

THE BIBLE AND

OUR TIMES

MIDDLE-EAST COCKPIT

By W. L. Emmerson

IN His unerring Word, God declared that wars and rumours of wars would multiply with the passing centuries, and spread until the whole world was involved in the final conflagration.

Further than that, He revealed to His prophetic messengers in the most precise terms just how the stage would be set for the closing drama of time.

If then, as we look out upon the movements of nations and peoples to-day, we see them taking up just the positions outlined in the prophetic pre-view, the convictions borne in upon us by other "signs" which we have reviewed will be reinforced, and the realization will deepen that the last act is nearly due.

Vortex of the Final Conflict

In almost the closing prophetic revelation to Daniel, God indicated that the vortex of the final struggle would be none other than the ancient lands of the Middle East, out of which the first of the great world empires emerged.

A century or two ago, such a turn of world history must have appeared almost unbelievable, for in the wake of the venturesome explorers of mediæval and later times, the tide of empire seemed to be moving for ever away from the scenes of the valley civilizations of Assyria and Babylonia and Egypt, and from the shores of the Mediterranean, where once flourished the mighty nations of Greece and Rome.



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The Israeli Parliament in session in Jerusalem.

But just as we noticed that the early nineteenth century saw world developments moving into line with the prophecies of the "time of the end," so at that very same time the orientation of the nations began significantly to take the shape of the prophetic outline of the latter-day world.

The two factors which gave the Middle East a new and strategic importance after being forgotten by the great nations for nearly twelve centuries, were, on the one hand, the growth of the British Empire in the East, and on the other, the Russian ambition for expansion southward toward the Mediterranean.

To both these powers the Middle East suddenly became vital. To Britain it became the communication line with its richest possession, India, and to Russia it offered the rich prize of warm-water ports through which trade could flow when her northern outlets were icebound and useless.

Kings of North and South

As these great powers turned their attention to this vital strategic region they found it occupied by a decrepit Turkish empire, threatened by lateral cleavage as a result of the steady decline of the sultanate and the growing power of the local governor of Egypt.

At once, therefore, they began to involve themselves in the dynastic quarrels of these newly developing kings of "north" and "south," the latter-day representatives of the original kings of north and south resulting from the break-up of the Greek empire. (Read Daniel 11:5 et seq.)

Britain was anxious to control the break-up of the Ottoman empire and to ensure the independence of the Moslem lands in order to protect her corridor to the East, while Russia equally resolutely addressed itself to the destruction of the Moslem empire for her own imperial ends.

About this time, also a third European power, France, came into the picture. Napoleon, flushed with the triumph of the revolutionary armies on the Continent, and with visions of world mastery, conceived a plan to conquer Egypt, by which means he would cut Britain's life-line to the East, and frustrate Russian expansion southward, as a preliminary to the conquest of India and a frontal attack upon the dominions of the Czar. The French episode, however, was brief. Napoleon was beaten in Syria and his fleet was destroyed at Aboukir by the British, while the Ionian islands were wrested from him by Turkish and Russian naval forces.

With France thus expelled, the Russians and British were left to watch one another and the precarious balance of power between the kings of north and south.

With the advent of the trans-continental railways and the cutting of the Suez Canal the political significance of the Middle East was further accentuated in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and in consequence the "eastern question"

became a permanent item on the agenda of the great European powers.

In the first World War, German designs on the Middle East, following the pattern of Napoleon's ambitions, were frustrated by the brilliant British campaign led by General Allenby, and as a consequence the whole of Turkey's Asiatic territory except Asia Minor was wrested from her and six new and independent Arab states were set up in Syria, Mesopotamia, and Arabia.

In World War II Hitler attempted a pincer movement in the Middle East by way of the Balkans and North Africa, but again brilliant British generalship prevented the pincers from closing.

The Evil "Spirit" of the Middle East

The successful outcome of World War II eliminated for ever the German "Drang nach osten" (Drive to the East), but unfortunately it also elevated Communist Russia to a place among the three great world powers and intensified her aspirations for warm-water outlets to the Mediterranean and Persian Gulf.

Furthermore, a startling new factor began to obtrude itself which was destined to make the Middle East not merely a European, but a world problem. That new factor was—oil, which has not without reason been designated the evil "spirit" of the Middle East!

Already before World War I petroleum had been discovered in Iran and Iraq and after World War I these countries began to assume

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Saudi Arabian delegates at a meeting of the United Nations.





By F. Shields

Paul testifies to his faith before King Agrippa.

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"Fully Persuaded"

By J. A. McMillan

THE times in which we live are distinguished as times of fear and frustration, of doubt and despondency. In such a time it is salutary that the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ offers us a solid basis for hope and abiding peace. The apostle Paul wrote words that have kindled confidence for nineteen centuries:

"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Rom. 8:38, 39.

Such a faith as this is impregnable to all

the shattering assaults of our changing conditions, to all the changes and chances of our mortal life.

