



THE BIBLE AND

OUR TIMES



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Sin not only degrades socially but it imperils our eternal existence.

★ TERTULLIAN referred to sin as "the great interloper," for it has no right to be here. But here it is, intruding itself upon us. The pity is that through familiarity many fail to perceive that sin is still "exceeding sinful."

Knowing the dire effects of sin upon the human race, God has made provision whereby men and women may be guarded against it. His Word, the Holy Bible, is one long revelation of the calamitous and grievous fruitage of this great evil.

Sin is a crafty foe which lies in ambush for the unwary soul. The Creator sought to make this fact clear to Cain, for He told him, "Sin is lying in wait for you, eager to be at you." Gen. 4:7 (Moffatt). Too often we fail to realize that we live much as does a soldier on military service in enemy territory. We need to be wary, for, when least expected, sin may be upon us.

Sin is subtle; it bluffs men. They fail to see it for what it is. They even joke about it. But such men are fools; God's Word says so. "Fools make a mock at sin." Prov. 14:9.

SIN

Does Matter

By H. G. Woodward

Sin Marks Men

Sin leaves its mark upon man. This fact is so obvious that it would be difficult to find anyone who would dispute it. This mark is not always observable by man, but it is noted by God. The patriarch Job declared this truth when he said, "If I sin, then Thou markest me." Job 10:14. Thus, the sinner is a marked man in the sight of God. No-one can afford to sin.

Sin is pleasant; that is why it is so popular. The convivial company of the saloon is attractive to many. The gambling hall gives a zest to life. The one who is successful in business, in spite of unscrupulous transactions, considers himself wise. But such satisfaction, such pleasure, is short-lived. The Bible speaks of it as "for a season." Heb. 11:25. It was for this reason that Moses turned his back upon what he knew to be "the pleasures of sin." The sinner may go through life with a song on his lips; but we are told, "Know you not that from of old, ever since man was in the world, the sinner never sings for long, and godless men have short-lived joy?" Job 20:4, 5 (Moffatt).

Sin Enslaves

Sin is a slave master. Jesus said so. Here are His words: "Truly, truly I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave." John 8:34 (Moffatt). Paul declared that man is "sold under sin." Rom. 7:14. Sin is a hard master, a tyrant. Millions of souls are under its thralldom. They struggle and strain in their chains until they are worn out by their efforts and at last resign themselves to the servitude. Some become so used to their fetters that their slavery is no longer repugnant.

Sin pays wages. It is a faithful paymaster

and never fails to pay in full. How many men go through life filling full to the brim their cup of iniquity, heedless of the wages that are accumulating and which will most certainly be paid! But God's Word is specific upon this subject and states with awful bluntness, "The wages of sin is death." Rom. 6:23.

Sin finds you out. There is no doubt about it. "Be sure your sin will find you out." Num. 32:23. Nonetheless, there are some who say, "I don't believe that, for I know persons whose lives are full of shady transactions, who have never been found out." Wait a moment! The Bible does not say that our sins will all be found out in this life. But assuredly all will be revealed in the day of judgment. We can keep nothing from our Creator. "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing." Eccles. 12:14. Many a man has carried in his heart a secret sin, keeping it even from his nearest and dearest. But there is coming a time when this sin will be found out. Be not deceived, you cannot keep your sins to yourself for ever.

Sin Offends God

Sin is unrighteousness. In 1 John 5:17 it is clearly stated that "all unrighteousness is sin." Here is the test for the respectable sinner. How many times have you done that which is not right? That is what sin is. Sin does not consist only of the grosser things of life. One can be quite respectable and yet be a sinner. If there is anything in one's life that is not quite right, it marks him in the sight of God as a sinner.

Sin is "missing the mark." Daniel, the Hebrew prime minister in a heathen court, revealed this truth to us. When praying for his fellow countrymen in captivity with him, he said, "O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face . . . because we have missed the mark." Dan. 9:8 (literal meaning). Before us is the target of God's law; but, alas, surveying the results of our best efforts, we see that we have repeatedly and consistently "missed the mark." With Daniel we must hide our faces in con-

fusion when we see how far short we have come of God's expectations for us.

Sin is the transgression of God's law. James Moffatt translates this thought as follows: "Everyone who commits sin commits lawlessness: sin is lawlessness." 1 John 3:4. Why is it that the police force must be ever on the alert, that the jails are full, that in many cities we walk abroad at night at our peril? It is because we live in a lawless age, when men chafe under the righteous law of God.

Sin is the breaking of any one of the laws of the Decalogue. This truth is made amply clear by James in his epistle. He tells us: "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." James 2:10. That the writer here refers to the Decalogue is proved by the fact that he quotes from it in this connection, as can be seen by reading the whole chapter. Thus it is clear that he who would be free from sin and its guilt must live in harmony with God's law, for to break any one of the commandments is sin.

To many this may seem impossible, and so it is, if we strive in our own strength. But to all who seek to be obedient to the law of God, the promised grace is given. We have the assurance, "My grace is sufficient for thee." 2 Cor. 12:9. The apostle Paul knew this to be so, for he declared: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Phil. 4:13.

