

The Golden
Future

"Our Hope for years to come"

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DOES GOD CARE?

THE Author of all creation is actively planning for the happiness of mankind. Man from his limited viewpoint sees only the dark shadows of life, and even though he usually endeavours to make the best of an unsatisfactory situation, he cannot be happy while disease, disaster and death wait at every turn to claim the unsuspecting victim. Until God speaks, no man knows of the magnificent scope of his glorious destiny, reaching beyond the power of death and evil and stretching into the illimitable reaches of eternity.

But God cannot speak until man enquires. He who implanted free will and the power to choose in the human heart forever respects that liberty of choice. Even though the immutable laws of creation decree that willing and wilful continuance in evil can only end in eternal death, the wisdom of God waits while man learns for himself, and learning, makes voluntary choice of his destiny.

God's voice echoes along the corridors of time, sweeping through the long ages of history, passing over the rise and fall of great civilisations, traversing times of darkest ignorance and seasons of human enlightenment, until at last it reaches men in this twentieth century. What has God to say? What is there in the words of the Infinite to which man can listen, and listening, find at last a key to the riddle of existence.

The voice of God has two mediums of expression—the Bible on the one hand, supreme in the sphere of ethics, and on the other hand Nature, now rapidly yielding her secrets to the scientist and investigator. The history and prophecy, poetry and philosophy of the Bible presents a conception of the Divine purpose

in creation which is to-day confirmed in ever increasing degree by the results of scientific research and discovery. The combined testimony of these two witnesses declares and reiterates one eternal truth. God DOES care, and the pages of the Book clearly reveal that salient fact.

To reconcile the existence of evil, and the chaotic condition of the world to-day with faith in the reality of God is sometimes very difficult. Some who cannot effect this reconciliation have turned to agnosticism or atheism, demanding a satisfactory explanation of the paradox before they can honestly acknowledge the sovereignty of an omnipotent Creator. But from whence shall such an explanation come? Traditional theology has in its composition too many relics of paganism and insufficient insight into the nature of Divine Law to afford reliable guidance. A system of belief which grew up in the Dark Ages of human ignorance and superstition has too many accretions born of those ages fitly to reflect the Word of God in this more enlightened day. Hence it becomes necessary to look at the Divine revelation in the Bible from a new standpoint and to seek an exposition of the Creator's plans which will commend itself to men and women of this generation.

GOD DOES CARE. The evidence is to be seen in Nature all around; in the wonderful adaptability of natural resources for human life and happiness; in the immense possibilities which are within the grasp of man. It is written on the pages of history, telling of events which move irresistibly toward the marvellous climax which is the consummation of God's purpose. It is revealed in the words of God concerning that part of His Plan which, when it goes into effect, will cause sin to be no more and evil to flee away, and man to learn, and well learn, the lessons of this dark period of sin and death.

The story in Genesis reveals God's care. Man, a new creation, endowed with qualities of heart and mind which made him a mental and moral image and likeness of God, placed in a perfect environment and with every possibility within himself for continued progress in the control and use of earth's resources. A remarkable story indeed, but one that took a tragic turn when man fell into sin and so death passed upon all men. **Yet God's care did not cease.** Throughout the long story of human frailty and wickedness His controlling hand has been manifest, diverting the course of events when evil appeared likely to sink men into irremediable degradation. Two outstanding events of this nature are recorded in the Old Testament, one being at the time of the Deluge when " every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually" and the other at the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah—two cities which had become sinks of iniquity. God's care for those people was manifest in that He took them away in mercy before they sank into hopeless and irrecoverable wickedness, knowing as He did that the provisions of His plan **would, in a future day, enable those same people to rise out of the depths and come into harmony with righteousness and with God.** That was why he said of the Sodomites, "I took them away as I saw good." (Ezek. 16: 50.)

God's care is evidenced in the preservation of the Bible—a record which has been the inspiration of millions in all ages of the world's history. Men have endeavoured by every means known to human ingenuity to exterminate it, but still the Book lives, in veritable truth a beacon in the darkness of this world's night.

God's care rings with the vibrant words of John 3: 16, "For **God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth**

in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Those words, echoing and re-echoing in the world for century after century never lose their sheer beauty and impassioned appeal. Jesus Christ, the Divine ambassador who came to earth two thousand years ago to proclaim abroad the message of salvation, is the greatest evidence of the love of God men have ever known.