He who has this trust in Jesus has a victorious attitude to life and death. Trials and temptations will come into the life of each one, but the soul who trusts in the Lord has a buoyancy of spirit that surmounts all the crushing blows of disappointment and disillusionment. Paul had been imprisoned for many years on false charges, yet he could write from his cell to Timothy and assure him that the future held no terrors for him. He was fully persuaded that immortality was a gift from God, and that the future life could be safely entrusted to the One who had

abolished death and had made manifest both life and immortality.

The Facts of Faith

Paul's persuasion was not based on sentimentality, but on factual events. He wrote to the converts in Corinth that our faith is substantially built on what Jesus had done on our behalf. Here is what he wrote: "Moreover, brethren, . . . I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." 1 Cor. 15:1-4.

These events are simply stated and are decisively corroborated by a rich and varied testimony throughout the Christian ages. The death and resurrection of Christ are actual happenings that are historically and accurately recorded. But they are more than events. They are experiences repeated in the life of mankind in each succeeding generation. When the believing soul comes to accept these divine facts they change and transform the outlook and the attitude of the individual.

When you come to trust in Jesus, the crucified and risen Son of God, you come into possession of, or are possessed by, a persuasion, a deeply seated conviction, that neither life nor death, neither things present nor things to come, neither promotion to exalted rank nor abasement to the depths of humiliation, nor any other experience in all the created universe, can separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.

This persuasion is more than a belief—it is a personal and integral trust in the goodness of God. It may come by way of the emotions, it may come as the result of reasoning things out, but eventually and ultimately it rests on the assurance of a divine act—God so loved that He gave.

There was a time when Paul the prisoner of Rome preached before King Agrippa and other illustrious persons. He showed how "Christ should suffer, and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles." He then appealed to Agrippa: "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest." Then Agrippa said unto Paul "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. And Paul said, I would to

God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am." Acts 26:23-29.

In His epistle to the Romans, Paul lays down a fundamental principle of Christian conduct. Following a discussion of toleration on matters of doubtful value, he says: "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." Rom. 14:5.

To be fully persuaded means to accept with complete abandon the claims of Christ. It means to love God with all your heart and mind and soul and strength. It means to embrace the promises of the Word of God and to trust in the saving grace of God. It means to take Jesus as your personal Saviour and to crown Him as your Lord and King. It means to face up to all the commands of God as just and reasonable. It means to "present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service," and to "be not conformed to this world," but to be "transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." Rom. 12:1, 2. A hesitant, doubting spirit will never know the fullness of God's love. It will never drink to the full of the richness of Christ's grace: it will never know the sweetness of the communion of the Spirit's indwelling presence.

What God Will Do in Return

Thus far we have discussed the things we will do if fully persuaded. But what will God do for us if we fully accept His precepts and promises? If we yield our hearts and wills to Him, He will persuade us to continue in His grace. (Acts 15:43.) He will persuade us of the truth of the things concerning the kingdom. (Acts 19:8.) He will persuade us of the saving and transforming power of Jesus. (Acts 28:23.) He will fill our hearts with His own peace.

When we dread the world's cold frown He will remind us: "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." John 16:33. When we tremble at the approach of death, He will say: Be not afraid; "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." John 11:25. When we fear the future and the outcome of man's efforts to rule the world, He testifies: "Surely I come quickly." Rev. 22:20.

May you then be able to say, by the grace and truth of God—"I am persuaded."

A Preacher's Dilemma

WHAT HAPPENS
AFTER WE DIE?

By Henry F. Brown

I PICKED up a minister whom I saw standing by the roadside with his suitcase. After greetings I remarked to him, "You preach funeral sermons, do you not?" "Certainly," he said, wondering at my question. I continued, "I've always been interested in learning from a minister how long it takes a soul to get to heaven. Suppose I should crash this car into that tree yonder, and you and I should be instantly killed. How long before we should be within the pearly gates?"

Without any hesitation, he answered, "We should be there instantly." This is apparently the Protestant view of the after-death condition of the Christian. A Roman Catholic priest once informed me that it might take a matter of hours, or even days, between a man's death and his appearance at the gates of heaven, and he might even be converted *en route*. The modern Christian seems anxious to send his loved ones directly to bliss, but the alternative does not seem to impress him. That is, if the saved loved one goes directly to glory, the unsaved relative or acquaintance must go to hell.

What the Bible Says

I pointed out to this preacher the following biblical truths which conflicted with his conception of what occurs to a man when he dies.

1. The dead man leaves his body in the grave. There is no question about that. David hadn't taken his body to heaven, even after some eight centuries. (Acts 2:29, 34; 13:36.) So whatever goes to heaven is incorporeal—



The
Resurrection.

By Baron
Leighton

bodiless. How strange it must be to Elijah, who was taken to heaven without dying (2 Kings 2:11), to spend ages in heaven among millions of bodiless spirits!