There Is a Way of Escape

Sin can be forgiven. God has made special
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The police forces of the nations are seeking to stem crime by material means. God through the Gospel gets to the roots of sin.

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GOD and HUMAN SUFFERING

By E. W. H. Vick

★ THERE is no fact more generally obvious and none so susceptible to proof as that suffering is universal. In whatever position and clime man is found, sorrow and pain dog his footsteps there. Wherever man is there is evil, suffering, and death. Lamentation is heard in the house of the peasant and in the palace of the king. Death lays its icy hand on the humble and on the mighty, on men at the battlefield, on women in peaceful surroundings.

At the same time, in the Scriptures, God is characterized as a God of love; the Bible

states this positively and explicitly. "God is love. . . . Love is of God." 1 John 4:8, 7. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." Jer. 31:5. "God so loved the world." John 3:16.

Is God's love then imperfect? Suffering and evil certainly seem to stand in opposition to God's love. The question of suffering is a question about the very justice and goodness of God Himself. This consideration makes it a very serious one. The problem, simply stated, is this:

God is love, and omnipotent.

Evil and suffering are not evidences of love.

How then can we reconcile the badness of the world with the goodness of God?

Habakkuk puts the question like this: "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest Thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest Thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?" Hab. 1:13.

Is God Responsible?

Some say: "If I were God, I would not allow these things to go on; do they not show that if God exists, He is more evil than good?" Are these conclusions sound? They are not. That God is all-powerful does not mean that He can do everything. To say that God is almighty means that He can do everything that is according to His nature. However, it is "impos-

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Jesus came to deliver men from suffering, sorrow, and death.



sible for God to lie" (Heb. 6:18), because God is truth (John 14:6; Rom. 3:4), and lying is in opposition to the truth. Satan is the father of lies who "abode not in the truth." John 8:44. A recognition of this self-limitation of God's activity is necessary to an understanding of the problem of human suffering.

God created man in His own image and intended that he should be happy in the performance of the Creator's will. God placed within man innate moral abilities. We know whether a thing is right or wrong. Even the heathen has a sense of moral values. When he feels he has done wrong, he brings a gift, not to the local chief, but to the provincial deity. That is to say that he believes through his blunt perceptions that he has wronged God.

Not only has man a moral sense but he also has will power. He possesses the ability to carry through a purpose in the face of the strongest current of deterring forces. In creating man so, God formed beings capable also of perverting the good. He could not do otherwise except by making them robots. "Evil," asserts Bede Frost, "is not a thing of itself, a substance, a being; evil is always a perversion of what is good in itself . . . evil is a consequence of good. If no good existed, neither could evil exist, since it is nothing but a perversion of good."—*The Place of Understanding*, pages 77, 78.

"Sin is not an entity existing apart from and independent of personality. It is an attitude of mind, a disposition, an attribute, a quality of personality, a way of life, a perversion of good."—M. L. Andreason in *The Sanctuary Service*, page 197.

Thus man possesses the power to pervert the good. God gave man the choice when in the beginning He placed Adam and Eve in a perfect home in Eden. The misery of the world is the result of the misuse of this wonderful power. Man brought suffering upon himself.

The Shadow of the Cross

The world to-day is not as God created it, nor as He intended it to be, for the shadow of the curse darkens it. God could have prevented evil by taking man's freedom of choice from him. But this would have been contrary to the principle of action which God expressed and which He desired to evoke in making man—love. Love never forces; "forced love" is a

paradox, an impossibility. Love given voluntarily only is acceptable to God. Christ wept over Jerusalem, because He could not save it. (Matt. 23:37.) A pathetic reminiscence of the Psalmist strikes the same minor chord: "How oft did they provoke Him in the wilderness, and grieve Him in the desert! Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel." Psa. 78:40, 41.

A Time of Restitution Coming

But though man, through his perversity, has marred the beneficent plans of God with dire consequences to himself, it is in the purpose of God to bring into being a world where there is "neither sorrow, nor crying, nor pain" and where "the former things shall not be remembered nor come into mind," because they shall have passed away for ever. When the Lord returns as He has promised (John 14:1-3), the former perfection is to be restored in the earth made new. The events of history are significant in showing the progress of the plan of God, and they indicate to-day that God's plan is near its completion.

It is because of what God has done that man will ultimately be delivered from suffering and sin. Gethsemane and Golgotha bear witness to the depths of the love of God as revealed in Christ. Calvary stands as a witness for all who deny God's love. The resurrection of Christ testifies to the final triumph of God's purpose. The universal efficacy of that sacrifice is well expressed in Isaac Watts' hymn:

No more let sin and sorrow grow
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found.

F. W. Boreham in *Luggage of Life* has a very enlightening essay on our present attitude to suffering. He suggests various ways of looking at it: by seeing that the Cross sheds illumination upon suffering and transfigures tears; that the fires of God are sent not to devour but to refine; that the presence of suffering ones calls for ministry which is in itself a blessing.

