have been preaching all morning. We have done the best kind of preaching by our very actions and conduct among our fellow men."

Are those with whom we come in contact going to listen to what we say and wonder at our discourteous conduct, our careless work? Or are they going to remember our Christ-like deeds and words? "Be thou an example of the believers."

A. C. Frey Collection
Deep Waters and a Bubbling Brook

BE COURTEOUS

(1 Pet. 3:8)

The word “courteous” originated from court-like or polished manners, relating to the courts of kings, and implied being well-bred and polite, accompanied with some degree of dignity. True courtesy, however, which involves not only politeness but genuine consideration for others, springs from kindness of heart, and no training in the courts of royalty can produce the gracious and humane spirit which is the product of the Christian faith.

In this highest and noblest meaning of courtesy, our lives should reflect the character of Jesus, who was considerate towards all whether men, women or children. Even on the few occasions when He spoke with severity, He still had in mind the highest consideration for those He reproved, and would have delivered them from themselves, had they been willing to listen to Him. Yet how we fall in this respect in thought, word and action, in our contact with each other. No wonder Peter exhorts us “Love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous.” (1 Pet. 3:8)

A quiet tone of voice and manner always accompanies courteous speaking, and we may be sure that when we get heated and tend to adopt a louder voice than usual, it is urgently necessary to put a strong check upon ourselves; we must calm ourselves and lower our voice. At once our language will become more mild and affable. We never gain anything by shouting and dogmatism, except what ends in defeating our own cause. In all our relationships and walks of life we need the meek and quiet spirit, which God can work in us to enable us to work it out in our association with others.

Sometimes good breeding demands that we should remain silent. Circumstances may arise where to speak honestly we would be obliged to say unpleasant and disagreeable things. Provided there is no moral need to speak, we shall not lose face by keeping quiet. Silence is often far more eloquent than the strongest language. It can be the best answer to a question, or the most effective reply to an unjust remark or piece of scandal. Silence rebukes the speaker by forcing him to re-consider his words, and it can be the only way of allowing the voice of God to speak directly to the heart, when human tongues have ceased.

We can show courtesy by being silent and permitting someone to talk while we listen. It takes a nobler mind and more humble heart to listen

intelligently and with sympathetic interest, than it does to talk. We can help others just by listening when we could not help them in any other way. They do not want to be talked to, they are not asking for advice, and they are not seeking instruction. They just want to unburden themselves, and by listening we can bless and uplift them without their realisation of the fact, for there are few people who are willing to forego talking and be content with listening.

The habit of interrupting others, or talking while others are talking, is both rude and discourteous, though it may not be so intended. It almost amounts to saying “You shut up and listen to me. You are saying nothing of any importance.” Some people want to do all the talking; we can never talk *with* them; we are expected to listen. This ignores the rights of others completely, and it is most inconsiderate. When we have to listen to something we do not believe, whether privately or in a meeting, let us give sympathetic attention and courteously wait our time. Then we must not rush impetuously and aggressively to challenge the speaker, nor assume an air of superiority or contempt, but be kindly and dignified even in our disapproval, trying to keep in mind that our own ideas may not be always correct.

In what sense can we be courteous in thought? We often misconstrue a word or an act by our arbitrary interpretation of it. True courtesy should lead us to put the kindest construction upon it that is possible. It is so easy to do just the opposite and view it in the worst aspect, yet how we would resent being treated in this way ourselves. We are very ready to excuse our own failings; let us exercise the same faculty for the benefit of others. “Judge nothing before the time,” (1 Cor. 4:5) but by justifying and excusing one another in our daily walk and conversation, we shall feel neither harsh nor censorious towards them, nor tempted to treat them accordingly.

As Peter joins love and pity with being courteous, we must be prepared to forgive generously. We should not make any reservation, but with the fulness and magnanimity of God, forgive one another even as God for Christ’s sake has forgiven us. He forgives and remembers no more; He casts all our sins behind His back. He blots them out and washes them away, abundantly pardoning and making us as white as snow. It is our relationship with God that is made the basis for the exhortation to exercise the spirit of magnanimous forgiveness.

Courtesy in action is usually considered to be certain forms of politeness such as deference in greeting others, holding doors open, and a

pleasant obliging manner generally. We must go beyond this, however, and be sincere in all our actions, not making extravagant professions that we do not mean, nor seeking after effect, but acting from a true heart in all honesty of purpose. We should endeavour to make our greetings something we really feel, and thus they will become a real pleasure both to ourselves and to others, and not a strained conventionality. Sincere greetings and sincere service will win and retain for us a lasting respect and love.

If we would be sincere in our service, we must serve unselfishly in the true spirit of service, and not for reward or self-seeking. It is not the highest form of service that asks beforehand “What shall I have, therefore?” It is when we do it as unto the Lord, not looking for thanks, appreciation or reward, but merely that we please God; then it is that we shall be recompensated at the resurrection of the just in overflowing measure according to God’s riches in glory. Even though we may be receiving wages for our labour, and be dependent upon them, we may still do all things as unto the Lord and not unto men. Our highest and most coveted reward is to please God.

Courtesy will render to all their dues; respect to whom respect is due, honour to whom honour. It will owe no man anything but to love. Whether to a little child, or an aged person; in public or in private; in the family, in business, in the street, in the church; we should be always kindly and considerate in our manner and in our speech. If at all times and under all circumstances we are ready to concede respect and deference to all with whom we have dealings, we ourselves shall merit and receive respect and deference from those to whom we have extended it.

How glad we shall be in that day when God’s people are revealed in glory and exaltation, that we have been able to show them true kindness and genuine consideration in their toilsome journey toward the heavenly city. With what joy shall we hear how we have helped and comforted them in their pilgrim way by our loving courtesy and thoughtful attention. What an incentive this should be in our contact with all kinds of people, to manifest the beauties of a Christ-filled heart, by the simple yet effective courtesy of a loving spirit, by which we shall be able to entertain many an angel unawares.