2. Not only would these eerie spirits be without bodies; they would be without minds, too!

- a. They are asleep. (John 11:11.)
- b. Their thoughts have perished. (Psa. 146:4.)
- c. They know nothing. (Eccles. 9:5.)

So then these inhabitants of heaven would be a peculiar type of being, indeed, with no bodies and no minds!

3. There has been no judgment to determine the guilt or the innocence of the dead. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." Heb. 9:27. But the judgment is at the second coming of Christ, "who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing." 2 Tim. 4:1. And Jesus said very plainly: "Thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." Luke 14:14.

Now no court in this country would sentence a man without giving him a hearing, yet the Protestant view, as popularly held and expounded by ministers at funerals, is that a good man dies and goes to heaven, enjoying his recompense for ages, without ever having passed the judgment bar of God. Abel has been in heaven, and Cain in hell, for thousands of years without ever having been tried! There certainly would be no purpose in solemnly warning Christians: "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ: that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10), if all entered into their reward immediately.

Where Did Lazarus Go?

4. The finest witness to call as to what occurs after death is Lazarus. He had been dead four days. (John 11:39.) He had had ample time to get to heaven and greet his friends. We could rightly expect that on his return he would be able to give some conception of what heaven is like: but he said nothing about it. Furthermore, if Lazarus had been in heaven, it would have been most natural for Jesus to have said: "Father, it will be to Thy glory and will help these people to understand My mission if Thou wilt be good enough to send back Lazarus's spirit, which went up to Thee four days ago. I want it to enter into this body again and have Lazarus live as a human." But Jesus did nothing of the kind. He ceased speaking to the Father in heaven and directed His attention to the cavern in which Lazarus's body had been deposited four days before, and said in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." John 11:45. All there was of Lazarus was in the tomb, except his record written in the books of God. (Rev. 20:12.) That which went to God at his death was what God gave him at his birth—"The breath of life." Gen. 2:7. Jesus did not call Lazarus from heaven; He called him from the tomb.

5. I pointed out to my preacher passenger that his conception of the immediate apportionment of rewards was completely at variance with the scriptural teaching: "I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22:12), also with the clear declaration that this takes place after the resurrection: "All that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come

forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." John 5:28, 29.

I asked the minister how he could describe the bliss of the dead in heaven in the very presence of God and then, in the next breath, read verses that promised the resurrection as the basis for their hope. The minister confessed he did not know. The resurrection, and not death, is the hope of the Christian. If a man were to enter into bliss at his death, there would be no point in the resurrection at all. If Abel could have existed in heaven for some six millenniums without a body he could doubtless continue to enjoy such existence for ever, and Paul certainly would be mistaken in his instruction to the sorrowing Christians of Thessalonica (1 Thess. 4:13-16), when he pointed them to the return of Christ and to the resurrection, and not to death, as the basis for their comfort. My preacher friend was telling the people not to sorrow because their dead were in heaven. Paul says: "Sorrow not as do others, because the Lord will come and with the voice of the archangel will awaken your dead."

What Paul Believed

Paul's picture of the resurrection (1 Thess. 4:13-16) makes it very difficult to believe that he held the philosophic background of my preacher friend. He should have said, to be logical: "I would not have you ignorant about those who have gone to heaven," rather than "have fallen asleep," as the emphasis certainly should not have been placed on the dead physical body, but on the living spirit.

6. Paul certainly did not believe that the good dead are in heaven, as his argument is (1 Cor. 15:18, 19): "If Christ hasn't been resurrected, the dead are perished." How could he have said that if they were already in heaven? And there would be no point in stating that we of all men would be most miserable unless there be a resurrection, knowing that the dead were already enjoying the things prepared for them from the foundation of the world.

Were Paul's doctrine that of my preacher companion, that all good people go immediately to glory, what an excellent opportunity he missed to pass on to posterity this belief. In-

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Mt. Sinai where Moses received the Decalogue.

MANY things which were once regarded as right and proper are now out of date; for instance, certain types of clothes, certain kinds of transport, certain sorts of houses. How often does one see a silk hat nowadays, except on very special occasions? or a hansom cab? or a dwelling such as our Saxon fathers occupied in the days of William the Conqueror?

Our books of science have to be revised and brought up to date every few years. Even the laws which appear on the statute books belong to this category. Some of the laws of England have undergone drastic changes, and many which were in force two or three hundred years ago, have ceased to have any meaning in this modern world of ours. They are rightly regarded as obsolete; they belong to a bygone age.

Do the Ten Commandments belong also to a bygone age? Are they obsolete? Do they need to be drastically changed to fit in with our present mode of life?

Are the

One of the very rare occasions on which God has spoken direct to His people was when He gave them His law of Ten Commandments. The record begins: "And God spake all these words." It must have been a never-to-be-forgotten experience; the voice of God was actually and distinctly heard by the people in the giving of the law. (Exod. 20:1-22.)