The rest of the story has not yet been told. We are only too familiar with the sad tale of sin, suffering and death. The cry of those who are the victims of violence goes up to heaven, and throughout the earth crime and injustice remain unpunished. Nevertheless the plan of God is moving steadily on into that brighter day when righteousness will be enthroned and evil restrained; when multitudes of humanity will come with gladness and enthusiasm to the feet of the Saviour; and when the dead, returning from graves in which they have lain maybe for centuries, will find themselves upon an earth restored and made new and in which nothing that " defileth or maketh a lie " (Rev. 21: 27) will ever be again.

“Close your *eyes* for a moment to the scenes of misery and woe, degradation and sorrow that yet prevail on account of sin, and picture before your mental vision the glory of the perfect earth. Not a stain of sin mars the harmony and peace of a perfect society; not a bitter thought, not an unkind look or word; love, welling up from every heart, meets a kindred response in every other heart, and benevolence marks every act. There sickness shall be no more; not an ache nor a pain, nor any evidence of decay—not even the fear of such things. Think of all the pictures of comparative health and beauty of human form and feature that you have ever seen, and know that perfect humanity will be

of still surpassing loveliness. The inward purity and mental and moral perfection will stamp and glorify every radiant countenance, and benevolence will mark every act. Such will earth's society be."

Those words were written over fifty years ago. To-day their fulfilment is rapidly approaching. Is it too good to be true? There is Divine authority for its certainty. " For as truly as I live," saith God, " the whole earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." (Num. 14: 21.)

"And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God;

We have waited for Him, and He will save us.

This is the Lord;

We have waited for Him,

We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation."

(Isa. 25: 19.)

Because, after all,

GOD DOES CARE.

CHAPTER II

INTO THE DARKNESS

CIVILISATION has come to the cross roads. The cataclysm of 1914 unleashed characteristics in human nature which men fondly imagined had been repressed for ever. Honesty in business, courtesy in politics, and morality in social life, all have suffered degeneration in the last few decades— and the edifice of social ethics built up by the peoples of Western Europe and North America during three centuries is shaken and riven to its foundations. The nations which achieved greatness on the basis of an

open Bible, religious toleration, and the emergence of true democratic principles of government, are now sliding into the abyss just as truly as they are rejecting those same foundations of their past standing. Europe's statesmen are at their wits end; every conference becomes abortive and every agreement a scrap of paper, and with each successive endeavour to stay the headlong descent it becomes more apparent that the existing social order is doomed. Truly, as predicted by Jesus two thousand years ago, there is today "Upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity . . . men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming upon the earth." (Luke 21: 25.)

The catastrophe is inevitable. There can be no other ending. Despite the pious hopes of the last few generations and the belief of many that civilisation never stood on a higher level, the whole foundation upon which human society has existed from the dawn of history has made such a climax certain. The world is built on selfishness. Sin and injustice are allowed to flourish measurably unchecked, and the constant endeavour of men to acquire power and possession at the expense of fellow-men has resulted in a condition upon earth aptly pictured in the oft-quoted saying:

"Man's *inhumanity to man*
Makes countless thousands mourn."

In the beginning the human race was endowed with full mental, moral and physical perfection. The story in Genesis is plain in its teaching. Our first parents were adapted to a material environment which could be made to afford them everything desirable for the necessities and amenities of human life. The Divine commission was to "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish (fill) the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the

sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." (Gen. 1: 28.) Man was intended to be the lord of this earthly creation, making use of all its products for his own pleasure and satisfaction, and living his life in perfect harmony with his Creator and with his fellows. That is why man would have lived eternally in this sublime condition had he not deliberately and wilfully transgressed the Divine laws of creation and plunged himself and all his descendants into sin— and all the disease, suffering and death which sin entails.

Consequently to-day, although man has attained an almost complete mastery over the forces of Nature; although he can at the touch of a switch converse with his neighbour halfway round the earth or view in his sitting-room scenes which are at that moment being enacted a half hundred miles away; although he can set upon his table the fruits and products of lands in another hemisphere and be carried in comfort to those same lands at a hundred miles an hour; although he has thus conquered outward forces and subdued the earth, he has not yet learned how to subdue himself. The canker of sin and selfishness in the heart vitiates those wonderful possibilities which are latent in human powers, and renders him impotent to achieve the one thing every man at heart really desires—everlasting life under conditions of ideal happiness.

