

The Bible and

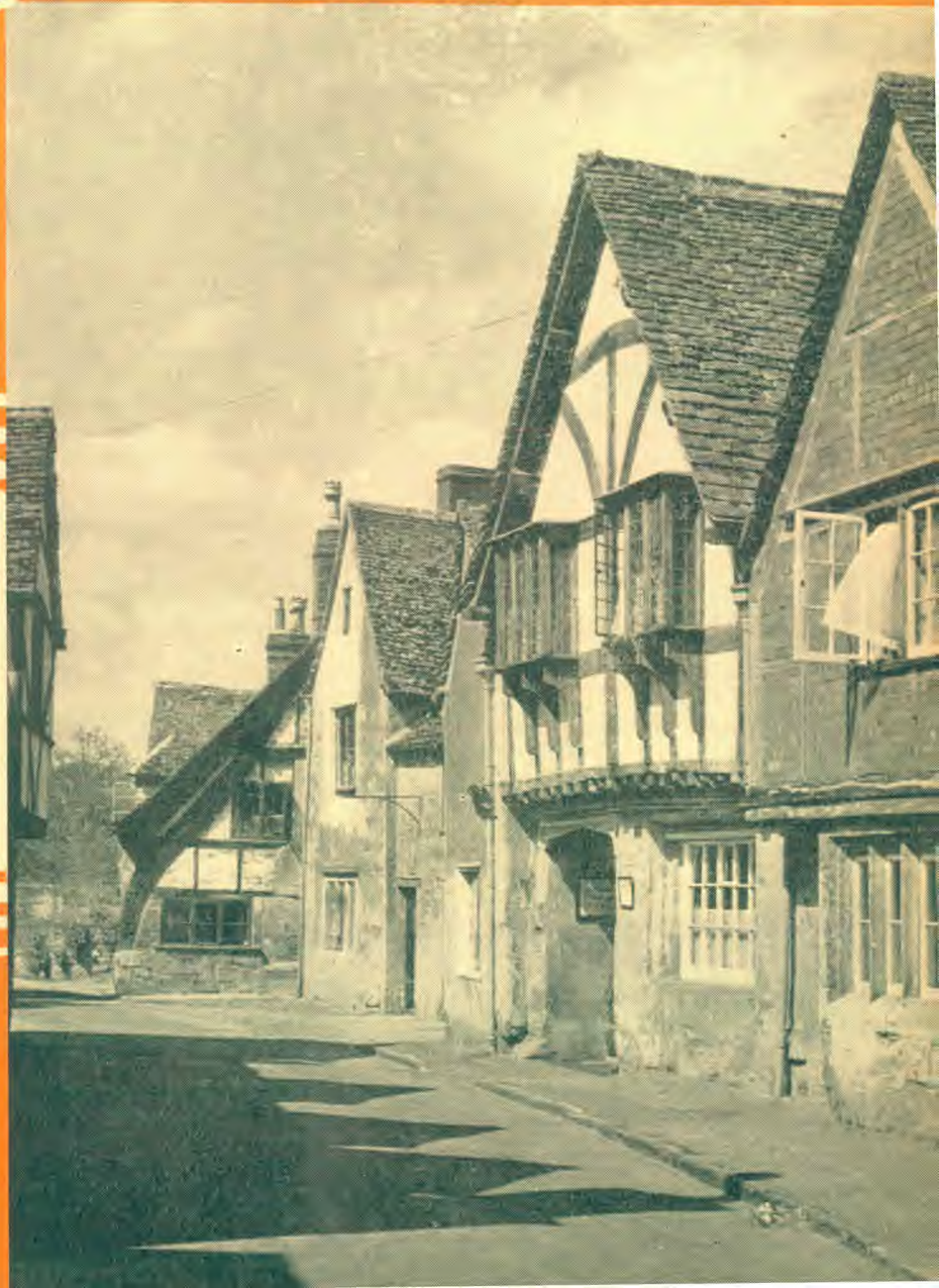


OUR TIMES



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MINUTES to MIDNIGHT!

By Arthur S. Maxwell

★ THE minute hand of the clock on the cover of the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* has been moved up to two minutes to midnight.

When the *Bulletin* was first published in 1945 by a group of distinguished nuclear scientists who felt burdened to warn mankind of the perils latent in the discovery of atomic fission, the minute hand was placed at eight minutes before the hour of doom. Here it remained, month by month, until President Truman announced that Russia had detonated its first atomic bomb. Then the hand was moved up to three minutes to midnight. Now, with the news confirmed that Russia has exploded a hydrogen bomb, it has been moved again until minute hand and hour hand are almost in line.

Says the editor: "That we live in imminent danger, that an untoward event tomorrow may trigger a tense world to erupt in flames of atomic or thermo-nuclear warfare, that there will be no place to hide' for the great masses of civilized mankind—these are the torturous facts which compel our leaders to spell out for us the tragic nature of the times in which we live. . . .

"The hands of the clock on the *Bulletin's* cover now stand at two minutes to midnight. Not to terrify, certainly, but to warn and to awaken, the clock is intended to be symbolic. Wishing will not stop the clock. The *Bulletin* may be wrong. It may actually be one minute—perhaps seconds—to midnight."

The latest issue of the *Bulletin* is devoted almost exclusively to emphasizing the urgency of providing adequate civilian defence, essential preparation for which, the contributors affirm, is deplorably lax and in places non-existent.

Hovering Atomic Peril

In the leading article, Ralph E. Lapp, physicist and former member of the Manhattan Project, warns: "The spectre of atomic peril hovers constantly near."

In a special interview, Val Petersen, Federal Civil Defence chief, emphasizes that the first attack could very easily be a sneak type of attack in tremendous force and "if they were to bomb thirty or forty of our principal cities, the attack would be certainly crippling and, I think, verging on devastating."