To further impress these commandments on the hearts and minds of His children, the Lord wrote them on two tables of stone. "The writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables." Exod. 31:18; 32:16.

That these Ten Commandments were not devised at Sinai for the first time and exclusively for the children of Israel is clear from the fact that their existence is clearly implied in God's earlier relations with men right back to the very beginning. In the giving of the manna, recorded in Exodus sixteen, for example, the Lord said to His servant, Moses: "I will rain bread from heaven; . . . that I may prove them, whether they will walk in My law, or no." Exod. 16:4.

In Genesis 26:5 we are told that Abraham, who lived at least three centuries before Moses, observed God's commandments. And when Adam sinned, and Cain, was not their sin a breaking of the law of God? It must have been so, "for by the law is the knowledge of sin," and Paul also says: "I had not known sin, but by the law." Rom. 3:20; 7:7.

Jesus Had No Intention of Setting it Aside

So right back to the beginning and right on to the first advent of our Lord, that is for four thousand years, the Ten Commandment law was regarded as sacred. During all those

Ten Commandments Obsolete?

By F. A. Spearing

years it never became out of date. Nor do we find anything in the New Testament to suggest that Christ held the view that drastic changes were necessary before the law could be accepted as the standard of right living in His day. On the contrary, Jesus said: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." Matt. 5:17, 18.

Drastic changes? Not a single change was to be made in that sacred Ten Commandment law. "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you," was, in fact, part of the Master's commission as He sent His followers to preach the Gospel to the ends of the earth. (Matt. 28:20.)

In the beautiful fifteenth chapter of John's gospel are some of the most precious words spoken by Jesus to His beloved disciples a short time before His death. In verse ten, Christ's regard for the commandments is plainly stated: "If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love." Could anyone suggest that these commandments had, even in part, become obsolete?

A study of the gospels and the epistles shows how faithfully the apostle John, the apostle James, and that other apostle who thought of himself as the least of them all, Paul, followed in the steps of their Lord and Saviour in the observance of the holy law. Here are just three of many texts which could be given, on this point: "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not grievous." 1 John 5:3; "Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, . . . this man shall be blessed in his deed." James 1:25; "Do we then make void the law through faith? God

forbid: yea, we establish the law." Rom. 3:31.

Which Could Be Changed?

It is not, of course, surprising that we find the apostles teaching exactly as our Lord taught regarding the Ten Commandment law, for they were inspired by the Holy Spirit even as was Jesus. Yet some say that, in spite of the teachings of Christ and the apostles, the law needs to be amended in some particulars, to meet modern needs. Very well: which of the Ten Commandments should be altered, and in what way? Let us consider them all. We will not quote every one fully; they are presented clearly in Exodus twenty.

The last six commandments speak of our duty to our neighbour. Suppose we look at these first.

The Fifth Command. "Honour thy father and thy mother!" There is surely no need for a change here. Never was this precept more necessary.

The Sixth Command. "Thou shalt not kill!" We shudder at the thought of the brutal murders that are taking place in our favoured land, as well as in other parts of the world. We shudder, too, as we think of the millions who perished in the last two world wars; and of the many millions who may perish should there be another world conflict. We think no one would want this precept changed, no one, that is, in his senses.

The Seventh Command. "Thou shalt not commit adultery." There is an ever-increasing number of people who do not like this precept; but all decent men and women would wish it to remain as it is.

The Eighth Command. "Thou shalt not steal." No one likes to be robbed; and the number of people who would deliberately set out to rob their neighbour is small. We believe the large majority would wish this command to stay just as it reads.

The Ninth Command. "Thou shalt not bear false witness." Perhaps the people who lie at the slightest provocation do not remember

this command, or do not understand it. There are far too many who indulge in "white" lies, to say nothing of lies of other colours! God makes no distinction. What a world this would be if the ninth precept were swept away!

The Tenth Command. "Thou shalt not covet!" Why must this command be included? Surely it is not so terribly wrong to want something very badly, so long as you don't actually steal it! This sort of argument gives evidence of a necessity. Coveting is the first step toward stealing; it is the first step toward adultery. Let us thank God for the command which puts us on our guard!

The first four commandments speak particularly of our duty to our Creator. They may well be grouped together. Indeed they are inseparable.

In the first command, we are warned that we must have no other gods before God. This is reasonable seeing that He gave us life in the beginning, and has preserved us all the way until now. Linked with this command is the next which warns us not to make or to worship images. To break this command, is to break also the first; yet there are millions of people who belong to religious organizations who worship images. "Why, they are like the heathen!" someone remarks. Not exactly; the heathen don't know what they are doing, whereas these people at least *ought* to know!

It is easy to see that the third precept belongs with the first two; it tells us we must not take God's name in vain. No Christian would stand for the breaking of this command.