Forest Gate Monthly

An ounce of example far outweighs a pound of advice

Deep Waters and a Bubbling Brook

LIE STILL AND LET HIM MOULD THEE—A HYMN

“LIE still and let Him mould thee.” O Lord, I would obey;
Be Thou the skilful Potter, and I the yielding clay.

Chorus-

*Bend me, oh, bend me to Thy will,
While in Thy hand I'm lying still.*



In Thy dear hand I'm resting, Oh hold me quiet there;
Then soften me and mould me, and for Thy will prepare.

I need not fear to trust Thee, Thy love and skill are such,
New lessons Thou wilt teach me while yielding to Thy touch.

Impress Thine image on me, fulfil Thy blest design,
Till others see upon me that beauteous face of Thine.



Ada R. Habershon (1861-1918) was born in London and wrote many hymns and books. Charles Alexander of Alexander Hymns where this hymn is first recorded discovered her ability to write hymns and encouraged her to write more hymns for his mission.

She was brought up by Christian parents involved in the Plymouth Brethren who were known to Spurgeon. She worked for many years in the Ragged school in East London.

Two of her books were “Israel’s Exodus: Past and Present” and “The Study of Types.”

Here are some verses that may have inspired the writer:

Isaiah 64:8 But now, O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.

Job 10:9 Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me as the clay; and wilt thou bring me into dust again?

Jeremiah 18:2-6 Arise, and go down to the potter’s house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. Then I went down to the potter’s house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another

vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.

2 Corinthians 4:7 We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

Psalm 37:7 (NIV) Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when people succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.

Ephesians 5:17 (NKJV) Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

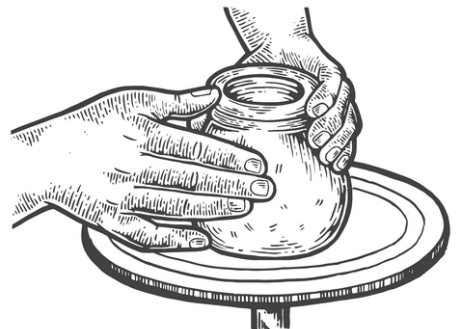
Philippians 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.

2 Corinthians 3:18 (WEB) But we all, with unveiled face seeing the glory of the Lord as in a mirror, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory.

Romans 8:29 (RSV) For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren.

Psalm 25:4-5 Shew me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths. Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day.

Romans 12:2 (NKJV) Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.



LOT'S DAUGHTERS

The incident, related in Gen. 19:30-38, whereby the two daughters of Lot became the mothers of children by their own father has been used by many a commentator and in many a homily to illustrate the depravity and corruption of that far-off day, but the strictures all too often do not take into account vital differences between that day and ours. The standards and conventions of four thousand years ago were not as those of today and some of the reasons that similar conduct is now rightly regarded as reprehensible did not then apply.

The story is set in the shadow of the catastrophic overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah. The patriarch Lot, with his two young daughters, had been saved from the holocaust and taken refuge in a cave on the high mountain which stands at the south-east corner of the Dead Sea. From their refuge, five thousand feet above the plain, they could see the devastated area below them and realised that all life had been obliterated. They had at first found shelter in the little town of Zoar some sixteen miles from Sodom but, the record tells us, they “feared to dwell in Zoar,” (v.30) perhaps because the Canaanite inhabitants were not too friendly or perhaps they feared that Zoar in its turn would be involved and destroyed; the conflagration probably went on for weeks and spread over a wide area. So they were eking out a sparse and primitive existence on this uninhabited mountain-top. It was here that the two girls, despairing of finding husbands, resorted to this desperate expedient in order to ensure posterity to their father. “*Our father is old*” said one to the other “*and there is not a man in the earth to come in unto us after the manner of all the earth.*” This need not necessarily mean that they thought all human life had been destroyed from the earth; the word for “earth” here can be limited in its meaning to the land around them and from their elevated position they could see some seventy miles to the horizon which would take in much of the land of Canaan where Abraham dwelt; they would perceive that the highlands of Judah were still green and fertile. More likely they saw no avenue of escape from their mountain fastness across the desolated plain below and felt that they were permanently cut off from the rest of the world.

The daughters justified their action by necessity, but the entire episode is better understood when it is remembered that at that early stage in the history of the race marriage was customary within much closer relationships than is considered either ethically or biologically sound now. The progressive physical degeneration which has continued from the

beginning had not sapped human vitality to the extent it has now. Men and women lived longer and were more virile. In Old Testament history we find that Abraham and Nahor his brother both married their nieces; nearly a thousand years later a possible marriage between David's son Amnon and his half-sister Tamar was considered quite proper (2 Sam. 13:10-13) although this was in fact forbidden by the Mosaic Law. Another and earlier Tamar saw nothing improper in bearing a child by her father-in-law Judah in order to maintain the family line (Gen. 38). Outside Old Testament records, it was a frequent occurrence for kings of nations to marry their own sisters with the object of keeping the line of descent in one family. Every one of the eleven Pharaohs of the famous Egyptian 18th dynasty, under some of whom the Oppression and Exodus of Israel took place, took their own sisters, daughters or half-sisters to wife, one even marrying two of his own daughters. Abhorrent as the idea might be to modern minds, therefore, it has to be admitted that Lot's daughters were not so far removed from the general thought of their times and the solution they found to their problem should be viewed accordingly.

The two children became ancestors of nations which multiplied to inhabit the territory east of the Dead Sea, the Moabites and the Ammonites. Both nations were thorns in the side of Israel in after days. One noteworthy fact is that Ruth, an ancestress of Christ, was a Moabitess. Had it not been for the action taken by the two daughters in that cave on the Canaanite mountain above the ruined cities, one of the most appealing characters in the whole of Bible history would not have lived, and the Book of Ruth would never have been written.