Still another writer raises the question whether people are ready in spirit for what atomic war may mean to them—whether they have prepared their hearts for the tragedies that could so swiftly befall them—the destruction of their cities, their homes, their places of business, their many comforts and conveniences—and whether they are prepared to *walk* out of their ruined cities to live **in woods and caves** and cook their food on open fires.

These are not reckless scaremongers who are saying and writing such things, but men of

experience, whose scientific training has tended to make them cautious how they express themselves. Moreover, they speak for a group including such men of renown as Albert Einstein, J. Robert Oppenheimer, Harold C. Urey, Hans A. Bethe, Leo Szilard, and other famous scientists. And when men of this calibre declare themselves to be alarmed about the future, it is surely time for the rest of us to take notice.

Their warnings, however, are falling for the most part upon deaf ears. Says Ralph E. Lapp: "As the Paul Reveres of the post-war period, we have not met with overwhelming success. And as the hands of the clock creep closer to the midnight hour—the black point of history—we find the countryside fast asleep. Only a few can be aroused."

The situation is reminiscent of that which existed in England in the years immediately prior to the holocaust of 1939. Again and again Sir Winston Churchill warned of the gathering storm, but nobody would listen. With Mr. Chamberlain the people yearned for "peace in our time."

It reminds us also of the widespread indifference, bordering on total unconcern, regarding the warning of Christ's imminent return now being given to the world. For a hundred years, with ever-increasing emphasis, Seventh-Day Adventists have sought to declare the prophetic message, "The hour of His judgment is come." By voice and pen, by radio and television, they have tried to bring to "every nation, kindred, tongue, and people" the tidings that the second advent of Jesus is at hand. They have pointed to the stupendous, earth-shaking events of the twentieth century as fulfillments of the long-promised signs that were to herald His coming. But who cares? Of the great masses of humanity on all the five continents, but a handful, comparatively, have heeded the warning and are preparing to meet their God.

Just as Jesus Said it Would Be

We should not, of course, be surprised at this situation. It is exactly as Jesus said it would be. When He told the parable of the ten virgins waiting for the bridegroom, He said that "while the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept." And at midnight there was a cry made, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh." Matt. 25:6. Again, when recounting the signs of His return,

He foretold that some people would say, "My lord delayeth his coming." Matt. 24:48.

Because of the gravity of this peril He warned His disciples, "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come."

It is not without significance, we believe, that the atomic scientists should now be declaring their convictions that the hands on history's clock point to two minutes to midnight. True, the calamity they foresee is different from that which the Advent preacher declares is approaching, but their strong presentiment of onrushing disaster serves to emphasize the "tragic nature of the times" and the solemnity that should be filling all hearts as the end approaches.

Illumined by the prophetic Word, their declaration is one of the most forceful and dramatic signs of our times, corroborating the century-old testimony of Seventh-Day Adventists that "the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

The hour is indeed late, later than we think.

© International News
American troops silhouetted against an atomic
blast in the New Mexico desert.

NOVEMBER 12, 1953





A Gospel evangelist in the Sahara uses a sand dune as his blackboard.

By R. D. VINE

Blossoming Deserts!

★ AMONG the grandest assurances of God's Word is surely that of Isaiah the prophet, who declared that one day "the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose." Isa. 35:1. This welcome change is to be complete. The scorching, sterile sands, the arid, barren miles of lifeless rocks and dust, the freezing Arctic wastes continually fettered by cruel sub-zero temperatures, are to be so positively transformed that their renewed fertility is thus described: "It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon." Verse 2.

There is just a chance that we in fertile Britain may fail to appreciate fully the value of such promises. Our land is lush and green. It is well supplied with life-giving rain—so well, in fact, that some complain. The good earth is kind to us, faithfully yielding its increase in fruit and vegetables and grain. We see but little evidence of erosion or sterility. Yet the world picture is different—strikingly different! So different, in fact, that the truth of the inspired prophecy is thrust alarmingly upon us that "the earth shall wax old like a garment." Isa. 1:6. Like a suit or dress, once smart and attractive, but now tattered, faded, and fit only for the rag bag, so was to be the trend of this earth.

The Desert March

In fifty short years the sensational march of the conquering deserts has increased from one-sixth to one-quarter the barren area of this world.

There is the mighty Sahara, its deadly expanse of three and a half million square miles covering an area larger than Europe. Its boiling sands, whipped up and driven by angry gales, are taking a heavy annual toll of fertile land. In 1951 its deadening dunes advanced over an area larger than England—60,000 square miles of good soil were irretrievably buried. Forests and farmsteads are steadily succumbing to the sandy invader; oases are diminishing in size until they vanish altogether; and the few desert towns like Agades are becoming less and less tenable.

The desert belt extends far beyond the vast Sahara. Broken only by the narrow waters of the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, it stretches across Arabia, Syria, and Iraq, includes the Great Salt Desert of Iran, the barren wastes of Afghanistan and Baluchistan, and the enormous empty waste known as the Gobi Desert—the most desolate, arid, and uninhabitable of all the world's deserts.

Original Fruitfulness

Much of the earth's barrenness is due to man's selfishness, greed, and mismanagement. The Libyan desert was once the granary of Imperial Rome. Sahara's centre, until fairly recent times, nourished a thriving civilization, with its capital at Gao. There is ample evidence that this colossus of earth's deserts was once a veritable garden of Eden, with verdant valleys, great forests of fruit-bearing trees, and innumerable springs feeding many a river. Dr. James Breasted's archaeological expeditions in North Africa of 1905 and 1920, proved beyond

doubt that the whole Sahara was once covered by great forests. Today, instead of the evergreen oaks with their edible acorns, there is, here and there, desert scrub and cacti. Instead of great rivers and fertile plains, nothing remains but boulder-strewn river beds, dry and parched, thousands of miles of undulating sand, and a few oases which are fast drying up. And we know that the deadly Gobi itself was once lush with melons and apricots, plums, and pomegranates.