Our God is a wonderful God. In His own wise way and time He is working out His purposes for His children. With renewed strength and confidence then let us trust in Him, knowing that in His presence will be fullness of joy and blessings evermore.

Must I Keep the Sabbath?

By Robert Wilson

★ YES, I must.

Why must I keep the Sabbath? Because I am a Christian.

But is not the Sabbath of Jewish origin?

Most decidedly not. The Sabbath is not called Jewish anywhere in the Bible. Judah, after whom the Jews were named, did not appear upon the scene until 2,250 years after the creation. Even if his great-grandfather, Abraham, is cited as the father of the Jews, it was over 2,000 years from the creation before he was born.

Its Divine Origin

The Sabbath was made for man, but not by him, for God expressly refers to the Sabbath as "My Holy Day." Isa. 58:13. The Sabbath was given to man at the creation, and the Lord Himself was the first to teach man how to observe it. Genesis 2:2 says: "God . . . rested on the seventh day from all His work." This rest could not have been from weariness for "the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary." Isa. 40:28. It was a rest from work in that nothing more was left to be done. Everything in God's plan was finished, and God rested as an example to our first parents, so that they would have no doubt regarding the keeping of the Sabbath. In the next verse we read that God blessed this seventh day. (Gen. 2:3.) Then there is a blessing for all who conscientiously observe this day, for it is a principle taught by the Word of God that whatsoever touches holy things shall be holy. (Exod. 29:37; 30:29.) We learn from Acts 3:26 that God "sent Him [Jesus] to bless you in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." If blessing means

the putting away of sins, how much better to put them away before we commit them. It needs just as much grace to resist sin as it does to pardon sin, and the blessing upon the Sabbath day is designed for the very purpose of giving us grace to overcome sin. Sabbath-keeping means striving to be like Christ, the author of the Sabbath.

In this same verse (Gen. 2:3) we are told that God "sanctified" or set the Sabbath apart. It is not enough then to keep a "seventh day," as some assert, for the day has been set apart by the Creator, and until He chooses to tell us otherwise *the* day will for ever be so set apart from all other days.

The Sabbath is thus not only the memorial of God's great handiwork, but also a weekly reminder of our relation to Him, for it is certain that if all were observers of the Sabbath of God there would not be an infidel in the world to-day. It was to this end that the Sabbath was made for man. It is our "rememberer," for the Sabbath commandment says, "Remember." Every seventh day is a reminder of our utter dependence upon God.

Christ and the Sabbath

Jesus was a model Sabbath-keeper and He



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The Sabbath is a symbol not only of creation but of redemption also.

kept the true Sabbath. Had He infringed this law in any way, the Jews would immediately have brought an accusation against Him. They tried every means in their power to trap Him, but never once do we read that they accused Him of keeping any other day than the one that God had appointed. If Jesus as my example kept the Sabbath day "according to the commandment," how can I presume to keep any other day?

Creation and Re-Creation

Some there are who affirm that every day should be a Sabbath day. But the Lord does not ask this of us. He distinctly says: "Six days shalt thou labour, . . . but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God." Exod. 20:9, 10. Others use the fact that Christ rose on the first day of the week to support the imposition of the Sunday-Sabbath, but far from being an excuse to discard it, this argument actually strengthens the belief in the true Sabbath.

Christ rose upon the first day of the week because He kept the Sabbath in the tomb. As in His life, so by His death, the sacred nature of the day is maintained.

The death of Christ made no difference whatever to God's relation to the church, but it made a tremendous difference to our conception of God. In Old Testament times, men often saw through a glass darkly, but in the light of the life and death of Christ, it could truly be said that men saw God, in Christ, face to face. In earlier days, the God who had been exalted as the mighty God of creation, now becomes the mightier God of re-creation.

Even a superficial glance at the Old Testament will confirm this latter point. In Exodus fifteen, the song of Moses exalts God as the One who controls the elemental powers. The power of creation is marshalled against the enemies of the people of God. The same thought prevails in many of the psalms, notably the one hundred and fourth to the one hundred and seventh. This clinging to the idea of a materially invincible God persisted with the Jews all through their history, for we find this factor one of the great hindrances to the work of Christ when He came to show them the greater power of God in the re-generation of the race of mankind into new creatures. This accounts for the great following that He experienced at the time of the feeding of the five

thousand. When Christ began to emphasize the need for the spiritual bread, involving as it must, sacrifice and self-discipline, many turned away and walked with Him no more. (John 6:66.)

A New Creature

As with the multitude, so with the individual, this theme was ever present in His discourses. In John three, Nicodemus, the eminent teacher, came to Him for light. Nicodemus was a sincere seeker after truth, but his mind was steeped in all the erroneous traditions of his people, and his concept of the Messiah's work suffered accordingly. Jesus stated the simple but inescapable fact, when He virtually said to him: "Ye must be re-created." Nicodemus could think only in terms of the material, as we see by his answer which meant, Can a man that is old enter the second time into this world? But Jesus did not imply this. Jesus said, "Ye must be born *again*." This is clearly the new birth, and is the only way by which the children of men may become the children of God.