AOH

TRUST AND WAIT

*When I cannot understand my Father's leading
And it seems but to be hard and cruel fate,
Still I hear that gentle whisper ever pleading,
God is working, God is faithful, only wait.*

Songs of the nightingale

A SONG OF VICTORY

A meditation on Psalm 22

We read that holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. (2 Pet. 1:21) They were permitted to pass through certain experiences and then to write of them, and so leave on record certain features to attend another set of circumstances which God would provide at some future date. Thus, the experiences they went through became prophetic pictures of the experiences of someone else. Often, they picture those of Jesus, and so become Messianic prophecies. Sometimes they prefigure and illustrate the sufferings of the larger Christ—Head and Body—or perhaps to some extent the terrible experiences that the Jewish nation has passed through during the centuries. It is not always easy to make a proper distinction. The Ethiopian eunuch who was reading Isaiah 53 asked in perplexity: “Of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?” (Acts 8:34 NKJV) It was explained to him by Philip that the prophet was describing the sufferings of the One who had recently been put to death at Jerusalem. The Jews, however, to this day suppose that Isaiah 53 has reference to their own terrible history as a nation.

It is probable that the eunuch would likewise have been perplexed respecting the application of Psalm 22; was the writer describing his own experiences, or did he speak of another? The Psalm is described as a Psalm of David. Whether that be so or not, it seems quite probable that the writer began to write about himself. As he starts the Holy Spirit comes upon him, and he commences describing, with a wealth of detail, circumstances which could not possibly have happened to himself. With a poet’s imagination he writes of One who suffers intense agony of mind and body. With the skill of an artist he portrays a very vivid drama which grows more intense every moment, until it mounts to a climax and then abruptly terminates. After a pause the curtain is raised again, and a happier scene is presented. The Victim has become the Hero; the Suppliant Sufferer has given place to the Joyous Victor.

It seems quite evident that the Sufferer in the Psalm is an individual and not a nation, for verse 14 refers to his heart, bones and body, verse 15 to his tongue and jaws, verse 16 to hands and feet, and verse 18 to clothing. In verses 9 and 10 he looks back to childhood, and forward to death in verse 15. His situation is described with minuteness; he is exposed to the public view (verse 7), apparently he is fixed to one spot, for his enemies gather around him (verse 12), he is deprived of his clothing, for he can count his bones (verse 17), he sees his garments distributed (verse 18),

and he has been subjected to violence, for his feet and hands have been bored through (verse 16). Inasmuch as Rotherham translates verse 17, “they, look for—they behold me” it may well be that either he has companions in suffering from whom it would seem to the onlookers desirable to distinguish him, or else that darkness has gathered and it is difficult to discern him. He is either absolutely friendless, or his friends are so few and feeble that they do not count, hence his repeated cries for Divine pity and succour (verse 11). Nevertheless, verse 22 shows that he has friends in the background, amounting to a large assembly, but they do not come into view till the sufferings are ended. His enemies are many; humanity in general reproach him, his own people despise him, beholders deride (verses 6, 7 and 8). Meanwhile, his sufferings are intense, his strength flows away like water, and physical courage fails like wax (verses 14 and 15). He struggles to maintain faith in God, who seems to him to be far away and slow to rescue. Crying to him day and night brings no answer—the delay to help is all very mysterious. The fathers had trusted and been delivered in their adversities, He had trusted and not been delivered; indeed, verse 11 implies almost that He had been handed over to his enemies by permission of God. The sufferings grow in intensity, and his appeals for Divine aid are louder (verses 19 and 20), but the face of God seems turned away and in anguish he cries, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” (verse 1). His heart is bursting, He had never anticipated such intense mental suffering as that which these words imply. There is a last cry (verse 21): “Save me from the lion’s mouth”—then silence reigns...

There is a sudden calm; all at once the strain of sorrow ceases with the “Yea” of verse 21... “hast thou delivered me.” (Rotherham) There is no recurrence of pain, no further trace of a single sob, the voice is hushed in death, but, marvel of marvels, suddenly the voice is heard again and on a note of praise. It is the same voice—the same metre—the same direct address to God; despair has given place to praise, keenest suffering has given way to ecstatic joy, all is changed! Deliverance has come! So great is his gratitude that He must shout his deliverance abroad (verses 21 and 22). His own deliverance is a matter of the deepest interest to the world at large. He calls upon Jew and Gentile to praise Jehovah, “For He hath not despised nor abhorred the humbling of the patient One, neither hath He hid his face from him, but, when He cried for help unto him, He heard. Of thee, is my praise in the great convocation, My vows, will I pay, before them who revere him.” (verses, 24 and 25, Rotherham)

As we go through this Psalm there is in our minds one name only: *Jesus*.

Surely, it is the crucifixion of our Saviour which is here portrayed with such a depth of feeling and wealth of pathos. It could not be anyone else. We seem to hear the appealing cry: *“Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the LORD hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger.”* (Lam. 1:12) We cannot pass by, we are arrested and gaze at that sublime exhibition of sacrifice and suffering, we marvel and silently meditate upon the Mystery of Divine Love. It is much to us—nay, it is *everything* to us.

Did the Father hear when Jesus cried unto him? Yes, He heard, and showed that He heard by mercifully cutting short those sufferings and eventually raising Jesus again from the grave. Because of his trust in God, He came forth an overcomer, a hero—a conqueror.

The lesson is an inspiring one. Often God does not answer prayer for deliverance exactly the way we expect; we have to descend into the very depths first before He puts forth his power to rescue, and then aid comes in an unforeseen manner. His ways are manifold, wise and loving and just, as He rescued our Lord and Saviour from the power of death, so He can and will rescue all who put their confidence in him. *“For He hath not despised nor abhorred the humbling of the Patient One, neither hath He hid his face from him, but when He cried for help unto him, He heard.”*

What a very fitting sequel the last few verses present. Only through the Redeemer’s death—the one and only great sacrifice for sin, can mankind obtain life. There is no salvation except through Jesus, and we have the assurance that when the knowledge of God’s way of salvation is known in all the earth, then all the ends of the world will turn unto the Lord. All shall worship before him and recognise that apart from Jesus none can keep alive his own soul. Through all the coming ages the story of this great sacrifice will be told, and the exulting shout of praise to God will pass from mouth to mouth: *“He hath done it!”* (Psa. 22:31 ASV) Truly, it will then be fulfilled that Jesus shall *“see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.”* (Isa. 53:11)

EWV/CTW

Life is short, but there is always time for courtesy.