Scientists tell us that the whole earth is drying. Its water stores are gradually being lost in the form of vapour which escapes through the atmosphere into the emptiness of outer space. But man's own mismanagement has turned many a fertile square mile into a yellow expanse of sand and dust. His ignorance of natural economy, and exploitation of natural resources without husbanding them is largely responsible for the biological bankruptcy of the Sahara and other places.

Protective Barriers Destroyed

We have sometimes wondered that the children of Israel should ever have been directed to such a land as Palestine—an area which today is largely arid and barren. Yet it was at one time "a land flowing with milk and honey." The greatest reason for this unhappy change is general neglect, and the destruction by the Turks of protective vegetation. The same reasons explain the deserts of Syria and Iraq. Yet in such places were once advanced civilizations, as is proved by such ruins as those of Babylon, Ur of the Chaldees, and Nineveh.

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A camel caravan crossing the desert.



And so the sad story could be continued. America itself yields the most terrifying examples of man-made deserts, where early settlers in their ignorance felled vast forests to make way for homes and farms, thus destroying Nature's rampart against drought. Subsoil water level has dropped increasingly low, in places sinking twenty feet and more in a hundred years, and thus converting the surface from fertile land, to dry, sterile, sandy dust.

Indeed, every continent—even Europe—yields abundant testimony that God's Word is true. Our own generation has seen an alarming ageing of the world. Fulfilled for sure, is the prophetic word that "the earth shall wax old like a garment."

What Is the Remedy?

How can the situation be remedied? Alarmed by the lesson of South Africa's Kalahari Desert, General Smuts once affirmed that the problem of soil erosion was more urgent than that of politics. In some places fertility is being restored by the planting of trees, and by irrigation. Great success has attended men's efforts to heal the wounds inflicted by our ancestors. But the overall problem is too vast for puny man. Climatic changes, for instance, are beyond his power. And though he may, by skilful planning, as in America, reconvert a dustbowl into a fruitful garden, he is impotent in regions of perpetual cold, neither can he restore the thousands of square miles of rich soil which has been washed or blown away by rain and wind.

And if atomic war breaks out, unleashing such horrors as the hydrogen and cobalt bombs, further fertile areas of the world will be blasted and sterilized.

Is it not clear that something effective must be

done, lest our planet become as barren and lifeless as its lunar satellite? Is it not equally clear that human power is altogether too small to do it? With all his awareness of the problem, his keen sense of its urgency, his skilled and determined efforts to solve it, man is not even holding his own. All of which constitutes one of the great signs of the times, strongly strengthening the mounting

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What Is Conversion?

By E. W. H. Vick

order, and in the purest sense. Conversion cannot be explained apart from a God of love who is faithful in keeping His promises to remake lives by His grace. We can see its effects but we cannot explain it.

"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." John 3:8.

Conversion is a change. It is the passing over from storm to calm, from defeat to victory. It is a changed attitude to life; it is a changed life; for once an attitude is changed the person is different. It is as if while walking carelessly upon the wrong road we are turned around and put on the right track. Conversion is as genuine as this new attitude to life is permanent. The continuity is the proof. Conversion commits the converted to a life of consistent progress. The newly-made man says:

*I looked to Jesus, and I found
In Him my shield, my sun,
And in that light of life I'll walk
Till travelling days are done.*

Conversion is thus a beginning of a life-long process. It is to be valued for what it leads to. Each day the Christian must renew his conversion vows; each day he must connect himself with the decision that made him the Lord's for ever.

Conversion is a preparation. It prepares one for service here and for heaven hereafter. We may be actuated by all the noblest of human motives, we may have all the skill that study and practice has brought, we may have wealth and generosity but without the breath of God in our souls our service will fall short of what it might be. Jesus made this the one pre-requisite for Peter: "But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when



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A little girl pauses in her play before the great cross on Mt. Davidson, in California.

★ CONVERSION is a miracle. It is the breath of the divine upon the human that changes men and women and prepares them for heaven and the great hereafter. We cannot explain a miracle apart from admitting that it is something we cannot explain. Which is not an explanation at all. You cannot explain conversion although you can say something about it. You can take stock of your own experience as a Christian and see what happened to you before conversion, and how and when it came. You can look at the experience of others who declare that they have been converted and notice the difference it has made to them. You can read what certain people have written about their contact with Christ, and you can read what the Bible says about the significance of it. If you do these things you will begin to appreciate that it is a miracle of the highest

thou are converted, strengthen thy brethren." Luke 22:32.

No Set Pattern

The experience of conversion is not conventional. It is impossible to fit the preparation for it and the experience of it into pigeon holes with neat labels. It does not work that way.

I remember chatting to a grey-haired old man who took me back many decades to a certain day when he with his friends was cycling along a country road. "Suddenly," he said, "I stopped, but my friends went on. That was the time when I found Christ. I could take you to the very spot now and I can see it all as vividly as if it were yesterday afternoon when it happened."

He was a happy man and I thanked God for sending me to him. But it did not happen like that to Charles Wesley. On Whit Sunday, 1738, he was desperately ill. He was living with a Mr. Bray whose sister was doing her best nursing him. Suddenly she felt she must speak to him about his soul, but he was a minister, she a servant. Trembling with nervousness she acted out her conviction and Charles Wesley was led to the Saviour.

To Moody it was such a climactic experience that it seemed as if he was dwelling underneath skies of a new world. The birds sang their songs with greater joy. The grass seemed greener and the flowers brighter. It was sensational for him.