In His interview with the woman of Samaria the same truth is emphasized, except that He here uses the figure of water as a symbol of the true life that God has to give. Thus the Sabbath is not only important as a link with the Creator, but for the believer living after the death and resurrection of Christ, it is the reminder of the great work of the re-creation of man in Christ Jesus. What was originally a monument to the glory of creation, becomes a greater monument to the greater glory of re-creation. Thus any attempt to abrogate the seventh-day Sabbath and substitute another is impossible without abrogating the sacrifice of Him who made this new birth possible.

Since I believe in this new creation, taught so consistently in the Word of God, I am left with no alternative. Either I reject the sacrifice of Christ or I must keep the Sabbath.



Who Are the Israel of God?

(Continued from page 10.)

church of Christ, the true "Israel of God" and in the divine kingdom into which Christ will gather them at His coming.

Let us then not count on any earthly ancestry but rather become members of God's Israel, and so have a part in the glorious consummation of the hopes of Israel in the kingdom of God.



By William Hole

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The Israelites return to Jerusalem after their long years of captivity.

★ AMONG some Bible students the idea is advanced that after the captivity of ancient Israel a distinction was drawn by God between the "Jews" whom He rejected and the ten tribes of "Israel" who are to reappear in the last days as America and the British Commonwealth of nations, and who are to receive all the blessings and promises made to Jacob three and a half millenniums ago.

Before, however, our national pride is stirred by so attractive a suggestion it would be well for us to go to the Word of God to get a proper understanding of who constitute the Israel of God and to discover whether such an idea can stand the test of Holy Writ.

Where Israel Began

In Genesis 49:1, 2 Jacob blessed his sons and inaugurated the line of the "children of Israel." The name "Israel," applied equally to the twelve tribes individually. These were Reuben,

Simeon, Judah, Zebulun, Issachar, Dan, Asher, Naphtali, Joseph, Levi, Benjamin, and Gad.

All tribes were united as one kingdom until King Solomon's death. Thereafter division arose between the tribe of Judah and the other tribes, Judah retaining its unchanging loyalty to Jehovah while Jeroboam led ten of the tribes into idolatry and revolt.

From this time the name of "Israel" came to have a secondary political significance to distinguish the revolted tribes of the northern kingdom from their brethren of Judah, but the primary meaning remained and Judah never relinquished its right to the title "Israel."

The story of the two kingdoms is one of tragedy. The northern kingdom of Israel went from bad to worse, and were finally carried away into captivity in Assyria in 721 B.C. Some of the saddest words in history are to be found in Hosea 4:17: "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone." From this moment the

ten tribes virtually disappear from history.

Those who did not go into captivity intermingled with Judah and a hundred years after the dispersal of the ten tribes, we read: "For a multitude of the people, even many of Ephraim, and Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun . . . did eat the passover otherwise than as it was written. . . . And Hezekiah king of Judah did give the congregation a thousand bullocks, . . . and all the congregation that came out of Israel . . . rejoiced. . . . So there was great joy in Jerusalem: for since the time of Solomon . . . there was not the like in Jerusalem." 2 Chron. 30:18-26. But in spite of what Hezekiah did to purge Judah and Jerusalem of idolatry, Judah ultimately shared the fate of the ten tribes because of her

fore the curse is poured upon us." In the following statement he again identifies himself with Israel: "And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel."

In the promises of restoration the Bible draws no distinction between "Judah" and "Israel."

Says Isaiah concerning Cyrus, king of Persia, who was raised up of God to liberate His people: "Cyrus . . . is My shepherd, and shall perform all My pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; . . . for Jacob, My servant's sake, and Israel Mine elect, . . . he shall build My city, and he shall let go My captives." Isa. 44:28; 45:4, 13.

Artaxerxes' decree recorded in Ezra 7:13 states: "That all they of the people of Israel

Who Are Now the

ISRAEL OF GOD?

By T. L. Gillett

corruptness. God did all He could to prevent this, but at last there was no remedy. This is very clear from 2 Chronicles 36:15-18 and Jeremiah 5:8: "But they mocked the messengers of God . . . until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy." "I had put her away, . . . yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also."

No Distinction Between Exiles

Both parts of the divided kingdom thus suffered the fate of captivity and the Bible makes no distinction between them.

Daniel knew nothing of a "lost" Israel in his prayer recorded in the ninth chapter of his prophecy. He says: "To the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are afar off, through all the countries whither Thou hast driven them, because of their trespass." "Yea, all Israel have transgressed Thy law, . . . there-

. . . in my realm, which are mindful to go up to Jerusalem, go with thee."

At the dedication service after the temple was rebuilt, offerings were made for all "Israel." (Ezra 7:17; 9:1; 10:1, 2, 5, 9, 10.) Ezra knew of no other people who were entitled to the sacred name of "Israel," nor did his successor Nehemiah.