The greater the courtesy, the greater the man.

Deep Waters and a Bubbling Brook

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.*” (Num. 13:30) 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 1 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 1 Chron. 2:18-42 and 2:19, which fact has given rise to some confusion, especially since the later Caleb appears adjacent in 1 Chron. 2:48-50. This earlier Caleb, son of Judah’s grandson Hezron, (v.18) 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 Israeli 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,

* It may appear as if Hur was the son of Caleb, please see other verses quoted on this page 21

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. 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 a great stature. And there we saw the giants (Nephilim), the sons of Anak (Anakim)”* (Num. 13:31-33) 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.”* (Num. 13:30; 14:9)

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.

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. *“But 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.”* (Num. 14:31) 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 Anakim 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-barnea to spy out*

the land... and now, lo, I am this day fourscore and five years old. As yet I am as 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." (Josh. 14:7-11) 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 (gory) 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 Canaanite town of Kirjath-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 Tell 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 forever, he wanted to discover suitable successors. So, he threw out a challenge: "*he that smiteth Kirjath-sepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife.*" (Josh. 15:16) 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 negotiating 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 1 Chronicles he had three sons by his unnamed wife and four more by his concubine Maachah; the name of one grandson is recorded. (1 Chron. 2:42-55) 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, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.” (v.34) 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.

AOH

JOSHUA

When Israel's great legislator died,
 Another valiant leader God supplied,
 Who, wise in counsel, skillful in command,
 Obtained for them the long-sought Promised Land.

Poems of the Way
W.H. Pepworth

THE NEW COVENANT

Isa. 42:6-7

The New Covenant is the name given to the arrangement whereby God will reconcile to himself all who are willing, after full instruction and enlightenment, so to be reconciled. The time for the accomplishment of this purpose is the future Age when Christ reigns over the world to eliminate evil and bring the human race to that condition of unity with God which is essential before they can enter the eternal state. Since it is promised that all dedicated Christians, his Church, are to be associated with him in the life beyond it follows that they have a share with him in the administration of this Covenant.

The Bible contrasts the New Covenant with the old Law Covenant, concluded between the Lord and the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai with Moses as Mediator, and shows that it will succeed where the old Law Covenant failed. In becoming the people of the Covenant at Sinai, Israel undertook an obligation to extend the benefits of Divine rulership and law to all, “*a light to the nations, to be my salvation to the ends of the earth.*” (Isa. 49:6 ISV) They never attained that goal. The New Covenant will be made primarily with Israel to replace the old one and this time they will achieve the Divine purpose.

The first intimation of the Lord’s intentions in this respect was made known through the prophet Isaiah. Ignoring the fact that Israel was already under the Law Covenant of Moses, the Lord promised that one day He will make *an everlasting covenant, a covenant of peace*, (Isa. 54:10; 55:3; 61:8) with which He associated the extension of its blessings to all (54:3; 55:5; 61:9). Isa. 60:3-7 pictures those not of Israel willingly coming into the Covenant. Israel herself, says 42:6 and 49:8, is to be the embodiment of the Covenant, and by its means will open the blind eyes, bring out the prisoners from the prison, establish the earth, (Isa. 42:7) and in general carry out all the beneficent activities which will result in the conversion of the world and the reconciliation of man to God. The Spirit of God will be upon Israel and his words will be in her mouth, never again to depart, and the result will be that the Name of the Lord will be revered from one bound of earth to the other. (ch. 59:19-21) Isaiah thus predicted that his people were to become the custodians and administrators upon earth of an arrangement the benefits of which are to be shared by all peoples on the face of the earth.

Jeremiah and Ezekiel, a century and a half later, were inspired to amplify

this very general outline and define more clearly the work of the covenant. In Jeremiah's 31st chapter the Lord speaks of his intention eventually to restore dispersed Israel to her own land in consequence of her repentance for past waywardness. The days come, He says, "*that (when) I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah...but this shall be the covenant...I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.*" (ch. 31:31-34) This is the essence of the covenant, the impressing of Divine law in the hearts of men, and this of course is the great purpose of the Age of Christ's reign on earth. Again in ch. 32:37-41 the theme is reiterated; God will give them one heart and one way and they will be his people. The sincerity of Israel in this matter is shown by Jer. 50:5 in which the scattered nation, about to be regathered by the Lord in order to embark upon its pre-ordained mission, seeks the way back to the land so that they might be joined to the Lord in a "*perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.*" (Jer. 50:5) Ezekiel crowns the presentation by associating the making of this "everlasting covenant of peace" with the end-of-the-Age regathering of Israel, and her constitution into an agent in the Lord's hand for his future plans, as pictured in his vision of the valley of dry bones (Ezek. 37:25-28).

So far nothing has been said as to who will fulfil the role, in respect to this covenant, that Moses did in respect to the old Law Covenant which it replaces. It was left to Malachi, the last of the Hebrew prophets, to introduce him and to provide a connecting link between the Old Testament and the New Testament views of the New Covenant. "*Behold*" he says, speaking as it were on behalf of the Almighty, "*I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant.*" (Mal. 3:1) The context places the application of this prediction at the end of this Age when the Lord is about to inaugurate his Millennial reign; here is pictured the arrival of the "messenger" of the covenant to commence its work—which is shown to be one of cleansing and purification as well as restoration. This word "messenger" in the A.V. is *malak*, angel. The angel of the covenant is obviously the angel or representative of God Most High and therefore easily seen in this context to be synonymous with the Lord Jesus Christ at his Advent and his kingdom. It is not difficult to see the parallel between the coming of the angel of the Lord at this time and that passage in the Book of Job where the same messenger or angel comes down to restore men from the grave and show to them the way of uprightness. "*If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter...to shew unto man his uprightness: then He (God) is*

gracious unto him and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit (the grave): I have found a ransom.” (Job 33:23-24) This angel is also an “interpreter.” This word is *luts*, meaning in general one who can converse with those of foreign language and so act as intermediary between two persons who do not understand each other or who are at variance, for which reason it is also used in the sense of ambassador or intercessor. So, Christ comes as intercessor between God and man in respect of the operation and making of this New Covenant just as Moses was the Mediator between God and Israel in respect of the previous one.