So we could go on. We cannot fit men and women into a stereotyped pattern. When Jesus says: "Come unto Me," He does not add, "like so-and-so did."

David Brainerd, the great evangelist of the North American Indians, was once angry with God because while the New Testament invited him to come to Christ, it did not tell him HOW to come. He said: "I thought that I would gladly come to Jesus, however difficult the path, if only I knew how; but I found myself, as it were, with a great gulf between me and Him, and with no directions as to getting through."

He finally saw how ridiculous it was. God has a thousand ways of acting of which we are quite unaware. If the act of conversion is a miracle then the steps leading to it are also providential. But we can say three definite things about conversion which apply universally.

It Is an Individual Experience

Conversion is individual. I am different from you and you from me. No-one in the world is quite like either of us. Each of us reacts differently to various circumstances. Just as our personalities

are different, so also are our spiritual lives. We cannot standardize the process of conversion. God does not repeat Himself. He loves originals rather than duplicates. The Damascus road conversion is not to be made the pattern for everyone. There may not be the same intensity, the same high-lights, the same deep shadows.

So we are not to expect in ourselves what we see in others. That will only bring discouragement. My conversion need not be accompanied by ecstatic waves of irrepressible feeling, or by the throes of woeful despair. Feeling or no feeling, if we are visited by Christ, our sins forgiven and our lives changed; we have been converted.

Let us try to understand what we are to expect in Christian growth and then say: "Have I got that, feeling or no feeling?" It is decision that matters far more than impression.

Theodore Monod tells of the conversion of a French friar: "I cannot say that I had a very strong sense of sin. I just felt happy in the love of God. God did to me as a mother will sometimes do to her child who has overslept himself. He woke me with a kiss."

"No-one sees the hand that lifts the burden, or beholds the light descend from the courts above. The blessing comes, when by faith the soul surrenders itself to God. Then the power which no human eye can see creates a new being in the image of God."

Perhaps we cannot even point back to the time of conversion. That does not matter. After one of Spurgeon's meetings a man accosted him and challenged him: "Can you tell me when you were converted?" Spurgeon said that he could not do it. "Then," replied the man, "you are not converted." Spurgeon with his customary readiness in reply said: "It so happens that there is no record of my being born, but the very fact that I am here living, breathing, talking to you proves that I am alive. It is the same in the life of the Spirit. Whether there is any record matters not so long as I enjoy the life with Christ."

What is important is that we are different. One man who had come into contact with Christ declared: "Whether He be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." John 9:25.

Secondly, conversion is climactic. Conversions are often sudden in their final moments: but though the experience is precipitated suddenly, there has invariably been a long process of preparation. We see in an emotional conversion the last

(Continued on back page.)



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The Queen accepts a copy of the Bible during the Coronation service.

★ ONE of the arguments which used to be levelled against the Bible by writers on comparative religion was that there is not really such a lot of difference between the Bible and the "holy" books of other ancient faiths. Consequently, if the latter are human compositions, the Bible can be placed in no other category. If their inspiration rises no higher than that of human thoughts, the inspiration of the Bible is no more divine.

In this conclusion the critics have been proved as unwise and hasty as those who presumed to question the trustworthiness of the Bible in respect of its history, geography, chronology, and science. For whereas the "holy" books, with which attempts

have been made to compare it, betray on every page their human origin, the more carefully the Bible is investigated the more convinced one must become that it is a Book from heaven.

Take the creation story in the early chapters of Genesis. The discovery of the Babylonian, Assyrian, and Sumerian creation tablets at once suggested to the enemies of the Bible that the biblical account of creation was not

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given to Moses by inspiration but was simply taken by him, or whoever wrote Genesis, from earlier traditions which had come into his possession.

More careful investigation, however, far from substantiating this argument, has thrown into striking relief the essential difference between the Bible and Babylonian accounts.

"An impassable gulf separates biblical cosmogony from Babylonian," declared Dr. A. H. Sayce, "for while the latter is grossly polytheistic, the former knows only the one Omnipotent God."

That being so, we are immediately confronted with the vital question as to how Moses, the future leader of a tiny tribe of people who had migrated into Egypt from the Tigro-Euphrates valley, could have written an account of the origin of the earth and of man so infinitely superior to that of the contemporary traditions of the nations around.

Dr. Rendle Short answers the question shortly and plainly: "If the author was a man who spake

from God, as he was moved by the Holy Ghost, all becomes plain."

That indeed is the only explanation. In the first chapter of Genesis we have an account of the origin of all things, which can stand up to the test of the very latest findings of modern science. We have also a doctrine of God which is infinitely sublime by comparison with the crude polytheism of the Babylonian and other creation stories. How could Moses have produced so incomparable an account but by inspiration of God?

When we go on to study the wonderful laws which Moses communicated to Israel as they tarried at Sinai on the way to their future home, we are again utterly unable to accept the argument

"It seems to me impossible," he says in the closing chapters of his last book, *The Recovery of Belief*, "to explain the history of Christianity, *unless* [his italics] it is of supernatural origin and has had divine backing. . . . How . . . it might be asked, could such a handful of unlettered and discouraged men have made the impact they did upon the Roman world, *unless* [his italics again] they were convinced of the truth of what they proclaimed, more particularly of the truth of the Resurrection, and *unless* [still his italics] they received continuous assistance from God as mediated by the Holy Ghost?"—Pages 243, 244.

Two other fundamental facts stand out when the Scriptures are compared with religious

COMPARABLE WORD

By W. L. Emerson

that they derive from the kind of minds which conceived the Code of Hammurabi or the legal codes of ancient Egypt. The alleged resemblance disappears as soon as they are subjected to a careful examination.