Jesus Preached to "The House of Israel"

It is said sometimes that the people living in Palestine in the time of our Lord were not Israelites but Jews. Israel is said to have migrated to the west. Jesus, however, was ignorant of these lost tribes, but was very conscious of an Israel existing in the land of Palestine. In the references to Jesus' ministry there is no distinction at all between "Jew" and "Israelite." "Salvation is of the Jews," said the Lord in John 4:22. But when He was born Simeon blessed Him and called Him "a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of

Thy people Israel." Luke 22:32. The wise men from the east quoted Micah 5:2 as recorded in Matthew 2:6: "And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule My people Israel." From Egypt Jesus came into the land of Israel. (Matt. 2:19-21.) John the Baptist in Luke 1:68, 80, was blessed of his father Zachariah as he was filled with the Holy Ghost, saying: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; . . . and the child grew and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the desert till the day of his showing unto Israel." Jesus saw Nathaniel one day and recognizing in him many good qualities, said: "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" John 1:47. Nicodemus was a "master in Israel." John 3:10. Commenting on the faith of a certain Roman officer, Jesus said: "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." Matt. 8:10. Matthew 10:6 and Matthew 15:24 refer to Jesus preaching to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel." And again in verse twenty-three of Matthew ten, Jesus tells His apostles: "Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man be come." Jesus had in mind the Jews when He spoke of the "lost sheep of the house of Israel." They went into the towns and villages of Palestine to seek Israel.

On the day of Pentecost, representatives of Israel came from all parts of the earth and were gathered at Jerusalem. Nineteen different languages were spoken at that gathering. In Acts 2:22 Peter addresses them in this fashion: "Ye men of Israel," and so does Paul in Acts 13:16, 17, calling them "men of Israel." Paul said to King Agrippa: "I . . . am judged for the hope of the . . . twelve tribes." Acts 26:6, 7.

In the time of Christ and His apostles, and indeed during the whole period following the captivity, therefore, the names Israel, Judah, Israelite, and Jew, were used with complete interchangeability. Paul in fact describes himself as of the stock of Israel, a Benjamite, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, a Jew, and a Pharisee of the strictest sect. (See Phil. 3:5; 2 Cor. 11:22; Acts 22:3; 26:5.)

Israel Essentially a Spiritual Designation

But while it is wrong to distinguish between Jews and Israelites among the literal descendants of Jacob we must remember that: "Not all Israel . . . are of Israel." "For they are not

all Israel which are of Israel. . . . That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God." Rom. 9:6, 8. Furthermore: "He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly. . . . But he is a Jew which is one inwardly." Rom. 2:28, 29.

This is what Jesus meant when He said to Nathaniel: "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." John 1:47.

After recounting the parable of the wicked husbandman, Jesus spoke directly to the Jewish leaders and said: "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Matt. 21:43. On another occasion in connection with the faith of the centurion, He said: "Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness." Matt. 8:11, 12.

"Israel" was always a spiritual designation, and it was God's purpose that the children of Israel should qualify to be "Israelites indeed." However, the nation failed, and they ceased to be God's peculiar people. So we find Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13:46 saying: "It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken unto you: but seeing ye put it from you, . . . lo, we turn to the Gentiles." It was a source of great grief to Paul that "Israel after the flesh" (1 Cor. 10:18) had rejected the Messiah, and so cut themselves off from the privileges of Israel and from all the promises.

Paul said: "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Gal. 3:29. Only as individuals can there be restoration to the commonwealth of Israel. (Rom. 10:1, 2; Isa. 27:12.)

Just before Jesus ascended to heaven the disciples, still not fully understanding the nature of the new Israel asked: "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom of Israel?" They still hoped Jesus would establish a temporal kingdom of Israel over all the earth. But Jesus had showed conclusively that the earthly nation was no longer the chosen nation of God, nor was the kingdom of fleshly Israel ever to be restored. All the promises and blessings given to earthly Israel are now to find their fulfilment in the

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God's "Strange Act"

By A. B. Cheesbrough

★ AN act of God! That is the term the lawyers and the insurance companies will use to describe the disaster that so suddenly overtook the people of Lynmouth. That it has called forth the practical sympathy of thousands who have come to the aid of the homeless and destitute victims of the overflowing waters, is as it should be.

Tragic happenings of a similar nature involving even greater loss of life and property, often happen in other countries, but how much more deeply are we shocked when the victim is our own homeland. Science could not foresee it; science could not prevent it. On that dark night human nature was helpless in the face of a continued, torrential downpour. We naturally wonder why a benevolent God should allow such a calamity.

Does the Bible have any light to throw upon such a problem as this? I think it does. Primarily, it may well be that such an occurrence as this is a warning, calling the rest of us seriously to consider its portent and meaning.

For instance, we live in a time when the biblical account of

The Flood

is discounted by the critics. Yet it does not require a great measure of faith to believe that if God can cause nine inches of rain to fall in a comparatively short time, He could also cause it to fall continuously for forty days and nights. That is what is asserted in Genesis 7:12. If we remember that in addition to the "windows of heaven" being opened, the "fountains of the great deep" were "broken up," we can easily comprehend the fact of the Flood, and that it must have been a catastrophic event in the history of the world.