The New Testament takes up the theme with Paul’s words in Rom. 11:26-27, where he quotes Isa. 59:20 as evidence for his argument that Israel is to be restored to Divine favour after the close of the call of the Church at the end of this present Age. The covenant is to be the outward expression of that restoration. He associates the New Covenant with the house of Israel, therefore, at the time of the removal of the national sins, which again is at the dawn of the Millennial Age. In a similar fashion the author of Hebrews, in Heb. 8:7-13, quotes Jer. 31:31-33 to indicate that the New Covenant is to be established to do for Israel what the old Law Covenant failed to do. In fact he concludes by pointing out that by promising a new covenant to effect this desired end God has made the old covenant obsolete so that it is ready to vanish away.

So far as this goes the New Covenant would appear to be purely a substitute, albeit a more effective substitute, for the old Law Covenant, and applicable only to Israel, and to others of humanity only in a secondary sense inasmuch as they embrace its principles and precepts. At this point, however, Jesus himself steps in.

During the Last Supper Jesus made a statement which so impressed those who heard it that it has been recorded in virtually the same terms in three Gospels. “*This cup,*” He said, referring to the wine which was about to be shared by the assembled disciples, “*is my blood of the New Testament (Covenant), which is shed for many for the remission of sins*” (Matt. 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20). There is some textual evidence for thinking that the word “New” should probably not appear in the text but that is of little consequence, for Jesus was obviously referring to the New Covenant. He was saying, as plainly as could be, that just as Moses sprinkled the blood of the burnt offerings associated with the Law Covenant over the people, so He himself was the corresponding offering for the New Covenant, and his blood the means of purification for the people in that day when the covenant should become effective, the day of

the remission of sins for the whole world. Again, that day is the future Millennial Age. By that one allusion Jesus extended the scope of the New Covenant to include all humanity, in the future Age.

It is important to notice at this point that although the blood of Christ—symbol of life given—is efficacious for the remission of sin of all who so choose, not all obtain that remission through the Covenant. Those during this Age, from Pentecost onward, who receive the gift of justification by faith, through faith in Christ, and so dedicate their lives to him by becoming members of his Church, have their sins remitted at the time of their accepting Christ as Saviour and Lord (Rom. 4:24-25; 5:1-2). This in many cases is centuries or even two thousand years ago whereas the New Covenant is not yet inaugurated and when it is, it is made with restored Israel. This seems to be the intent of Heb. 9:14-15 where v.14 maintains that the blood of Christ purges our conscience, that of the members of the Church, from dead works to serve the living God, whilst v.15 declares that “*through this*” (not “for this cause” as A.V.) “*he is also the mediator of the New Covenant, that by means of death for deliverance from the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.*”^{*} V.14 obviously refers to the deliverance of Christians in this Age by faith in the blood—death of Christ,—whilst v.15 equally obviously refers to the same blood—same death—being equally efficacious to those who, being of Israel, are freed from their first covenant and enter into their own “everlasting inheritance.” This last word, inheritance, Thayer defines as “that eternal blessedness in the kingdom of God which is promised,” a good definition of the effect of the New Covenant in the next Age.

This reflection leads logically to 2 Cor. 3:6 God “*hath made us able ministers of the New Testament (Covenant).*” Paul here is contrasting what he calls in v.7 “*the ministration of death, written and engraven in (on) stones*” i.e. the administration of the old Law Covenant with its record of failure, with what he describes in v.8 as “*the ministration of the Spirit*”—the administration of the coming New Covenant, something which he says is infinitely more glorious. This statement infers that Jesus, Mediator of the New Covenant as Moses was of the old one, will have his Church associated with him in the work of administering that Covenant from the heavens. The Apostle Paul, writing to the Galatians, makes the same point clear without so much as mentioning the New Covenant. He says (Gal. 4: 21-31), that the family circumstances of Abraham constitute an allegory of the two covenants preceding the as yet non-existing New Covenant, Sarah, he says, pictures the original Covenant God made with Abraham,

* Author’s own translation

which promised that through his seed all the families of the earth will be blessed. Isaac, the son of Sarah, prefigures the promised Seed of that Covenant, and Paul himself is authority for the dictum that that Seed is Christ, and not only Christ himself, but all who are his Church. “*If ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.*” (Gal. 3:29) Hagar, the second wife, prefigured the Law Covenant, and Ishmael, the son of that union, the “earthly seed,” the nation of Israel. The one is Jerusalem from above, the other Jerusalem upon earth. The Church therefore, children of the Abrahamic Covenant, become ministers of the New Covenant when that is established and in operation.

If indeed, as seems most likely, Apollos was the author of Hebrews, his familiarity with the old Levitical ritual and the Law Covenant would account for the stress laid on the “blood of Christ” in that epistle. He had already, in Heb. 7:21-22, elaborated the fact that the word of the Lord constituting Jesus a High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec made him a surety or pledge of a covenant “better” than the old one. This association of the Priest-Kingly rule of Melchisedec with the New Covenant confirms the place of that covenant in the next Age, but it also demands the appointment of our Lord to the position of Mediator at the time of the Divine decree, which was “*when he ascended up on high.*” (Eph. 4:8) That association of Melchisedec with the Covenant justifies the author of Hebrews in referring to the “blood of the covenant” even at a time so long before that covenant can come into operation. Hence in Heb. 10:29 he refers to the “blood of the covenant, wherewith he was (we are) sanctified,” in Heb. 13:20 of the “blood of the everlasting covenant” making us perfect to do his will, and in Heb. 12:24 of the “blood of sprinkling” speaking better things than that of Abel. In the first instance the disciples partook of the Cup at the Last Supper and were thereby “sanctified”—set apart for the Lord’s service—and in that have been followed in later times by all who have similarly given themselves to the Lord. That sharing of the Cup signified full and complete association, participation, with the Lord in all that He stands for and all He will do for the human race in the day of his kingdom. It may be not without significance that in the days of the old Covenant Moses sprinkled one half of the blood upon the people and poured out the other half upon the altar—the place of consecration to God.