And no commandment should be regarded as more important than the fourth, which speaks of the Sabbath. Why? Because the Lord not only tells us to *remember the Sabbath day*, the seventh day of the week, the day which is commonly called Saturday, and to *keep it holy*; He also gives us the reason why it is necessary to observe His holy day. And what is the reason? Here it is: "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it." Exod. 20:11. The Lord is our Creator; and as a sign that we believe in Him, He asks us to observe, faithfully, His holy day, just as He Himself observed it at the end of the first week of time.

So, as Christians, we must decide to observe all those six commands which reveal our duty to our neighbour; and we must decide, further, not to put anyone or anything before God, not to bow down to images, not to take God's sacred name in vain, and not to desecrate His holy Sabbath day.

A Preacher's Dilemma

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stead of saying (1 Cor. 15:51): "Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed," he should have said: "We shall all go to heaven." It would be ridiculous to hold up some future resurrection to Christians who expect to go at once to bliss.

Let us imagine the amazing scene that would be necessary if my friend's philosophy were true: many millions of happy, contented, ethereal, shining spirits, who have existed for thousands of years without bodies, being brought down to this earth to witness the resurrection of millions of physical replicas of themselves. For a moment each would exist in duplicate, one a physical being, and the other an ethereal being. Then in some inexplicable way they would amalgamate; each single entity being caught up to meet its Lord in the air!

How much more reasonable and sensible is the Bible teaching, that the good dead are asleep, awaiting the judgment day. Their sacred dust lies in marked resting places. The angel (Matt. 18:10) who accompanied them in life will, at the last trump, find them again, and catch up each awakened child of God to the arms of Jesus (Psa. 50:5; Matt. 24:51), "and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

MY CAPTAIN

"Why do you worry, little child?"
My Captain said,
Then smiled.

"I have the helm, so you should see
'Twill all be well
With thee."

I grasped the proffered Hand, and knew
That all He said
Was true.

—Neina Roe.



By J. R. Burgess

The Pharisee and the publican in the temple.

Prayers That Are Unanswered

By R. D. Vine

THERE are some people who try to live without praying to God and do not realize that they miss one of life's greatest privileges and joys. There are others who pray, and who realize their need of prayer, but whose efforts to make contact with Heaven seem unavailing. It is not that God says, "Wait a while before I grant your request." Neither is it that He says, "I'm sorry, but you are praying for something which would not be good. I'm afraid therefore, that I must refuse your request this time." No, the sad thing about these prayers is that they just simply are never heard by God. They ascend no higher than the ceiling.

Now the Bible shows that genuine prayer is the key in the hand of faith to unlock Heaven's storehouse. It would be very poor consolation for us to know that the things we need for our present and eternal welfare are stored in heaven, if we could not obtain them.

What is it then, that makes certain prayers useless? Is it that they are too short or too long, or perhaps that they are not expressed as clearly or eloquently as they might be? Oh no. The Bible shows that effective prayer does not depend on either length or eloquence.

We turn to the Scriptures for our answer. In Psalm 66:18 I read: "If I regard iniquity in

my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Ah, here then is a reason—perhaps the greatest reason—why so many prayers are unanswered. It is because of the sin and evil which is cherished in the heart. Any little grudge, any spirit of envy, pride or hatred, which is knowingly retained in the heart, makes quite useless the prayers which are offered. There must be no skeleton in the cupboard, no unwillingness to give up the wrong habits, the secret or open sins, which cause so much unhappiness in life. If God is to be merciful to us, we must be merciless with our sins and weaknesses. If we cherish them—no matter how trivial they might be—or if we merely excuse or condone them, then our prayers will never even make contact with heaven.

St. Augustine once prayed: "Lord, give me purity, but not yet." He was merely expressing in words the attitude of so many people. They admire genuine goodness and would like to be good, but put off the day when they will carry out their intention of giving up their besetting sins and weaknesses. When they pray, such men and women are in danger of offering prayers which God cannot hear, and therefore cannot answer.

Not that God requires perfection in His children before He listens to them. If He did, then no prayer whatever would be heard. But what He does insist upon is that they cease excusing their failures, and that they be willing, with His help, to wage a constant battle against everything which is wrong in the life, and to have done with sin and evil.

Closely allied to the psalmist's reason why some prayers are unanswered is the following reason, given by the wise man in Proverbs 28:9: "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination." Just imagine it, here is a prayer which, far from being a key to unlock Heaven's storehouse, is actually an abomination. Some people there are who despise God's law, and who refuse to regard its precepts as sacred and binding. The Ten Commandments of God, said Paul, are "holy, and just, and good," and those who seek communion with Heaven will strive to keep them. They know that God's law is a transcript of His very character. Our testimony, therefore, should not be, "I despise Thy will O Lord," but rather, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within my heart."

Expressing a further reason for unanswered prayer, the wise man says: "Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard." We need God's help, His mercy, His forgiveness. If prayers for such needs are to be effective, we must ourselves be merciful and forgiving, and be at all times willing to assist those who are in need. The man and woman of prayer will be kind, liberal, sympathetic, law-abiding, and always ready to help a needy cause. Such a one can rest assured that God will always hear his prayers and supply the answer.