God's purpose at that time was, of course, to destroy man from the face of the earth because of his great wickedness. "And God



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Street scene in tragic Lynmouth, shortly after the sudden flood which wrought such havoc to life and property.

looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth." The apostle Peter records, "The world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished." 2 Peter 3:6.

Creation was an act of God. "He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast." This was a completed act, for the inspired record says that "the works were finished from the foundation of the world." Heb. 4:3. He who creates has the right to destroy, and "shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" That destruction would ensue if man persisted in his evil course, was made plain to the antediluvians.

They were given one hundred and twenty years in which to repent, during which time God's Spirit strove with their consciences. But they were warned: "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." Furthermore, they were given a preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5), and the building of the ark which proceeded each day was a further sign and warning to them.

In spite of all this, as the Saviour Himself said: They "knew not until the Flood came, and took them all away." Matt. 24:39. It was a catastrophe of world magnitude which altered the whole course of nature. It explains many things which are now regarded as natural, but

which were foreign to the world that then was.

To say that all things continue as they were from the creation of the world, is not true. Continuity was broken at the time of the Flood; and "the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." 2 Peter 3:7. The antediluvians "knew not" because they did not want to know. They "knew not" because they believed not. Noah knew because he believed God. That act of God was a "strange act" because it was foreign to His nature. He "is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Verse 9. His nature is to create and preserve, but man brings his own destruction when he defies, or is indifferent to, the claims of God. God is love, but love includes justice as well as mercy.

However, because people perish in modern disasters it is no proof that they have guilt beyond mine or yours. Natural disasters overwhelm both saints and sinners, innocent as well as guilty. Just as God sends His rain on the just and the unjust, so may the suffering of this life fall upon Christian and unbeliever alike. The lesson for all of us is to be prepared. Many Christians lost their lives through the bombing of the enemy in the last war, but they did not perish in the same sense as those who were without God and hope.

Minor Disasters

There were minor disasters in the days of Christ, just as there are to-day. One such is recorded in Luke 13:4, when eighteen people had been killed by the fall of the tower of Siloam. "Think you," says Christ, "that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." The implication is not that all will perish in the same manner, but that unless we repent, God's wrath will eventually be exercised and we will all perish.

We are living in a time when the harvest of the earth is ripening. "Doth the ploughman plough continually to sow?" Isa. 28:24, R.V. "Now therefore be ye not scorers, lest your hands be made strong: for a consummation, and that determined, have I heard from the Lord, the Lord of hosts upon the whole earth." Isa. 28:2, R.V.

"Give ye ear, and hear My voice: hearken, and hear My speech." Such is God's appeal through Isaiah the prophet. The day of the Lord is near. "For the Lord shall rise up . . . that He may do His work, His strange work, and bring to pass His act, His strange act." Verse 21. This consummation is rapidly approaching. "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord: and He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began." Acts 3:19-21.

Sin Does Matter

(Continued from page 3.)

provision for this. He tells us of a "fountain opened . . . for sin and uncleanness." Zech. 13:1. This fountain is that which streamed from the wounds of the Saviour as He hung upon the cross of Calvary. If we bring our sins to that fountain and, confessing them there, seek God's grace to live in harmony with His holy law, we shall be freed from their guilt and power. "He [Jesus] was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not." 1 John 3:5, 6.

How well has William Cowper expressed the glorious truth of God's provision for the absolving of all our sins:

There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.

Mightiest Power on Earth

In his speech of acceptance as Republican candidate for the presidency of the United States, General Eisenhower said: "We are now at a moment in history when, under God, this nation of ours has become the mightiest temporal power and the mightiest spiritual force on earth."

The last phrase was presumably not intended to depose the church of Christ from that position.

The Blind in Heart

By Virginia Murray

★ CROWDS were hurrying along Broadway in the terrific noon-day heat.

An elderly man with a white cane appeared, tapping his way through his own black world along the street. Then with a force that stunned him, he smacked into a traffic signal post. Little red splotches appeared on the path from his bleeding nose.

The man reeled, but got his balance. Just then his foot stumbled over an unused traffic button that had formerly studded the crossing, but now lay useless near the traffic signal. The old man pitched forward and almost fell.

The curious throng stopped to watch him. Obviously he was trying to cross the street. Two well-dressed young fellows in the crowd

laughed as if they were watching a drunk.

The aged blind man reconnoitred nervously with his cane to get his bearings. He was evidently very rattled now. He cupped his hand to one ear, possibly listening for the sound of a bus. At that gesture the two young fellows laughed again. The old man, who had stepped off the curb turned about slightly just as a motor swished past him and roared around the corner. A tall, white-haired Swede grabbed the blind man by the arm and helped him to the curb.

"Tell me where you are going," said the Swede.

The blind man's tired voice trembled nervously. "I want a bus going to the bus garage."

The Swede guided the sightless man to a bus, but the rest of the crowd swarmed around him like so many ants enclosing an obstacle, and surged ahead. The blind man clutched desperately at the Swede's big hand and awkwardly groped his way onto the bus.

(Continued on back page)



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THE CHILDREN'S



Pages

A Talk With a Bus Ticket

By J. Clifford Mitchell

ONE day, when standing by a bus station, I saw a dark-blue ticket lying on the ground. It was quite a pretty blue, and I picked it up. "I wonder what you could tell me if you could speak," I thought.