So, at the end, all everywhere will share the blessings of the New Covenant. It was not always thus. Paul told the Ephesians (Eph. 2:12) that they, Gentile Christians, were at one time “*strangers from the covenants of*

promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.” The Abrahamic Covenant promised the development of a “Seed,” and life for all through that seed. The Law Covenant promised life for those who could keep its provisions, but that was only for Israel. The Gentiles were outside the pale, until Christ came. “*But now*” he says “*ye who sometimes were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.*” (v.13) “*Christ is [made] the end of the Law (Covenant)...to every one that believeth; the blessing of Abraham might (will) come on the Gentiles...through faith*” (Rom. 10:4; Gal. 3:14). By virtue of his office as Mediator of the New Covenant he will restore all who will, of all the sons of men, to the Divine likeness, and together with his Church, able ministers of the New Covenant, will cause them to enter that blessed state which has been prepared for them from the foundation of the world.

March / April 1981

Isaiah 42:6-7 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, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.

Isaiah 49:8 Thus saith the LORD, 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, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages.

Isaiah 54:3 For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.

Isaiah 54:10 For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee.

Isa. 55:3-5 Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people. Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the LORD thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee.

Isaiah 61:8-9 For I the LORD love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt offering; and I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the LORD hath blessed.

THE ALMIGHTY—THE ETERNAL

1. The Beginning of Time

“Whom no man hath seen, nor can see”

“I only am GOD; I existed before Time itself.” (Isa. 43:12-13 Ferrar Fenton translation)

The eternity of God is beyond human comprehension. We are finite creatures; our minds can only conceive objects existing within space and events taking place within a span of time marked by a beginning and an ending. We can accept the idea of endless life by visualising the continuance of the present into future time without interruption or change for ever; it is not possible to project our minds back into past time and comprehend the idea of a no-beginning. Somewhere back in the distant recesses, our finite thoughts tell us, there must have been a start. But although this is certainly true so far as created things visible and invisible are concerned, God tells us it is not true as respects himself. God has always existed, truly eternal. With him there is no beginning.

Until God began to create, there was no such thing as space and there was no such thing as time. Space is the medium in which objects exist and time that in which events take place. Space can be defined as the distance between any two objects; until God created objects there was no space. Similarly time can be defined as the duration between any two events; until God caused events to happen there was no such thing as time. The ancient Greeks evidently saw something of this, for Plato writes *“Time and the heavens came into being at the same instant, in order that, if they were ever to dissolve, they might be dissolved together. Such was the mind and thought of God in the creation of time.”* The work of Einstein, and of others who have followed him, difficult of comprehension by ordinary people as it is, goes to show that Plato was thinking on right lines. Time and space had a beginning. God, who exists eternally before that beginning, is the Creator of Space and Time. That is exactly what He tells us himself. *“I am God. Yea, before the day was I am he...”* (Isa. 43:12-13) or as Fenton translates it *“I only am GOD. I existed before time itself.”* In Isa. 57:15 He declares himself *“the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity”*; perhaps that expression is the only really satisfactory definition of the existence of God before creation. The writer of the 90th Psalm attempted to convey his own understanding in his own words *“Even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God”* (Psa. 90:2) but that is a relatively feeble restatement of the conception given to man through the agency of Moses; *“say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.”* (Exodus 3:14) So many attempts have been made to express that

word, *I AM*, into comprehensible English. The One being, the Ever-living, Eternal, the Self-existing; each conveys part of the meaning but none express it accurately. There is no word in the English language to describe a state of existence which is infinite in duration and scope, independent of all else, omnipresent and omnipotent. Isaiah has to come to our rescue in simple words of one or two syllables. “*I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.*” (Isa. 44:6) “*I am he; before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I...I...the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour.*” (Isa. 43:10-11) “*I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me.*” (Isa. 46:9) This expression “I am” or “I am he” recurs again and again to designate the one eternal God who is from infinity to infinity, from the time of no-beginning to that of no-ending, whose power is limitless and all-embracing. The New Testament catches up the theme and repeats it to Christian believers in this present Age “*I am Alpha and Omega*” (the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, as though we were to say A and Z) “*the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.*” (Rev. 1:8) Present, past and future, God is always there.

So, before the beginning, God was alone. Before man trod the face of the earth, before this planet and all the starry Universe had come into existence. Before the angels were created or the world in which they move. Back in the emptiness and the darkness of infinity, there was God, planning for the future, devising the details of that creation which He purposed within himself to bring into being.

The beginning of all things is marked by the distinction between God manifest in his Word for the progress of creative activity and God the Eternal, the Omnipotent. “*In the beginning was the Word*” says John at the opening of his Gospel “*and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. This same was in the beginning with God.*” (John 1:1-2) The English term “Word” is used to translate the Greek “*Logos*” which has a two-fold sense, that of speaking and that of thinking or reasoning. Hence it involves the conceptions of thinking, reasoning, meditating, calculating, planning—the mental faculties generally. That something more is involved than the operation of the Divine mind reaching out and pervading all things becomes obvious when later on John tells us that this same Word “*was made (became) flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*” (John 1:14) The Word has an objective existence in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, come to earth to manifest his Father in the sight of men in a manner heretofore thought impossible, for men knew that the

Eternal is fundamentally uncomprehended by human senses, “*dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen nor can see.*” (1 Tim. 6:16) John explained the wonder. “*No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared*” (revealed or manifested) “*him.*” (John 1:18) We can regard the “beginning” at which the Word was “with God” as that point of time, in very truth the beginning of all things, when God made provision for the manifesting and the revealing of himself to the creation which He was about to commence, when the Word became an active agent whereby the designs of the Eternal were to be put into effect. That active agent is the “only begotten Son.”