Now mankind awaits the greatest cataclysm of all. The imminent collapse of the world economic system is foreseen by many. The complex nature of this vast structure built upon wrong principles has at length reached the point where all the endeavours of its sponsors are insufficient to avert irretrievable ruin. As the writer to the Hebrews so truly says in another connection: " That which decayeth and waxeth old

is ready to vanish away " (Heb. 8: 13), and to-day the world waits with bated breath for that final catastrophe which spells the ultimate and utter failure of man's attempt to govern the world—without God. It is then that God will reach down from Heaven to save. He who has, for long ages, led men through a dark and devious way that they may learn well the laws which must govern their future well-being, will listen to that cry which will ascend from a stricken race. It is then that Peter's confident prophecy uttered on the Day of Pentecost to the wondering crowds in Jerusalem will have its glorious fulfilment.

"He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you; whom the heaven must receive until the Times of Restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began." (Acts 3: 21.)

For it is in the promised coming of Jesus Christ to restore order out of confusion that men will, at last, see the light.

CHAPTER III

WHITHER MAN?

THERE is an old story in English history which tells of the conversion of Edwin, king of Northumbria, by Bishop Paulinus in the year A.D. 627. The old pagan, surrounded by his thanes, gave respectful attention to the Christian missionary, and at the conclusion of his words looked around the circle and asked each one present to say what he thought of this new teaching. Spake one old warrior: "The life of man, O king, is like the swift flight of

a sparrow through the room wherein we sit at supper in winter, with your counsellors and ministers, and a good fire in the midst, whilst the rain and the snow prevails without. The sparrow flies in at one door, and out at the other, and vanishes out of our sight into the dark winter from which he had emerged. So is this life of man, appearing to us for a short time; but of what went before, or of what is to follow, we are utterly ignorant. If this new teaching has something more certain to tell us, it deserves to receive our closest attention."

This story expresses the attitude of mankind through the ages. Shakespeare's "bourne from which no traveller e'er returns" is for many people a land shrouded in mystery, and the purpose of life and the intention of God in creation an insoluble enigma.

Why is this? Largely because of inaccurate beliefs respecting the teaching of Christ and the message of the Bible. A vaguely defined Heaven, a dreadful Hell, and the awful prospect of the "Day of Judgment" has coloured religious thought with a sombre hue which is not easily brightened. Yet to the thoughtful and reflective, the Bible can speak to-day with a clarity never known before and convey a hope for all humanity which is founded upon logical and understandable principles.

There is a basic law governing all God's creation. That law declares that only righteousness can persist for all time; evil, although intruding and permitted for a season, must eventually bring about its own end. The whole of creation will ultimately continue to all eternity without the existence of evil in any form. Any other conclusion is wholly irreconcilable with the character of the Creator.

An equally important principle is that God, in bringing into existence a material creation, the earth, did so for the deliberate purpose of providing a suit-

able environment for a race of beings of a new order —mankind. Spiritual beings, inhabitants of the spiritual realm, had existed for countless ages before this earth came into existence, but with the ending of those long epochs during which the primitive globe gradually cooled and became capable of supporting living creatures, God created something entirely new —MAN, made in the mental and moral image and likeness of God, adapted in every way to this earth and its resources, and—this is most important—intended to live for ever upon this earth under conditions of perfection.

Man was never intended to become an angel. The spiritual and earthly worlds are separate and distinct, and will always remain so. It is true that in the development of the Divine Plan a certain company of human beings—the "Church of Christ," His disciples of this Age—are invited to a "High Calling " which results in their transformation from earthly nature to spiritual nature (1. Cor. 15:46-52), but apart from this exception, which is a subject demanding separate and detailed consideration, God's purpose for mankind is an earthly one—eternal life in an environment for which they are by every law of nature best fitted. The symbolic golden harps and trumpets, jewelled mansions and white robes of the New Jerusalem are to be interpreted as allegorising the immensely varied interests and occupations, the arts and sciences, of that perfect state of human society dwelling in shadowless happiness amidst the green fields and sparkling streams of an earthly Paradise.

One grim spectre bars the way. Evil, the dread influence which is the cause of all sin and death, must never enter that fair land. Those who are vouchsafed entrance to this wonderful inheritance must themselves be perfect, upright, in fullest accord

with the righteous laws of all creation and able to take their place as citizens of earth through the eternal ages. And man is not fit. Every member of the race is fallen below normal, under the influence and power of some one or other of the many manifestations of evil or held in the grip of sin. Before mankind can enter the Promised Land there must be a great cleansing.