"Quite a lot," said a small clear voice.

Can you imagine a dark-blue bus ticket talking? You can guess I was rather startled, but I held on to it, and slipped round the corner so that I should not miss anything that little voice had to tell me.

"If you really can talk," I said, when we were alone. "please tell me something about your life and adventures."

So the little blue bus ticket began.

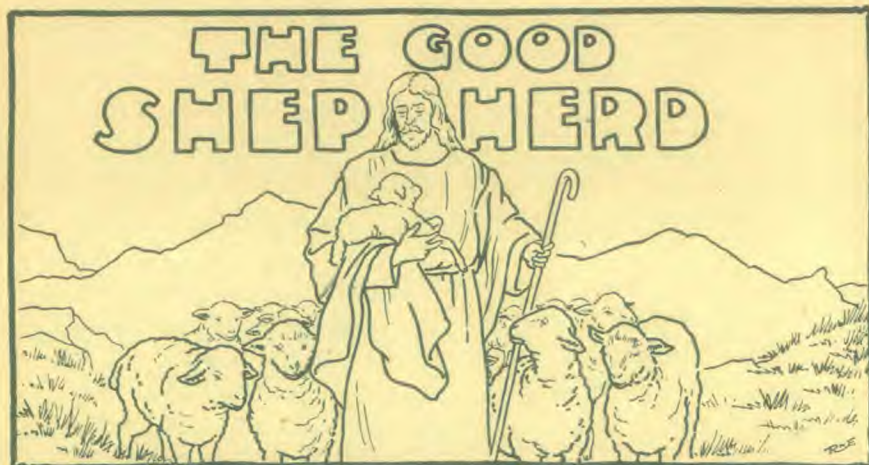
"I was born in a big sheet, then carried to a printing press, and compelled to pass between a roller and a flat plate, upon which my name and price was set in small type letters. It was funny coming out the other side of the press to find I had a lot of chums with the same name. Then by means of a quickly-moving machine we were separated, and packed into little bundles, and taken to a big table where there were yellow tickets, and brown tickets, and red ones: of course, some were worth more than others."

"Were not those tickets which were worth only sixpence jealous of those which were worth two shillings and sixpence?" I asked.

"No," answered the blue ticket, cheerily, "we are never jealous of each other. Each one of us does his best on the bus journey where we are called to serve; none can do more than that. The sixpenny tickets as well as the two shilling and sixpenny tickets find their place in one big bus service, and the success of the company for which we work comes through the big tickets and the small tickets working together."

"It is very nice of you to talk that way," I replied, venturing to interrupt what the blue ticket was saying, for I was thinking about the man who, because he only had one talent, buried it—a very stupid thing to do.

"One day," continued the little blue ticket, "a strange man came to the table where I and others were assembled; he was dressed in uniform. At first I thought he was a policeman, and began to wonder what wrong I had done. I was ever so pleased to know he was the bus conductor who had come to take me with him. He took a small bundle of



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 13th.

blue tickets of which I was one. He placed us in his ticket-holder, and carried us off to his bus.

"Soon people began to get into the bus. I was interested in a little cripple girl who walked with the aid of a stick; she sat in the front seat with her mother. Just behind them sat Mr. Jones—a man who had a big, kind heart. I saw him looking at the little girl, and I heard him say quietly to himself, 'Why, that's Mrs. Cook and little Joyce! I'll buy their tickets for them.'

"'Hallo, Mrs. Cook, and how is little Joyce?' asked Mr. Jones.

"'She's not very well,' answered Mrs. Cook, 'I'm just taking her to the hospital.'

"Then the conductor shouted 'tickets, please,' and what do you think? before Mrs. Cook had time to open her purse, Mr. Jones had paid for two tickets; one was two shillings and sixpence and the other for little Joyce was one shilling and threepence—that was me. I was the half-price ticket. I was taken out of the ticket-holder, punched by the conductor, then, with my friend the yellow ticket, was handed to Mrs. Cook.

"As she held us tightly in her hands, I heard her say with joy in her voice, 'Thank you, Mr. Jones; this will mean so much to Joyce and me.'

"When we came to the end of the journey I was dropped just where you found me. It appeared I was of no more use. My work was done. But I felt ever so happy, because I was a gift which helped to bring joy and gladness to a little cripple and her mother. It was worth being printed for, wasn't it?"

"It was indeed," I said, and I thanked the little blue ticket for telling me its story. As I made my way home, I said

to myself, "All of us can do something worth while to bring joy to hearts that need it." And it came into my head how it was written that "Jesus went about doing good."

Whom Can I Send?

By Pamela M. Jones

"Whom can I send to preach the Word to hungry souls to-day? For there are wandering sheep who from the fold have gone astray.

Whom can I send among you all, for labourers are few?"
In gentle tones the Saviour asks:
"May I send you?"