There must be something very real in this relationship of Father and Son, even though we realise that we are dealing here with a Divine mystery of which the earthly figure is but a feeble illustration. We are told, in what is perhaps the most famous verse in the Bible, that “*God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.*” (John 3:16) In a memorable passage St. Paul referred to God as “*He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all...*” (Rom. 8:32) These cannot be figures of speech. The matter dealt with is too serious to be defined in other than concrete terms. The Eternal really did give One who had been with him from the beginning of creation, yea, and since his ascension on high is with him still and eternally. The “Word of God” really did walk the earth among men, yielded his spirit into the hands of the Father when upon the Cross, rose again in the power of an endless life, and is with the Father, lord over all created things. We have to hold and believe all that is in harmony with what we know of the oneness and eternity of God.

The Book of Proverbs helps here. This is the book which enshrines a great deal of what is called the “Wisdom” literature of Israel. In Old Testament days, an equivalent term to the “Word of God” was the expression “the Wisdom of God.” Divine Wisdom was held to be the agent of all God’s work in creation, and “Wisdom” was personified in the same manner as the “Word” in New Testament days and in John’s Gospel. Nine chapters of the Book of Proverbs are devoted to the words of the “Wisdom of God,” transmitting his counsel to men upon earth. Embedded in these nine chapters there is what amounts almost to an autobiography of the Word of God, a personal explanation or definition of his relationship both to the Father and to the world in which we live. It is as if God knew how difficult it would be for men to understand how the Word, the Son, could be one with the Father yet distinct inasmuch as his relation to man is concerned. So Wisdom, the Word, speaks, saying (in Prov. 8:22-23 KJV/

ASV) *“the LORD possessed (acquired) me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up (anointed) from everlasting...before the earth was...”* The word translated “possessed” is *qanah* which means to get, to buy, to purchase, to obtain, and it carries the definite meaning of becoming the possessor of something not previously possessed. Now this is said to have become true at the “beginning” of God’s “way”—a word meaning a road or trodden path leading to a definite goal—and this at once brings us into the realm of history, of events, occurring within time. God himself had no beginning; the “beginning of his way” must refer to the point at which He began to put into operation his creative power to cause events to happen in the sequence He had already ordained. The investment of his Wisdom, his Word, with attributes of personality, as implied in this chapter, was evidently prior to any work of creation, for “Wisdom” goes on to say *“When there were no depths, I was brought forth...before the mountains...before the hills was I brought forth; while as yet he had not made the earth... When he prepared the heavens, I was there; when he set a compass upon the face of the depth...then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him.”* (Prov. 8:24-30) All this language should be understood as describing the investiture of the Word with personality without doing any violence to that Divine Oneness which Jesus always claimed continually subsisted between himself and his Father, a unity which was in Jesus’ mind when he said *“I and my Father are one.”* (John 10:30)

Furthermore, this association of personality with the Word marks the dividing point between the eternity in which God dwelt without creation and the time span during which his creative power brings into existence the creation comprehended in time and space as we understand those terms. Proverbs 8 describes an exercise of the Divine Will resulting in the concentration of God’s mind and plan in respect to all creation in One who could thenceforth stand up and say with full authority *“The Lord acquired me at the commencement of his developing purpose before any of his most ancient works; I was anointed to this from eternity.”* That is more of a paraphrase than a scholarly translation but it conveys the meaning of the passage in modern English idiom related to what is known of the nature of God. Theologians have wrestled with this basic truth of the Christian faith in the effort to make the mystery intelligible but this treatise is neither qualified to pronounce upon their arguments nor satisfied that they really succeed in what they set out to do. Nothing can match for clarity and simplicity the plain Biblical definition *“the only begotten Son of God.”* And the clearest and most satisfactory manner in which we can view God in his manifestation toward us is to visualise One

who became the embodiment of the Divine Word back there when God was about to commence creation, was thenceforth the Father's companion and agent for the execution of his work, as a beloved Son, in the fulness of time was found in fashion as a man for the suffering of death, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father, Lord of all creation.

It is significant that the Son is said to be in the image of the Father. He "*is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation*" says St. Paul in Col. 1:15 (RV). "*The brightness (effulgence) of his glory, and the express image of his person*" is the way Hebrews 1:3 puts it. It was only when the Word was invested with attributes of personality that he could be spoken of as the image of God. Not an image by creation as was Adam, who also was made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27) but an image by reason of sonship—the only begotten Son of God.

So the Father entered into communion with the Son as with a companion, but to guard against thinking of the Son in the manner we think of created beings, who also derive life from God, the Son claims for himself those prerogatives which elsewhere in the Scriptures are attributes of God. "*Before Abraham was, I am*" He said to the people (John 8:58) and they, remembering that God is declared to be the "I am" took up stones to stone him "*because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.*" (John 10:33) "If ye believe not that *I am he*, ye shall die in your sins" he told them. (John 8:24) The claim to be the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the first and last, attributed to the Father both in Isaiah and Revelation, is also accredited to the Son in Rev. 1:11; 2:8, and 22:13. There can be no doubt about this. "These things saith the first and the last, *which was dead, and is alive*" (Rev. 2:8), God the Father does not die, cannot die; but the Son did die, and the mighty power of the Father was exercised to raise him out of death and set him at his own right hand. (Eph. 1:19-20) So that when we have explored all that can be explored and said all that can be said we can apprehend no more than is conveyed in the simple Scriptural statement that God the Eternal comprehended his Word, his Purpose, his Power in the only begotten Son, who henceforth became the Father's right hand in all creative work, the manifestation and revelation of the Father to all created beings. The institution of that condition of things was the first event ever to happen and therefore the beginning of time.

AOH

Virtue is like a precious stone, best when plainly set.

Deep Waters and a Bubbling Brook

THE GOLDEN FUTURE

Part 7 THE CHOICE

So will the centuries pass, whilst the earth grows ever fairer and more beautiful and mankind attains to a better and more complete understanding of the message of Jesus Christ and the goodness of God. The days of evil will slip away into the background—never forgotten, always remaining an imperishable recollection of the terrible consequences of sin but no longer with the power to hurt or destroy. The song of the angels, “Peace on earth—goodwill among men,” will be an accomplished fact at last. Human beings will be fair of form and virile in body; magnificent examples of the creative power of God; and with the consciousness of that eternity of supremely happy life which is before them will rise at every dawn to pursue with unflurried minds the occupations and pursuits to which they have set themselves. The world’s work will go on—men will till the soil and reap the fruits of their labour; they will gather together for the study and practice of arts and sciences which will always have something new to reveal; they will travel and rejoice in the varied glories of nature and live their lives in absolute peace and harmony with each other and with God.