No external purification this. No mere adherence to some code of rules which defines, in human language, the Law of God. It is not sufficient to profess a renunciation of sin and only casually and formally accept the name of Jesus Christ. These things are laudable in themselves but they do not penetrate deeply enough. The men and women who will compose that sinless society of the future will retain their uprightness before God by reason of an intelligent understanding of the principles which underlie God's decree that righteousness must be universal; and a voluntary acceptance of the conditions of life as laid down by their Heavenly Father. Man will be brought to view with dispassionate eyes the nature and effects of evil upon the one hand and the nature and effects of good upon the other, and then make a deliberate choice. The present life is an object lesson in the former, for all humanity has a very practical and first-hand experience with sin and evil. There will be a time, though, when all men will enjoy an equally practical experience with the effects of righteousness. Since many of the earth's past inhabitants now sleep in death, there must be a great awakening from the grave, that all who have ever lived may take up their position in this further development of the Divine Plan.

That future experience of righteousness will need a benevolent and all-powerful administration. Benevolent, because the whole object of that period

is for the ultimate happiness of men. All-powerful, because it is essential that the influence and machinations of evilly-minded men shall not impose restraint or bondage upon those who are endeavouring to learn the laws of the Kingdom. The practice of evil will therefore be forcibly restrained, and a theocracy of righteousness instituted, whilst mankind, as yet in a childhood stage, are progressing in an education which is to bring them eventually to the cross-roads of decision.

For that decision has to be made. God will coerce no man's will; and although it is true that during this age and this lifetime no man has any option but to be born and live as best he can under the domination of evil; and equally true that in the next age he will live his life under the dominion of truth and equity; yet at the end of that era there is a time when all restraining influence is removed and to every man upon earth comes the solemn adjuration " Choose ye this day whom ye will serve." The Messianic reign of Christ comes to an end when He steps aside and allows every man and woman, fully informed as to the relative consequence of evil and righteousness, and fully able to choose the one or the other without let or hindrance, to make the momentous choice.

That choice is momentous because by that day not one living soul will be ignorant of the basic principle of creation—the consequence of sin, eternal death; and that of righteousness, life in perpetuity. And when it has been made, the immutable laws of God will bring to an irrevocable end the presence of evil in His fair universe.

There is no man who can be entrusted with the oversight of that righteous administration of the Messianic Kingdom,—no statesman or politician, no writer or philosopher, no scientist or organiser, who

could possibly be given all power in heaven and earth for the reclamation of the human race from degradation and their advancement to perfection. That is why Jesus Christ is to be earth's new King, to rule in righteousness and equity. That is why the Bible speaks of the world as rejoicing at His coming to inaugurate this epoch of universal instruction in righteousness which shall be for the salvation of "whosoever will."

That is why, without any possibility of doubt,

JESUS CHRIST MUST COME AGAIN.

CHAPTER IV

CHRIST—A KING!

THE greatest event of history since the Crucifixion is the coming again of Jesus Christ to complete the work He commenced two thousand years ago. From Pentecost onward the Christian Church has hoped and prayed for that day when the Lord will return to fulfil the promise He gave to His first disciples. The imminence of His return has been proclaimed and prophesied to almost every generation since that time, but the fact that so many lurid happenings have been associated with that coming has, in this matter-of-fact day, thrown the age-old expectation into disrepute. The frequent attempt of well-meaning Christians to fix upon a definite day for the visible appearance of Jesus in the clouds of heaven; and the equally frequent failure of these predictions, has disinclined a great many from paying any attention to such an apparently visionary subject.

It is certainly true that many Christians still expect the coming of Christ to be accompanied by terrific convulsions in Nature—rending rocks and falling mountains, hosts of trembling sinners brought up

from the grave to hear their sins rehearsed and be condemned to everlasting punishment, a few saintly ones caught away to heavenly glory and the world and all that it contains burned up. All this is an inheritance from the crude religion of medieval times and it dies hard. But die it must and die it will. The vivid symbols of scripture were never intended to be interpreted in any such wildly; literal sense, and such beliefs are born, not of the reasoned teaching of Jesus, but of the dark and terrifying mythologies of paganism.

The return of Christ is to be a time of universal rejoicing. He comes to inaugurate a reign of righteousness over the earth which has as its object no less an end than the extermination of evil. The time of His return is marked by the downfall of those man-made institutions and systems which are founded upon unrighteousness. His lightnings which enlighten the earth (Psa. 97: 4) reveal the inherent rights and privileges of every man and hence His return is the signal for a great clamour upon behalf of liberty. The kingdoms and governments of this present order of things will crumble and vanish away, the " hills melting like wax at the presence of the Lord " and the " mountains being cast into the midst of the sea " (Psa. 97: 5, and 46: 2), and amidst the strife and confusion of this great Time of Trouble upon the nations (Matt 24: 21—Dan. 12: 1) there will ring out, clear and commandingly, the voice of One having authority: "Peace, be still." And just as it was in that day when those words were first uttered during the storm on the Galilean lake, there will be a great calm.