For, as Archbishop Trenchard once said: "Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance; it is laying hold of His highest willingness."

How is your prayer life, friend? Jesus said that "men ought always to pray, and not to faint." Jesus knew how vital prayer is to the Christian. He wants you to have the joy of daily communion with Him. Heaven's abundant stores are at your disposal. May we have the grace to use the key of prayer effectively.

Middle-East Cockpit

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a major significance by reason of the steeply rising demands of the new "oil age."

Since World War II, with its serious depletion of American oil, the Middle East reserves have become literally the greatest political problem of our time. For the nation controlling the world's largest oil reserves, today holds the power also to dominate the earth itself!

Thus in the fifth decade of the twentieth century, the wheel of fate has turned full circle and the Middle East has become again the cockpit of conflict, the world's Danger Spot No. 1!

Complicating the international problems raised by the Middle East becoming the world's biggest oil reservoir, are the dynastic feuds between the Arab nations, and the intrusion into Palestine of the new State of Israel.

King Abdullah has no oil in his Kingdom of Jordan and would very much like to become head of a Greater Syrian Kingdom by joining up with Iraq which is ruled by his nephew, and with the republics of Syria and Lebanon.

This project is opposed by Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia, who is not anxious for a con-

federation along his northern border which might imperil his own throne, seeing that he came to power by expelling the father of Abdullah from Mecca.

King Farouk of Egypt likewise regards it as a threat to his own dominance in the Middle East.

Then all the Arab States, excepting perhaps Abdullah's Jordan, are resolutely opposed to the consolidation of the Israeli state and are manifesting their hatred by boycotting Jewish goods in Arab markets, denying the passage of oil tankers for Haifa through the Suez Canal, and preventing the flow of oil from Iraq and Arabia to the Israeli refineries.

Naturally Russia is exploiting to the full the internal strains and stresses in the Arab lands and Israel, with the object of breaking British and American power, and in conse-

quence the Middle East to-day is a hot-bed of intrigue.

Without doubt the present oil crisis in Persia will be used to the full by Soviet agents to embarrass the Western powers.

All this adds up to making the Middle East to-day the most dangerous powder magazine in the world, not excepting Europe and the Far East. None can, of course, tell when or by what it may be touched off. But if and when it is there can be no doubt that the fires will spread and involve the whole wide world.

There, as elsewhere, the shadows are lengthening and darkening as the days go by, presaging the imminence of the final conflict.

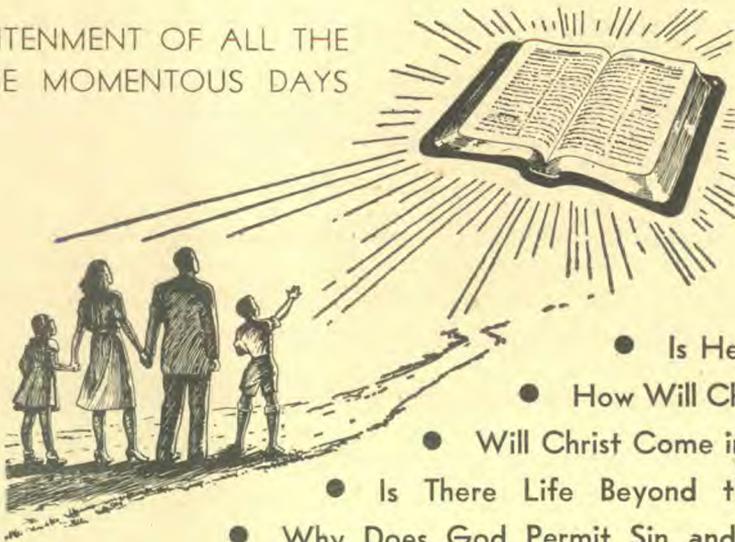
More and more urgent, therefore, in the ears of the people of God sounds the warning call, "Get ready, get ready, get ready."

(Next time: "Whither Europe?")

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THE CHILDREN'S Pages



A Lamb and a Boy

By Muriel D. Taylor

ON the day he was eight years old Robin Lee received a living birthday gift.

Robin's father owned a sheep farm, and he had promised his little boy, ever since he was a wee chap, that some day he should have a lamb of his own. Robin's birthday came in lambing season, and the day he was eight years old, twin lambs were born, and one of them was given to him as a birthday gift. How happy he was! Probably no lamb ever had as much love and devotion.

The choice of a suitable name took a lot of thought. Several were suggested, but none seemed to be just what Robin wanted. Finally his mother said, "Why not call the lamb 'Treasure' since you set such value upon him?"

But alas, Treasure did not grow very quickly, because the mother sheep was unable to care for two lambs, and Treasure was the one who went short. His little wobbly legs did not grow stronger and his bleat was weak and pitiful.