One thing remains yet unfinished. The glories of this restored earthly creation will be so stupendous and so completely satisfying to the natural man that it is well-nigh impossible to imagine a discordant note—and yet the Divine standard of righteousness must ever remain established with its uncompromising law. “The wages of sin is death.” To those who have accepted Christ Jesus and in the light and power of that acceptance have progressed to full perfection—morally as well as mentally and physically—the prospect of everlasting life under Edenic conditions stretches out enchantingly into the illimitable future. But what of those—if such there be—who, despite all the opportunities and blessings which will have been so abundantly conferred upon them, despite all the illumination and instruction in the essential laws and principles of Divine creation and government which they have received, despite the fact that the power of Almighty God has been exerted to its uttermost to bring about in them a change of heart, still inwardly reject the Divine standards? Whilst outwardly conforming to the laws of the Kingdom, they are at heart allied with sin, and remain unrepentant. That there is a possibility of some such characters being met within that Kingdom is plainly indicated in the Scriptures.

To the normal man or woman, conscious of ordinarily decent instincts and

principles, the condition of an utterly degraded and brutalised human being is hard to comprehend. History does record cases of monsters in human guise, men and women whose cruelty or callousness have made them notorious through the ages, yet even in these there were sometimes revealed quite unexpected streaks of better principles which indicate that they were not hopelessly degraded, and not beyond the hope of redemption or outside the reach of Divine power. There is therefore a reasonable basis for belief that the processes of the Kingdom will reclaim many such and bring them into full reconciliation with God and His righteousness. But as to those whose entire moral and intellectual nature is willingly and wilfully given over to the reception and practice of evil, and who after the abundant and all-sufficient administration of the future Age remain incorrigibly set in their allegiance to evil for evil's sake, knowing full well the Divine alternatives; for them the Divine law will operate with the clear-cut precision of all God's ways. Rom. 6:23 says "The wages of sin is—death!"

Therefore, before the time comes that Christ's reign closes, the final blow will fall upon the dominion of sin and all who have not accepted the way of salvation which is offered by God through Christ. The choice will come to them as it did to Israel in the days of Joshua, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve," (Josh. 24:15) and as the shades of eternal night close round those who are determined to continue in the practice of evil in full face of the goodness of God, the last enemy will flee from the earth to return no more. Words spoken three-and-a-half millenniums previously will at last have their fulfilment, "It shall come to pass, [in that day] that at evening time it shall be light." (Zech. 14:7)

None will be coerced into everlasting life. None who despise the Divine gift of life will be compelled to accept it and live on into all eternity tortured by an existence which they resent and an environment into which they will not fit. The Lord who gave is also the Lord who will take away if the gift of life, joy and happiness is not esteemed or desired. No shadow of injustice or even hardship is inflicted upon one who, called into being by the will and power of the Universal Creator, and finding this creation, its laws and its principles, its obligations and its responsibilities, so distasteful that he will not voluntarily assume his rightful position as a citizen of creation, loses the life of which he cannot make rightful use. The Divine power that gave him life and existence withdraws that life, and existence ceases as though he had never been.

To those who realise, on the other hand, that true religion after reconcilia-

NOTICES

Bible Students Seminar Day

Saturday 8 February 2025

Crick Village Hall, Bucknills Lane, Crick, Nr. Rugby NN6 7SX

For those who wish to keep the memorial of our Lord’s death at the time nearest the anniversary, it is suggested that this year **Friday 11 April 2025 (14 Nisan) after 6 p.m.** is the appropriate date and time.

Bible Students Fellowship Conference 2025

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Gone from us

Erica Waters (Blaby)

tion through acceptance of Christ, consists in whole-hearted acceptance of all God's gifts and the voluntary sharing, with every fellow-creature of the resources, products, labours and responsibilities of the everlasting earth, and who willingly play their part in this final realisation of the Divine Plan of the ages, there stretches out an eternity of supreme happiness. Every human being will be fully mature, and old age will never come. The Divine intention to fill the earth having been achieved, the increase of the race will naturally cease, and all humanity rejoicing in full maturity and the zenith of health and strength will in the knowledge of undying vigour occupy their places in this new eternal world. The ideal companionship ordained to all eternity by One Who first said, "It is not good for man to be alone" (Gen. 2:18 DRA), will come into its heritage as a greater and in every respect more glorious fulfilment of the first eloquent picture in the Bible—that of the human pair together in the garden, all in all to each other and with no shadow of sin to mar their happiness.

This is our hope! This is the prospect seen in vision by seers of Old Testament days, depicted in miniature by the miracles of Jesus Christ, deepened and clarified by the theology and the teaching of the twelve apostles. For two thousand years have Christian people prayed "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, *on earth* as it is in heaven." (Matt. 6:10 RSV) Here is the fulfilment. Here is that for which holy men of old endured fire and water, imprisonment and persecution, holding on in certainty "as seeing Him Who is invisible." (Heb. 11:27) In that glorious day when humanity at last understands why God has permitted this dark day of evil, one rapturous strain will ascend to the heaven of heavens and roll in resounding crescendo through the everlasting years,

*"Even so, Lord God Almighty,
True and righteous are Thy judgments."* (Rev. 16:7)

O SOUL OF MINE!

O SOUL of mine, be calm, be still,
Submit thyself to God,
In all thy ways yield to His will,
Nor faint beneath the rod.

O soul of mine, like potter's clay
Within the Master' hand,

O let Him mould thee day by day,
Till faultless thou shalt stand.

O soul of mine, have faith, believe,
Nor count the cost of strife,
Fight on, faint not, thou shalt receive
At last the Crown of Life!

Poems of Dawn, G.W. Seibert