The return of Jesus to this earth, and His revelation to all men, therefore, is definitely an event to be expected. Our knowledge of the spiritual world makes it no longer necessary to insist that He

must be seen with the physical eyesight, descending from the upper atmosphere, before the fact of His coming can be accepted, for the Lord's own words to Nicodemus make it clear that a spiritual being comes and goes " as the wind " and is not discerned as such by the natural sight. It is evident also that after dwelling among men in the days of His First Advent and propounding that teaching which will eventually save the world, He returned to His Father's throne to wait whilst that teaching had its effect. The world at the First Advent was not ready for the full revelation of all that the principles of Christianity can and will yet do for man; it was ready only for the germ of Christ's teaching, and it is that germ which for two thousand years has worked in the hearts of a relatively small proportion of earth's millions whilst the remainder have held to the laws of evil and reaped their bitter harvest.

Christ returns to establish a new order of society the spiritual administration of which will be in the hands of those who during the past two thousand years—the " Christian Age "—have come into heart-harmony with His teachings and by reason of a consecrated devotion to His message and service are thoroughly trained in every aspect of Divine Law. These faithful followers of Jesus Christ—called variously in Scripture the "Church," the "Bride of Christ," the "Little Flock," are those to whom the educational and uplift work of the next Age can be safely entrusted. Christian disciples who have learned well the foundation principles of their faith and have manifested their profession in daily life will have achieved a balance of judgment and a clear apprehension of right and wrong which is lacking in many of even the noblest of men and women to-day; and it is just these characteristics which will be needed in the administration of that coming day when

all men will be required to hear the Word of God, and make choice of their eternal destiny. It follows therefore that the first work to be accomplished by Christ at His return is the gathering to Himself of His faithful " saints " who all through the Age have been "looking for His appearing" (Titus 2: 13). To be made like their Lord, the definite promise of the New Testament, these must be " changed " from earthly to spiritual nature, thus becoming an exception to the purpose of God for mankind in general.* Such passages as i Cor. 15: 35-58, and 1. Thess. 4: 14-18, describe this change to the spiritual world as the great hope and destiny of the Christian Church, and it is from their new environment in that spiritual world that these risen ones will administer the affairs of this new Kingdom.

Thus is the world, a groaning creation, travailing in pain together, **waiting** for the manifestation of the Sons of God (Rom. 8: 19). In that day when the power of the Almighty Father is manifest in that new social order which is the Kingdom of God upon earth, men will look up into the heavens and will realise that, even as He promised, **CHRIST HAS COME.**

CHAPTER V

A NEW SOCIAL ORDER

THERE is much in the Bible to guide enquirers into the outstanding features of that still future —although imminent—day when God will " speak peace to the nations." It is useless to search its pages for spectacular predictions in the manner beloved of certain "prophets "of a generation ago,

* For a comprehensive treatise on this subject, read "The Plan of God—in Brief," from the publishers of this booklet, post free 5d.

but it is possible to build up a tolerably clear picture from its foundation principles, illuminated by the prophetic vision and inspired revelations of Hebrew seers and Christian apostles. Both the Old and the New Testaments contribute their quota to this preview of the coming social order which is now the happy lot of Christians to perceive.

That the sin and selfishness of man is to culminate in the utter and final breakdown of all human forms of self-government is certain and definite; and this catastrophic ending to the "kingdoms of this world" is predicted by our Lord and by many of the sacred writers, purely because of their knowledge that no other ending was at all possible. Those same men also declared that in this time of human extremity the alternative system of government—a Divine theocracy based on righteousness—would immediately come into operation.

“It shall come to pass “says Isaiah (2:2) “that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be exalted in the top of the mountains, and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord . . . and He will teach us of His ways, and we shall walk in His paths ” “For then,” declares the Infinite Himself, “will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord to serve Him with one consent.” (Zeph. 3: 9.) Again He declares, "I will put my laws in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts . . . for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them . . . and I will remember their sin no more." (Jer. 31:33-34.)