Treasure was some days old when one of the lambs of the flock was found dead beside its mother. "Well," said Robin's daddy, "here's a mother that has no lamb, and

a lamb whose mother cannot feed it. What do you make of that, Robin?"

"Why not put my lamb with the sheep whose lamb died?" suggested Robin. So this plan was tried.

But Treasure was not welcome. The mother of the dead lamb refused to take any notice of the little stranger. Then Mr. Lee tried placing the foster mother and Treasure in a small enclosure. "We'll see what a night together will do," he told Robin.

For hours Robin lay awake

LITTLE LAMB

Little lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?
Gave thee life and bade thee feed
By the stream and o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing, woolly, bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice?
Little lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?

Little lamb, I'll tell thee;
Little lamb, I'll tell thee:
He is called by thy name,
For He calls Himself a Lamb.
He is meek and He is mild,
He became a little child;
I a child and thou a lamb,
We are called by His name.
Little lamb, God bless thee,
Little lamb, God bless thee.

William Blake.

listening to the plaintive cries of his hungry lamb. A few tears wet his pillow, for it was hard to hear his pet calling for its supper. In the morning it was found that the mother sheep had jumped the bars of the enclosure and deserted the lamb. Robin was angry with her, but his father explained, "It is the law of nature, Sonny. She knows this lamb does not belong to her. There is one other way, and we'll try that."

Mr. Lee took the dead lamb, removed the skin, and placed it over Treasure like a jacket. Very odd the lamb looked in it. The skin did not fit tightly, and of course had to be held in place by cords. Robin only knew his Treasure by its wobbly legs, and the weak bleating that went on continuously. He was most excited as his father carried the lamb over to the mother of the dead lamb, and placed him beside her.

At first she turned away as before; then she sniffed cautiously at him, and as she caught the scent of her own lamb all was changed. She welcomed Treasure and poured out her love on him in sheep fashion. From that day on, Treasure lacked nothing.

Robin thought a lot about Treasure's welcome into the new family, and asked his father many questions, all of which were answered patiently. Then his father asked him, "Son, do you know what a parable is?"

"It's a story Jesus told, I think."

"Yes, our Lord told many parables. It's a way of teaching truth by comparing something to something else. I can see by the way we introduced Treasure into the new family a picture of something the Bible tells us about. You remember I said to you that it was the law of nature that

kept the mother sheep from receiving Treasure as her own?" Robin remembered.

"There's a law that is as old as the garden of Eden that keeps God from receiving us as His children. It is called the law of sin. We have all gone astray like lost sheep; we are born with a sinful nature, and God cannot receive us into His family as children because sin has made us strangers to Him."

Robin was listening carefully. The scene of the ewe following the law of nature in refusing to welcome the little stranger that was not born to her took on a new meaning.

"Now, Robin, here's my Bible. Turn to John 1:29, and read it." Robin found the place, and read. "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

"To whom is John referring when he speaks of the Lamb of God?" and Robin, looking at the first part of the verse, said, "To Jesus."

His father explained to him that for thousands of years before the Lord Jesus came, the Jewish people, in obedience to God's command, had to kill a lamb for a family and bring its blood as a satisfaction for their sin. About four million lambs were killed each year for this purpose. Now that Jesus had come John told the people He was God's Lamb and had come to die for the sins of the people.

"What made that mother sheep receive Treasure so gladly as her own?" Robin's father went on.

"He had on the skin of her lamb."

"Right; now one more question. Why was there a covering for Treasure that made him acceptable to the mother?"

Robin knew the answer. "The mother's own lamb died."

Robin sat thinking. He saw why Treasure, in spite of the law of nature, was welcomed into the new family, a family into which he had not been born. It was because he was dressed in the clothing provided by the death of another. He began to see how he, a little lost sinner, in spite of the law of sin, could come into the warmth and privileges of the heavenly family circle, through accepting the robe of righteousness that God's Lamb made available by His death. It was the start of an understanding that led the boy to Christ.



Your Letter

My Dear Sunbeams,

I AM sure you will be wondering if someone has made a mistake when you see that this letter has been signed by Auntie Margaret, and not by Auntie Eva. Well, it's not a mistake, for Auntie Eva has had to leave us. I know we will all feel extremely sorry, and will miss her very much. She took a real, personal interest in every one of you, and I am sure I am right when I say that she will miss receiving your interesting letters.

However, life is full of changes, and we must learn to say good-bye cheerfully. You will all join me in wishing Auntie Eva much of God's blessing as she leaves us, won't you?

I have written to a number of you, and received quite a lot of letters. So I am already beginning to feel that I know you, and that we are going to be good friends.

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 June 14th.

I am so glad that John Baker of Newport enjoyed the prize sent to him. I shall look forward to seeing more of your paintings, John. Congratulations to Gillian Binnet of Oldbury on passing the first half of her exam. I hope you will have equal success in the second half, Gillian.