After the establishment of Israel in the promised land the book of the law, or the Torah, was added to by the prophets and by pious kings like David and Solomon. Surrounded by, and in constant contact with heathen nations, it would have been impossible, without divine aid, for these writings to be uninfluenced by their beliefs and practices. The fact that they constitute a pure stream amid the miasma of the surrounding heathenism, is a powerful evidence of divine inspiration in their production and preservation.

When we come to the New Testament we are confronted with a similar problem of explaining the sublimity of its teachings and the vast gulf between them and the philosophies of the surrounding Graeco-Roman world.

The late Dr. C. E. M. Joad, who until recent years was one of the foremost anti-Christian intellectuals in Britain, before his death had to confess that there is no other explanation than that the Bible and the church are of supernatural origin.

writings contemporary with Israel and the early church. First, there is the perfect unity of Bible teaching from beginning to end. Despite the fact that the Scriptures were written over a period of a millennium and a half by shepherds, farmers, fishermen, priests, tax gatherers, soldiers, kings, and statesmen, this collection of literature on all manner of subjects blends into one harmonious whole. There is one system of doctrine, one rule of faith, and running from Genesis to Revelation there is one dominant theme, the redemptive activity of God. Each and every part is essential to the whole and is related to every other. No portion may be removed without impairing the rest. Could such a result be reproduced by bringing together any other set of writings from different ages, however carefully they were selected?

The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews argues that "every house," by its evident plan and purpose, must have been "builded by some man," and then goes on to draw the conclusion that the world, by its very organization, testifies that its Builder "is God." In like manner the plan of

THE BIBLE ON TRIAL.—3

Scripture can be explained in no other way than that an activity more than human guided the pens of the writers and guided the church in gathering the books which had been written.

Incomparable Perfection of Teaching

Secondly, there is the incomparable perfection of the teachings of the Bible. The Scriptures provide the most satisfying answers to all the fundamental questions which confront the mind of man. From time immemorial men have asked, "Who is God?" "Whence came the world and man?" "What is the meaning of life?" "Is there anything beyond death?" Philosophy and science have tried to answer these questions, but they carry little conviction. The Bible speaks with authority and satisfies the mind and heart of man as no other book can. It provides the cure for what Stanley Jones of India has called "the three great oppressions"—Sin, suffering, and death.

The Bible provides the most convincing philosophy of history and interprets the significance of our times where human interpreters have been able to see nothing but a meaningless succession of events culminating in the chaos of our time.

The Bible not only surveys the past and authoritatively interprets the present, but it speaks also with certainty about the future. It sets forth God's purpose for this world and for mankind. It reveals His plans for each individual life. In an age in which "men's hearts [are] failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth" (Luke 21:26), it announces the "blessed hope" of the ultimate fulfilment of the purpose of God in a "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness," and in the final dissolution of death in eternal life. Furthermore, it shows how man can prepare for a place and a part in God's ultimate purpose.

Then again compare or rather contrast the ethical teaching of the Bible with contemporary religious and philosophical writings. The sacred books of the heathen were steeped in the impure and the immoral. Even the great thinkers of Greece countenanced the lowest standards of morality and ethics. The ethics of the Bible stand alone, "supplying the strongest motive to collective morality and the purest ideal of individual life."

How did the Hebrew prophets and kings and the first disciples, in a world sunk in polytheism and nature worship, and whose idea of the gods was patterned after their own licentious lives, come to possess so unique a body of spiritual doctrine

and ethical teaching? It must either have arisen *de novo* in the minds of the Hebrews, or it was the result of divine revelation. And of the two the latter is the only credible explanation.

And what shall we say of the character and life of Jesus as portrayed in the Bible? Could fanatics and deceivers have conceived and depicted so wonderful, so pure, so faultless a character, whose alleged life and teachings reveal no flaw after nearly two thousand years of critical examination? Would not some vestige of the defects in their own characters have been mirrored in their picture of Jesus?

As someone has said, "If Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John invented the character of Jesus, we are in the presence of a literary miracle greater than anything that our Lord ever wrought."

The Bible's Universal Appeal

The Bible is unique among the books of the world in yet another way. It is generally recognized that a piece of literature will appeal to one age but not to another; to one class of people but not to another. In other words a human writer can seldom capture the attention and imagination of other men outside his own age and his own cultural environment. Few books will bear translation or transportation far beyond the country of their origin. The change of environment is usually fatal to their power and influence.

But the Bible is not like that. These drawbacks do not apply to the Scriptures. The Bible has been translated into many more than a thousand tongues, but in all it speaks with the same directness, clarity, and force. It is the power of God unto salvation whether its message is couched in the language of the originals, in the tongues of the civilized nations, or in the obscure dialects of primitive tribes. Through all it speaks the same word of peace and power to the human heart.

The Bible is finally the "timeless" Book. It speaks as powerfully to men today as it did in the days of the Roman Empire or in ancient Egypt and Babylon.

Nor is this all. Its message never palls or grows old. Though it has been preached, expounded, explained for millenniums, it is still "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

From every standpoint the Bible stands absolutely alone. It is incomparable. It can be no other than divine!

(Next Time: "The End from the Beginning.")

Steps in Atonement

By G. D. Keough

★ THERE are two distinct steps in the work of vicarious atonement for sin. There is, first, the expiation of guilt, and, second, the blotting out of the record of sin and its destruction. Both steps are equally fundamental, and no atonement can be complete until both steps have been taken. Let us get this matter clear. On the cross, by His death, Jesus expiated the sin of the whole world, all sin, that is, except the sin of rejecting Christ, the sin against the Holy Spirit. "And He is the expiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." 1 John 2:2, R.S.V. Forgiveness and life are therefore offered freely to every man. "And let him who is thirsty come, let him who desires take the water of life freely." Rev. 22:17, R.S.V.