These declarations imply a paternal administration dealing with fallen humanity along educational lines; and just as with children in school, so will it be true

that whilst liberty to do right will be the prerogative of all, liberty to hurt, destroy, or injure will not be permitted to any. The Book of Revelation (chapter 20) speaks of a mighty angel descending from heaven with a great chain in his hand; binding the devil, and casting him into the abyss **“that he should deceive the nations no more** till the thousand years be fulfilled.” Thus is pictured in metaphorical language the forcible restraint of evil during the time of Messiah's kingdom, until such time as all men are sufficiently restored in mind and body to face the issue for themselves.

There will then dawn a day when despairing mankind realises that a new power has taken control of earth's affairs. The politicians and statesmen, weary and dispirited at the failure of all their efforts, may at first pay little heed to the new voice which is raised. Certain allusions scattered throughout the Bible seem to indicate that the men to take control will be certain stalwart heroes of old, returned from the grave; men who walked with God and understood those principles of Divine Government which are so much discounted to-day. The experiences of a number of such are recapitulated in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. In any case the histories of Moses the founder of a nation, Daniel the Babylonian statesman, Nehemiah the patriot, and others too numerous to mention, are sufficient to carry assurance that if men like these were alive to-day to administer affairs of state, then peace upon an honourable basis would speedily come to this war-wracked world.

And these are the men who will rise from the grave to do this very thing.

Is it too fantastic to believe? “Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you,” cries Paul before Agrippa, “that God should raise the dead?”

(Acts 26: 8.) The whole foundation of Christian expectation is built upon the belief that Christ died, was raised from the dead and became the first fruits of "them that slept." (I Cor. 15: 20.) Why then should it be thought a fantastic thing that in the fulness of time and in man's extremity God will restore to earthly life men who have already demonstrated their fitness for the stupendous task of administering affairs of state in the earthly phase of the Kingdom of God? (Isa. 1: 26.)

The shattering impact of this clarion call to righteousness and equity resounding through the civilised world will awaken all men to a realisation that some strange new power has taken control of earth's affairs. Many there will be, men and women of goodwill, who will at once hail this proclamation with eagerness and range themselves upon the side of these new "princes in all the earth." (Psa. 45: 16.) Some there will be who will stand aloof, suspicious, sullen, not willing that the searching light of Truth shall reveal the darkness of their own lives. Those who are by nature degraded and brutalised, and have lost the finer instincts of humanity, will cry out that they want none of this new life; whilst without any doubt at all some whose lives have been spent in preying upon their fellows and in gratifying their own pleasures and desires at the expense of others will fiercely oppose this threatened invasion of their vested interests. Yet this first reaction in favour of the new administration, even if confined to a relative few, will produce an immediate effect throughout the world such as no revolution or reformation in all past history has ever approached.

The next development will be even more startling; for men will begin to discover that vice and abuse of right principles no longer escape retribution; moreover that the very attempt to injure or destroy

another will be frustrated at the outset. The psychological atmosphere created by the strangeness of such events; the missionary zeal of teachers who will already be at work amongst the people; but above all the evident operation of Divine power in a totally inexplicable manner will begin to render it literally true that "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain." (Isa. 65: 25.) The maliciously-minded and the evil-doer may injure themselves; others they cannot injure; and when this realisation sinks into the minds of men, that dread enemy, fear, which holds all men in thrall, and shadows almost every life, will be swept away. "My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places." (Isa. 32: 18.) In such an atmosphere of confidence there will be possibilities of rapid development in the knowledge of the Eternal laws, and the writing of those laws in the hearts of men.

In proportion as men and women sympathise with and desire the accomplishment of God's ultimate purpose, so will they come into harmony with His precepts. Every individual in turn will become a teacher, assisting less fortunate ones along the pathway on which they themselves are progressing. Opportunities for every form of Christian endeavour and social service will abound, and the sincerity of every man's heart will be demonstrated by the eagerness with which he throws himself into the work of helping others. Under such conditions it is easy to comprehend that mankind will become one great family, men consulting with each other for the wise and effective utilisation of the common blessings, and for the undertaking of those enterprises which will be necessary for the continued welfare of the human race. The present evils of competitive enterprise and international antagonism

will cease to be, and so will the word be fulfilled which declares, " He maketh wars to cease unto the ends of the earth." "They shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning-hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." (Psa. 46: 9; Isa. 2: 4) Social service will be the keynote, and the " Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man " will become a reality in a sense more stupendous by far than has ever been dreamed by the most ardent of political reformers. The order of the day will be reconstruction. No longer shall the brevity of human life discourage and dissuade men from setting their hands to enterprises which may require centuries for their full accomplishment. The pulling down of all that is drab and ugly in the dwelling-places of men and the painstaking erection of edifices beautiful to the eye and sumptuous in their amenities will provide occupation of the most pleasant kind. Agriculture will come into its own, for the earth itself is to be restored and made beautiful and to bring forth in abundance. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose . . . for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert." (Isa. 35: 1-7.) Stupendous irrigation schemes will transform the world's deserts into fertile plains; hitherto inaccessible regions will become the playground of men; and in every possible sense of the word it shall be true that "the earth shall yield her increase." (Psa. 67: 6.)