"Whom can I send?" His voice rings clear, "these souls of Mine to win.
To gather in these wandering ones, and rescue them from sin.
Whom can I send, is there not one, My gracious work to do?"
The Saviour pleads more lovingly: "Can I send you?"

But back the answer comes: "Not me; send someone else to-day."
"Just go," the Saviour says, "and I will teach you what to say."
But deep within the human breast there lies a stubborn will.
There lies an unresponsive heart, whose throbs of love are still.

"Whom can I send?" the Saviour says, "for the time is near at hand.
When all the nations far and wide will at the judgment stand.
So hurry now the hour is late, and there is much to do."
He wants an answer, will you go.
Can He send you?

Your Letter

My Dear Sunbeams,

It really has been difficult to choose the prize-winners for our painting competition this time. All the entries were so good. I just wished that you could all have a prize. Perhaps next time you will

be the best, so keep trying, won't you?

I was in a crowded bus the other day, when a boy politely gave his seat to a lady carrying heavy parcels. How grateful she was.

I do hope that all our Sunbeams set an example of thoughtfulness like that. Not only in buses but at home and in school as well. You can all repeat the "Golden Rule." It says: "Do unto others as you would be done by;" but I do hope you remember to do it as well as say it.

All true politeness springs from a kind heart, so if Jesus dwells in our hearts then it won't be hard for us to think of others before ourselves, and we will be happier as well as the people we help.

Yours affectionately,

AUNTIE MARGARET.

Results of Competition No. 17

Prize-winners.—Geoffrey Trigg, Yew Tree Cottages, Oakle Street, Churcham, Nr. Gloucester. Age 10; Ann Fowler, 84 Gorsedale Road, Wallasey, Cheshire. Age 5.

Honourable Mention.—John Dixon (Swindon); Gillian Plant (Blythe Bridge); Sylvia Child (London); Marion Paget (Wokingham); Judy Dunn (Swindon); Glenys Williams (London); Lydia Harris (Cambridge); Jilda Sleeman (Torquay); David Simmons (Torquay); John Plant (Blythe Bridge); Michael Sharland (Swindon).

Those who tried hard.—Amy Randlestone (Stockton); Ruth Price (Wokingham); Brenda Plant (Blythe Bridge); Joan Fowler (Wallasey); Haydn Gilbert (Swindon); Carole Field (Southend); Adrienne Edwards (Torquay); Richard Godden (Folkestone); Peter Crowhurst (London); Anthony Peart (Bishops Cleeve); Ruth Campion (Torquay); Trevor Goddard (Iver); Jacqueline Wilson (Middlesbrough); Vernetta Handysides (London); Kay Sharland (Swindon); Sandra Hillier (Swindon); Hazel Harris (Cambridge); Jean Simmons (Torquay); Paul Hobbs (Birmingham); Marilyn Foote (Bristol); Margaret Peart (Bishops Cleeve); Gillian Starkey (Croydon); Heather Payne (Bishops Cleeve).

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Straws in the Wind

Gospel for Frightened World

"THE Christian message is needed to-day as it was two thousand years ago, and the Christian church is not something ancient and decrepit," said Pastor Martin Niemoller in a recent address in South Wales. "It is the one thing needed in a world which has become frightened by its own inhumanity."

Secrets of the Past

"IN 1802," said Michael Ventris in a recent broadcast talk, "the oldest known languages were Greek, Latin, and Hebrew; and no records which had been written down earlier than about 600 B.C. could be read or understood." But, he continued, following Champollion's brilliant decipherment of the Egyptian hieroglyphics, "this situation was to change very rapidly, and during the course of the nineteenth century more and more early scripts came to be read, and their languages understood: Old Persian, Elamite, Assyrian, Sumerian, Mitannian, many of them completely unsuspected by earlier generations of scholars. The most recent success, in 1932, has been

the reading of the Hittite hieroglyphs of Asia Minor; and as the result of many ingenious

the frontier of literate history has been pushed back about 2,000 years over a large part of this area."

Abiding Faith

A greater trust in Thee I plead,
A faith serene and sure;
A heart from Satan's bondage freed
To serve Thee evermore.

A trust that makes the future bright
Although unknown it be:
Illumined by Thy gracious light
'Twill be the best for me.

A faith that takes Thee at Thy word,
That fears not what may come,
But whose expression thus is heard,
"Thy will, not mine, be done."

A trusting faith that looks above
And firmly anchors there;
Just resting in Thy precious love
And ever watchful care.
Gwen Yeades.

decipherments, we can now read nearly all the ancient languages of the Near East, and

The Blind in Heart

(Continued from page 13.)

The Swede told the conductor where he wanted to go and then, with a lurch, the bus started up.

The Swede came back to where his friend was waiting on the path.

"What's wrong with these people? It's as if they are all blind," he muttered.

What could have happened to all these people, that they could not stop long enough to assist a sightless man?

"It's as if all the people were blind," the Swede had said. Christ said it, too. "Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not?"

The man who was physically blind was perhaps not so blind as the people watching him. They were blind in heart.

Jesus said He could help these people, however. Through Him they could sense the pulse of the world's agonies, and apply the healing of Christian sympathy and fellowship.