Not everyone responds to this gracious invitation, and many are therefore lost. The second step, the blotting out of sin, is therefore conditional, and depends on the repentance of the sinner and his acceptance of the atonement made for him. "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." Acts 3:19. They were expiated by the blood of Jesus, but they will not be blotted out till repentance is complete. "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, . . . the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." 1 John 1:7. The expiation has been completed, but our cleansing from sin, and the blotting out of our sin, await our repentance and walking in the light. It is clear, therefore, that the expiation of sin, and its being blotted out, are two distinct and necessary steps in the work of atonement.

The first step was taken by God without the consent of the sinner, and with no request for it on his part. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16. The second step is taken only with the sinner's consent and desire. "Ask, and



By C. Mente

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The earthly sanctuary portrayed the heavenly ministry of Christ.

it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Matt. 7:7. If any man is lost eternally, it will be because he did not desire to be saved. His guilt was expiated completely, and his sin purged, and free pardon was pressed upon him, and the power of God was engaged to give him the victory and blot out his sin. It was all his for the asking, and yet he did not obtain it. The only reason is that he preferred to go on in his rebellion, and choose sin with destruction rather than accept free pardon and repent of his past sins. He has chosen death, and it is therefore his.

Atonement in the Sanctuary Services

These two steps in the work of atonement were illustrated in the Levitical services. The atonement of forgiveness was ministered to repentant sinners

every day: "The priest shall make an atonement for him for his sin which he hath committed, and it shall be forgiven him." Lev. 4:35; 5:6, 10, 13, 16, 18, etc. But the atonement of blotting out the sin was made only once a year. On the tenth day of the seventh month there was a special ceremony in which the sins were sent away into a solitary land. Two goats were chosen by lot, the one for the Lord, and the other for Azazel. The Lord's goat was sacrificed, and the high priest took the blood into the most holy place, and sprinkled it before the ark of the covenant, then he put some of it on the horns of the incense altar in the tent of meeting, and finally, on the altar of burnt offering in the court. This was called atoning for the sanctuary. "On that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord. . . . He shall make an atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make an atonement for the tabernacle of the congregation, and for the altar, and he shall make an atonement for the priests, and for all the people of the congregation. And this shall be an everlasting statute unto you, to make an atonement for the children of Israel *once a year.*" Lev. 16:30-34.

When this work of atonement had been completed, and the high priest had by it taken all the sins of all the repentant among the people upon him, he immediately transferred them to the goat which typified Azazel and sent them away on him into a solitary land.

"And when he hath made an end of reconciling the holy place, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat; and Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, and all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited." Lev. 16:20-22. The forgiven sins are conceived of as remaining in the sanctuary until this day once a year when, after atonement has been made, they are sent away for ever.

Atonement was made by Azazel's goat also. "But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the Lord, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness." Lev. 16:10. This atonement is not in any sense vicarious. It is the same kind of atonement as that made by the

murderer when he is executed, and the same word is used in Hebrew to describe both. (Num. 35:33.) The sins of Israel were placed on him only after they had been expiated and blotted out of the records in the cleansing of the sanctuary. The priest had cleansed the sanctuary and the people by the blood of the Lord's goat, and after that had been done, he placed the sins already atoned for on the head of Azazel's goat, and sent them away on him.

Sin Returns to Its Author

In order to understand this ceremony better it should be kept in mind that sin originated with Satan. He is the author of all sin. Jesus said of him: "When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it." John 8:44. In the same way as all righteousness is from God, all evil is from Satan. Men have no righteousness of their own. The righteousness of Jesus is imputed to them, and then imparted to them, and they may make it their own finally. But it is not a work of theirs. "When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness which he hath done shall not be mentioned." Ezek. 18:24. The righteousness was not his in the first place, and having returned to his wickedness he has not made righteousness his own, and there is nothing to be remembered as his. In the same way, sin is from Satan, and when sinners turn to God they are accounted righteous. They have no sin. Christ has expiated it. When sinners choose sin, they will expiate their own sin in the lake of fire. They have made sin their own, and they must perish in its destruction. Satan bears his own sin, and expiates it in the lake of fire.

The goat belonging to Azazel is a type of Satan. When Jesus has atoned for the sins of the believers in Him, and blotted them out, the sins go back to Satan as his own, and he atones for his own sin by his death. They are no longer the sins of the righteous who have repudiated them, but the sins of Satan with whom they originated, and they are destroyed with him. He must pay the penalty. In that way "atonement is made over him." (R.S.V.)

This second step having now been completed, the work of atonement is consummated, and Jesus comes to welcome the redeemed to the joy of their Lord. He comes "the second time, without sin unto salvation" to "them that look for Him." Heb. 9:28.

Blossoming Deserts!

(Continued from page 5.)

evidence that these days are "the last days," and that Jesus Christ Himself—Creator and Life-giver, is about to intervene.

The general situation reminds us of Him who "turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the waterspings into dry ground; a fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein;" but who likewise has power to reverse this distressing condition for "He turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into water springs." Psa. 107:33-35. Not that God is necessarily the active agent in thus blighting certain areas of the earth's surface, but by violation of those natural laws ordained by Him—"for the wickedness of them that dwell therein"—humanity has reaped this harvest of sterility.

Were it not for sin, the whole world from pole to pole would be a garden of Eden, for when the Creator surveyed the delightful product of His power six thousand years ago, He "saw that it was good." Gen. 1:25. The world was entirely good, and free from the slightest blemish of barrenness or sterility. Adherence to God's way would have avoided the curse which brought briars and thorns and lessened fertility. More important perhaps, is the fact that faithfulness to Him, even after the original fall in Eden, would have avoided the desolating Flood which completely ravaged this earth in Noah's day.