Nor is the new social order to content itself with the external aids to man's happiness. The arts and sciences, the pursuit of which is so often restricted to the leisured classes among humanity, will then be open to all. Knowledge will be pursued for its own sake, and the fruits of scientific research applied to

worthy objects for the increase of human comfort and happiness. The musical festivals and philosophical debates of that day will surpass by far the loftiest attainments of man in the present or the past.

Thus will the inspired words of John Addington Symonds be literally fulfilled:

*" New arts shall bloom of loftier mould,
And mightier music fill the skies,
And every life shall be a song,
When all the earth is Paradise."*

There is a crowning glory to this sublime picture. These glories are not for the living nations only. Not just for those who chance to be alive when the day of Christ's Kingdom bursts upon an unbelieving world.

For the Word of God lays down a teaching as definite as it is certain of fulfilment—that all who are in their graves shall come forth to re-creation of physical form to share in the glories of that Messianic Kingdom.

"I believe in the resurrection of the dead!"

The creeds of Christendom have re-echoed the solemnity of those pregnant words for centuries. A day will dawn when the returning millions, gazing upon a fairer earth than ever they have seen before, will with one accord break into that expression of rapture born of the eloquence of the statesman-prophet of Israel:

“And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and shall come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” (Isa. 35: 10.)

CHAPTER VI

DEAD MEN LIVE AGAIN!

AN inconspicuous little man, broad of shoulder but below average height, made his way up the steps to the Court of the Areopagites. The place—Athens, the pride of ancient Greece. The time—about the year 51 A.D., just before Nero became Emperor of the Roman empire and the British king Caractacus was defending South Wales against the invading legions of Rome.

The philosophers stirred in the sunshine. At a loss, for the nonce, for a subject of debate they watched with the languor of boredom as the stranger approached, perceiving by his actions that he intended to make use of the time-honoured privilege of addressing the learned and wise in their own sanctuary. Indifference changed to interest, and interest to close attention, as Paul the Cilician expounded, in the best style of Greek oratory, the thesis of his choice—"Jesus Christ and the Resurrection." Whilst he philosophised upon the nature of God "in whom we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said," (Acts 17: 28) they retained their interest; but when he began to speak of the resurrection of the dead, the wise shrugged their shoulders and went back to their lounging. The world was already a long way past such a childish notion as that!

The seventeenth chapter of Acts records the pitiable story with a distinctness and sharpness of outline which stamps it as truth. The philosophers are dust and ashes these many years; but the words spoken on that memorable occasion live on into eternity. "God hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom He hath ordained, whereof He hath

given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead!" (Acts 17: 31.)

Both the teaching of Jesus and the theology of Paul concur in declaring that the resurrection of all men is to take place in that day when Christ reigns over the earth. Very soon after the new administration is set up the fulfilment of Christ's words may be expected, "All that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth." (John 5: 28.) Not only the righteous—the examples given in the Scriptures are an assurance that this re-awakening is to be universal and to affect all who have ever lived. Thus the men of Nineveh, of Sodom and Gomorrah, cities which were notorious for their iniquity, are to return (Matt. 12: 41, 42; Luke 11: 31, 32; Ezek. 16: 55) and Caiaphas, the leading figure in the greatest crime of human history, is to see the coming of that Kingdom against which he so blindly fought. (Matt. 26: 64.) The innocents of Israel (Jer. 31: 15-17), Job the proverbial symbol of patience (Job 14: 13-15), Israel the people of God (Dan. 12: 2), and many more will come back from death in one continuous stream of awakened humanity questioning and wondering at this strange thing which has happened to them.

"How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?" asked the imaginary critic Paul's reasoning in I Corinthians 15 calls into being. Truly a question that needs an answer, for if men and women who have been dead and forgotten for centuries or for millenniums and whose physical bodies have long since mouldered into dust, are to re-appear upon earth again as human beings—well, with what body **do** they come?