I wonder how many of you will be visiting the Festival of Britain? Miriam Harris of Cambridge is coming with her school. All you London Sunbeams will be there, of course. Thank you, Margaret Moon of Hull, for your nice letter. You have quite an interesting date for your birthday, haven't you? I was glad to hear from Leslie Wood of Stoke Poges. Leslie is taking singing lessons. I am sure he will use his voice to sing for Jesus, for he closes his letter by saying that he is waiting for the Lord to come again.

Let us all determine that we will live each day for Jesus, and watch for His return.

Yours affectionately,

AUNTIE MARGARET.

The Bible and OUR TIMES

(Formerly "Present Truth")

Vol. 67, No. 11.

Price 3d.

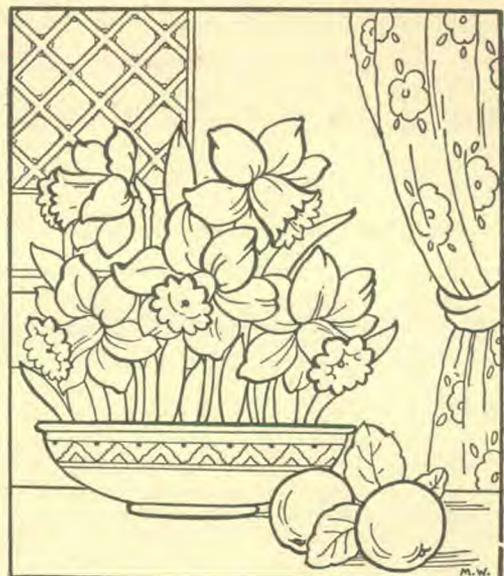
Printed and published in Great Britain fortnightly on Thursday by

**THE STANBOROUGH PRESS LTD.,
WATFORD, HERTS.**

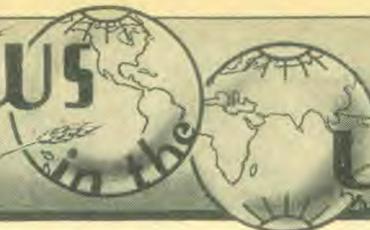
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STRAWS



WIND

RUSSIA'S DEFENCE EXPENDITURE

THE 1951 Soviet budget reveals an increase of 17,000 million rubles in military expenditure on the previous year, bringing the total up to 96,400 million rubles, or 21.3 per cent of the national budget.

WEAKEST FRONTIER

COMMENTING on the present crisis in Persia, a writer in the *Observer* describes the frontier between Persia and Russia as the "weakest frontier" of the free nations.

RIISING WORLD POPULATION

A UNITED Nations Survey reveals that the world's population in 1949 was 2,400,000,000, and is rising at the rate of one per cent a year. Since 1920 the increase has been more than 500,000,000.

ATOM BOMB COST

DR. HAROLD UREY, the atomic scientist, stated recently that each atom bomb costs between one and two million dollars.

ANXIETY ABOUT TELEVISION

COMMENTING on the B.B.C. proposal to spend four million pounds on television in the next three years, T. S. Eliot states that in America he found "only anxiety and apprehension about the social effects of this pastime, and especially the effect (mentally,

morally, and physically) upon small children." Miss Barbara Ward, a former B.B.C. governor now in Australia, has stated: "Children are spending, in some cases, four to five



Our Refuge and Strength

Our Refuge and Strength is Jesus
In these darksome days of despair;
He's a Stronghold of life and light:
An impregnable fort,
In righteousness wrought:
My Keeper by day and night.

Our Refuge and Strength is Jesus
In these perilous, troublous times;
He's a covert from stormy blast:
A pavilion to hide,
A home to abide
Till the tempest be overpast.
(Mrs.) M. H. Cooper.



hours daily watching television sets and ruining their eyesight, minds, and imagination."

ASTRONOMER'S FAITH

IN his book, *The Origin of the Earth*, Professor W. M. Smart says: "When we study the universe and appreciate its grandeur and orderliness, it seems to me that we are led

to the recognition of a Creative Power and Cosmic Purpose that transcends all that our limited minds can comprehend." To one astronomer at least the heavens are telling the glory of God and the wonder of His works.

MISSILE WITH "HUMAN BRAIN"

"WE are planning a missile," asserts Air Chief Marshal Sir Alec Coryton, chief of the Australian guided-missile project, "which will contain the mechanical equivalent of a complete human brain, which will destroy with unerring accuracy a target far from its launching place."

LARGEST ARMADA

ACCORDING to defence authorities, the U.S. Navy in 1952 will comprise 500 warships with another 500 support and smaller amphibious craft, and will constitute the world's largest armada.

THREE MILLION SCRIPTURES

IT is a tribute to the energy of the British and Foreign Bible Society in a year of crisis that during the past year its circulation figures reached the unprecedented total of 3,239,400 volumes, as against 2,857,938 in 1949, and 1,749,601 in 1948. It was made up of 1,357,749 Bibles, 917,123 New Testaments, and 964,528 portions.