But Edenic beauty will come again. Such is the promise of the Word. "The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose" is the promise with which we may console ourselves as we survey the frightful expanse of the Sahara, the Gobi, and other wildernesses.

This restoration will come not through man, but by the direct intervention and act of God. Till then we do well diligently to husband the good earth which remains, to battle unceasingly with the ever-rolling dunes, and to replace Nature's desert barriers in the form of trees. But the promise of complete renewal is bound up with our Saviour's second advent in glory—an event which all the signs declare to be "even at the

doors." In His own good time, will come not merely renovation and healing, but complete re-creation.

Peter visualized "the day of the Lord" which "will come as a thief in the night; in the which . . . the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." 2 Peter 3:10. Thus is foreseen the end of sin, of impenitent sinners, and of the very evidences of sin. From the purging fires will emerge, by divine decree, "a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness;" which we look for "according to His promise." Verse 13. "Behold, I make all things new," is the Lord's assurance.

How supreme the satisfaction of realizing that this time of transformation is not far distant!

Spiritual Deserts to Blossom

But there is a very personal lesson to be found in this. Barrenness can be discovered in men's souls as surely as in the Sahara. Too often, like the desert, the soul is hungry, thirsty, parched, and lifeless. Often too, there is great regret and genuine sorrow for such spiritual fruitlessness.

Thank God, there is a sure remedy. It is, in fact, the only remedy. It is that of letting God rule our lives, opening our hearts for the guiding and healing power of His Holy Spirit, and accepting forgiveness and cleansing of sin through the merits of Jesus Christ. The Psalmist visualizes such: "Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses. . . . For He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness." Psa. 107:5, 6, 9. And Isaiah adds his inspired assurance: "The Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, . . . and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not." Isa. 58:11.

Yes indeed, "the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose"—the Sahara Desert, the Gobi Desert, the Kalahari Desert, but most comforting of all, the barren desert of human hearts and lives which sense their sterility, and honestly turn to Christ for healing.

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THE CHILDREN'S Pages

Jeremy's Great Idea

By Eirene Adair

"EILEEN, do listen to a great idea I've been thinking over," implored young Jeremy Cameron excitedly one autumn afternoon as he and his sister sat in the cosy living-room.

Eileen looked up rather crossly from the sums she was trying to do for homework, for Jeremy had already interrupted her several times.

"Well, what is it this time?" she asked impatiently.

"You know the sale of work that the ladies of the village are having in the village hall next week?" continued Jeremy undismayed by his sister's crossness.

"You mean the one for the Pets' Hospital? The one that Mummy has been doing such a lot of sewing for lately?"

asked Eileen more interestedly.

"Yes," replied her brother, "wouldn't you like to be able to do something to help, Eileen? I would. Do you remember how kind and gentle the 'Vet' was last summer when Rover ran onto the road, and the mudguard of a passing car caught his ear and cut it so badly?"

"Yes, he was extra nice," said Eileen thoughtfully, "but there's not much that we could do for the sale in the short time before it takes place. We should have thought about it earlier."

"That's just where my great idea comes in," was Jeremy's excited answer. "You remember last year that Farmer Jebb told us we could go every autumn to the big meadow, where all the chestnut trees grow along one side of it, and that we could collect as many chestnuts as we wanted? Well, there's heaps of them lying about now."

"What could we do with them for a sale of work?" broke in Eileen.

"Well, a few days ago I heard Mummy reading out a hint someone had sent in to a book, about always having put chestnuts in among their clothes as they kept moths away better than anything and hadn't a nasty smell like mothballs. I thought we could get some crepe paper and tie chestnuts in little bundles to sell as moth killers."

His sister thought this was a very good plan, and so the next day the two children went off after breakfast on their bicycles to the big meadow about a mile away from their home.

As Jeremy had said, there were lots of chestnuts in the grass around the trees; so they worked hard, and by the end of an hour they had their cycle bags and the haversacks, which they had slung over their shoulders, full of the green prickly balls.

Now they cycled home happily, and after lunch settled



See how nicely you can paint this picture and send it with your name, age, and address to Auntie Margaret, The Stanborough Press Ltd., Watford, Herts., not later than November 26th. (In case OUR TIMES arrives late, still send your entry. All attempts will be considered.)

down to spend the afternoon taking the shiny nuts from their outer covering and throwing away the ones that weren't good enough to use. They left the good ones in a big cardboard box to let them dry properly for a day or two.

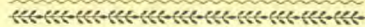
On Tuesday evening, the day before the sale, they polished the chestnuts, sorted them into little heaps of twelve, and tied each lot in a piece of the pretty coloured crepe paper that Mummy had bought for them.

Mummy thought they were very clever little children to have thought of such a good way of helping. She promised to sell the new "moth killers" at her fancy-work stall, and to tell the people, who came to buy, how useful they would find them.

The children did not go to the sale as it was held in the afternoon while they were at school. They did not arrive home till four o'clock, and then they had some homework to do before tea-time. Of course, they eagerly waited for Mummy to come back so as to hear how their effort had helped.

How pleased they were to know that every little bundle had been sold, and that their sale had added nearly one pound to the total amount for the Pets' Hospital.

They were happy children that night, for they both felt that they had shown, even though in a small way, their thanks for the kindness shown to their little dog, when he had needed some medical treatment.



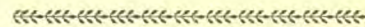
Shine for Jesus

Shine for Jesus! be a sunbeam
Everywhere you go:
Lots of folk have heavy burdens,
Cares you may not know;
But a smile from you, will lighten
Many a heavy load,
And will help some weaker
brother
Over life's rough road.