The story of the Garden of Eden has often suffered at the hands of its best friends, but the more that the Bible is studied in the light of twentieth century knowledge the more it becomes evident that in some

wonderful manner the first human beings did in very truth receive their physical bodies as a special and a direct creation of God. There is something in man which the brute creation does not possess and never can possess—something which makes all the difference between the highest and most intelligent of animals and the lowest and most degraded of men. God formed man of the dust of the ground (the physical elements of this earth), breathed into his nostrils the breath (spirit) of life, and man **became** a living soul—an intelligent, sentient being. It was the spirit of life, and the mental processes of thought, reasoning, memory and anticipation, operating through a suitable physical organism, that made man what he was and enables him to know himself for what he is.

If then this thing did happen once at the dawn of human history, clearly that same Divine power is able to repeat the process when the time comes for “all who are in their graves “to "come forth." A newly-created physical frame, impressed with the character, memory and disposition of a being who once lived, and died, and now awakens to consciousness and sentient existence again! The **identity** being thus the same, the period spent in death will be nothing more or less than a sleep so far as that individual is concerned; and the moment of awakening will be as the moment after that unconsciousness which was death, taking place perhaps four or five thousand years before.

From that point, the thread of existence will be taken up, and the individual commence to live with the same mentality and disposition which he had at the moment of death. And here the stern law of Divine retribution comes into full effect; for “whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap!"

(Gal.6:7.) The one who went down into death degraded

brutalised, vicious, will come back with the same characteristics. The one who sought to live a life of uprightness, rectitude and benevolence toward his fellow-men, will come back an upright and noble man. In consequence, and because righteousness will be dominant in that day, and the practice of evil restrained; and because truth will be paramount and doubt and deceit no longer possible, the noble and upright of heart will already be much farther advanced toward the Divine standard which is then to be attained by all, than those who have misused their human powers and opportunities in their previous life.

It is suggested by some, with good show of reason, that this stupendous awakening of earth's millions from the sleep of death will continue progressively, in the reverse order to that of their death, until at length the earliest of the most ancient nations will be restored to their place.

Men will without doubt organise the earth's resources to meet the needs of this returning multitude; and as each generation comes back so there will be those among them who, lovers of God or benefactors of men in their own lifetime, will quickly grasp the significance of this amazing thing which has happened to them and turn with enthusiasm and zeal to the work of instructing their fellows. Thus will be brought to pass the saying of Isaiah, "Thy dead shall live . . . awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust . . . the earth shall **cast out** the dead." (Isa. 26: 19.) "Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee," says Job (14: 15). "Thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands." Every man and woman entering upon a social order which has a use for each one will find an obligation devolving upon them to take their own place in its administration and service; by means of an all-powerful and absolutely righteous

system of government having the opportunity to come to a true and correct knowledge of the principles which shall govern all human life to all eternity—those laws of Nature which are also the laws of God.

The scientist and the statistician may and does oppose such a prospect with the cold logic of alleged facts, questioning the capacity of this planet to support life in perpetuity and talking about an ultimate “running-down” of the Universe. Such talk sounds convincing at first, but the scientists of past ages argued just as convincingly that the earth was flat, that men could never fly in the air lest they got too near the sun and were consequently burned up— and even as recently as a century ago stated with perfect assurance that human endurance could never survive a travel speed of more than sixty miles an hour!

The integrity of the Bible stands involved in this whole question. Long years ago it was stated that God created not the earth in vain—to be a ruin— but to be inhabited (Isa. 45: 18). The Divine promise is that this planet is to be filled with the glory of God, to be the home of a happy race of undying beings who, having at long last learned by bitter experience the " exceeding sinfulness of sin " will live to all eternity amidst glorious surroundings and a perfect environment, in complete accord and amity with each other and in absolute harmony with God.

And before this desirable condition of things can be brought about it must be that " Death and Hades deliver up the dead which are in them "(Rev. 20: 13), that all men may have this wonderful opportunity to accept the grace of God in Christ.

CHAPTER VII

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 foregather 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 physi-

cally—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 with in 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, not beyond the hope of redemption or outside the reach of Divine power. There is therefore 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. "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 ye this day whom ye will serve," 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 reconciliation 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), 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." 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." In that glorious day when mankind 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".

The reader will appreciate the impossibility of adequately dealing with these matters within the confines of a small booklet. Literature treating Biblical subjects in greater detail is available, and organised meetings for Divine worship and Scripture study exist in many towns. Further details can be obtained from the publishers of this booklet.