Shine for Jesus! be a sunbeam,
Though you've troubles, too,
March on, head erect and fear-
less,

God will help you through,
Make the little spot you live in
Gladder for your stay,
Shine for Jesus, be a Sunbeam,
All along the way.

Lilian G. Heard.



Results of Competition No. 19

Prize-winners.—Siegfried Baron, 28 Warwick Street, Dill Hall, Church, Nr. Accrington, Lancs. Age 12; Philip Charlton, 38 Lawrence Road, Southsea, Hants. Age 10.

Honourable Mention.—Ruth Campion (Torquay); Marion Paget (Wokingham); Miriam Harris (Cambridge); Stuart Munn (Carlisle); Hazel Harris (Cambridge); Eleonora Baron (Accrington).

Those who tried hard.—Ivan Clarke (Henfil Hempstead); Jennifer Grady (Enfield); David Wright (Heswall); Margaret Johnston (Rochester); Max Beteridge (Liverpool); Hilary Jezard (Dover); Vanessa Norman (Wimborne); Margaret J. Smith (Lowestoft); Jane Porter (Plymouth); Lydia Harris (Cambridge); Muriel Forder (Norwich); Caroline Clift (Wigston); Sylvia Newton (Edinburgh); Mary Porter (Plymouth); Patricia Neale (Bristol); Maureen Stone (Pennington); M. Penny (Cardiff); Clive Maybery (St. Albans); Ronald Grant (Edinburgh); Raymond Clift (Wigston); David Smith (Ipswich); Jacqueline Johnson (Mansfield); Graham Ryan (Witton); Antony Peart (Gloucester); Trevor Goddard (Iver); Joy Sealey (Torquay); Derek McDonald (Norwich); Nigel Payne (Woodmancote); Heather Payne (Woodmancote); Margaret Peart (Bishop's Cleeve); Kenneth Pierson (Clacton); Ruth Price (Wokingham).

USE A LITTLE OIL!

By C. D. Baron

IN Eastern countries, olive oil has always been, and still is most valuable, not only in the preparation of food, but also for many other uses. We read about one use of oil in the story told by Jesus about the good Samaritan. This good man poured oil and wine on the wounds of the man who had been waylaid and beaten by robbers when on his way to Jericho.

When the stomach is giving trouble the oil of olives is very soothing; it is also good to use it on an inflamed skin.

A drop of oil placed upon a squeaking hinge or a grating wheel will soon bring quietness, where before only unpleasant sounds grated upon the nerves.

If you are trying to hammer a nail into a very hard piece of wood, a drop of oil on its tip will act like a charm, and it will then find its way through the tough fibres of the wood without bending.

Oil upon the stormy waters

will bring peace. When travelling by a very small sailing vessel some hundreds of miles in the Pacific Ocean some years ago, there arose a very violent storm. Our small boat was tossed upon the roaring waves like a cork, and towering masses of water seemed as though they would swallow us up. So a small canvas bag, not bigger than a child's school satchel, was filled with oil, and held over the rail of our little ship. Drop by drop it fell upon the stormy seas until it left a large smooth surface of water between the boat and the foamy waves, and we were no longer in danger.

How we thanked God for the oil on troubled waters, for now as we rose and fell these masses of water passed under the vessel without finding their way on board to swamp it.

In our everyday life, with its bumps and jars and little annoyances, it is wonderful how often "a little oil" of kindness and gentleness can smooth the pathway, and bring peace instead of strife. "A soft answer turneth away wrath," is the advice of the Bible.

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Straws in the Wind

Bibles by Balloon

SOMETHING like 50,000 balloons carrying Bibles and religious tracts have been sent over the border from Western Germany into Eastern Europe in an operation sponsored by the International Council of Christian churches.

Deepest Dive

WHILE a Skyrocket aircraft recently established a new altitude record of 83,235 feet above the earth, Professor Piccard and his son have achieved the world's deepest dive by descending to a depth of 10,334 feet in the Mediterranean in their latest bathyscaphe.

What Is Conversion?

(Continued from page 7.)

stage of a long process of spiritual activity. Sometimes conversions are unconscious, but the principle holds good. What shall we say of the child who grows up in a Christian home? When is he converted? He has not known sin in its intensity. Is it likely that he will experience a violent reaction against it? He gradually grows and grows into the new life. However the climax is reached, the climax comes. It is the decision that matters.

The human will chooses to give itself into God's hands. Conversion is brought about by man's choice.

Thirdly, conversion is productive. The experience we may call by that name is not genuine if it has only temporary effects. The exercise of the will in forming that first decision must be repeated as the force in carrying out more duties. Conversion

is tested by its fruits. A revival is as valuable as it is permanent. Call back two years later and see whether the conversion or the revival has endured. The Christian life is not a static thing. A true Christian looks back only to look forward. It is a growing, progressive experience, the Christian life. Just as a life of sin plunges the sinner further and further into wickedness; so the life of the converted one grows more and more like Jesus. Conversion is not an end in itself: it is the beginning of a life-long process.

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." 2 Cor. 5:17. One's whole life is turned into entirely new channels. Those energies that made a man a sinner are now directed to making him a saint. If you are converted, you will not have to tell the world; they will know. Being born of the Spirit, the fruits of the Spirit will be seen in your life. (Gal. 5:22-25.)

We cannot understand the process, but we can see the results. The inner change has an outward counterpart, like the dragonfly that leaves the old life behind when it emerges from the chrysalis at last.

Friend, you will not get rid of your sins merely by a study of prophecy or theology. Nor will you get rid of your sins merely by linking up with a church, by leaving old companions or breaking old habits. Bunyan's pilgrim found that. It was only when he saw a vision of the cross and its meaning that he understood what freedom meant.

Even so it is today. Come to Jesus and in Him alone will you find the treasure for which your heart craves.

