

The Bible and

OUR TIMES





Discerning The Times

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*Current Events in the
Light of the Bible
By the Editor*

CHRIST WILL REALLY COME

EACH year the season of Advent in the church calendar evokes many hundreds of sermons on the "coming" of Christ. On the first advent there is invariably general agreement. Excepting only the extreme modernists, it is universally recognized that Jesus was literally Immanuel, that is God incarnate in human flesh. In Jesus, the divine Son really came and dwelt among men.

When, however, preachers come to the subject of the "second advent" many take no such straightforward line. Instead, they invent all manner of explanations, some ingenious, others merely pathetic, to escape from the obvious teaching of Scripture that Christ will come again as really as He came the first time.

This last Christmas season a broadcast series of Advent sermons on "The Coming of Christ" was given by the Rev. C. H. Dodd, and we regret to state that he ran true to the type with which we have become only too familiar.

In the opening words of his first address our keen anticipation was aroused when the professor squarely faced the issue. "On the one hand," he said, "we think of the coming of Christ into the world as a Babe at Christmas, and on the other hand we think of a more

mysterious coming, which is often called His *second* advent."

The adjective "mysterious" sounded ominous, and before many more sentences were uttered it was clear that Professor Dodd was not going to declare, in all its fullness, the

sublime message of Holy Writ that Jesus is personally, visibly, audibly coming again, and coming soon!

He launched out first upon a dissertation on the early church's expectation that Jesus would return to them in person very soon and how mistaken they were. He then went on to say: "If the early Christians were mistaken about the date, perhaps they were mistaken in trying to fix a date at all. Perhaps the coming of Christ is dateless, because it lies outside our system of time-reckoning altogether."

The supposition is unnecessary, unjustifiable, and unbiblical. And we would add that the early Christians' error was far more pardonable than the professor's "willing ignorance." They were mistaken because the time-scale of the divine programme had not been unveiled to them. But Professor Dodd refuses to accept what has been made transparently plain by the fulfilment of so much of the prophetic outline of events in the tragic story of the centuries.

On the basis that the second coming, unlike the first, "has no date," Professor Dodd proceeded to suggest first that Christ came back to the church in the "breaking of bread" in the communion service. "It is here," he says, "that we must look for a key to the paradox of a

coming of Christ which is past, present, and future all in one."

We readily agree that in the communion service the presence of Christ is realized by the believer, but this is certainly not what is meant by His "second coming." For Paul, explaining why Christians assemble at the table of the Lord says: "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come." 1 Cor. 11:26.

The Lord's supper is a memorial of the Lord's death which is to be celebrated by the believers "till He come." His presence in the communion service, therefore, is something quite different from the future coming here referred to, which will be as real as when He came to live among men and die for their redemption.

In his next address, Professor Dodd endeavoured to reinforce his first explanation of the second coming by another. Jesus also came back, he declared, in His resurrection. Consequently, the disciples "needed no longer to say 'the Son of Man will come; He had come; He was sitting on the throne of His glory, the invisible King of mankind.'"

But this is no more adequate than that the second coming is realized at the table of the Lord. Of course, Jesus came back from the grave in the resurrection and now sits "at the right hand of the throne of God." But that

is not His second coming, for Paul tells us that He who now sits beside His Father in heaven "shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." 1 Thess. 4:16, 17.

In this passage we have a transparently clear statement that the resurrected and ascended Jesus will "descend" again to arouse the blessed dead from their sleep and to gather them with the living righteous to be for "ever with the Lord."

In his later addresses, Professor Dodd made other equally futile attempts to evade the plain teaching of the Word. He comes again, we were told, when the resurrected Christ enters our lives. "In a real sense, that is the moment when Christ comes again for each of us." And one day, Professor Dodds believes, this coming will be realized in the "whole human race." "It represents the Creator's own design for His creatures," and "we know it will in the end be attained, however strange, and often unpromising, the course we travel to reach it."

Once again we must disagree, for the Bible
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This jovial meeting with the Chinese delegates at the United Nations headquarters certainly belies the gravity of the international crisis.

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THAT NEW PAGE!

By
Gordon M. Hyde

untried. What was that? You're afraid you'll make a mess of it? You can never please the Divine Teacher?

Listen to what I read the other day. The dear saint that wrote this must have known just how you feel:

"Many are inquiring, 'How am I to make the surrender of myself to God?' You desire to

give yourself to Him, but you are weak in moral power, in slavery to doubt, and controlled by the habits of your life of sin. Your promises and resolutions are like ropes of sand. You cannot control your thoughts, your impulses, your affections. The knowledge of your broken promises and forfeited pledges weakens your confidence in your own sincerity, and causes you to feel that God cannot accept you; but you need not despair. [Thank you, Teacher, for that!] What you need to understand is the true force of the will. . . . Everything depends on the right action of the will. . . . You cannot change your heart [Teacher, don't I know it!], you cannot of yourself give to God its affections [How I've tried, Teacher]; but you can *choose* to serve Him." What does the saint mean? Listen, she is speaking again: "You can give Him your will; He will then work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Thus your whole nature will be brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ; your affections will be centred upon Him, your thoughts will be in harmony with Him."—"Steps to Christ," page 37. (Stanborough Press ed.)

Coming back to our copy-book. You remember that tears did not get the writing done.

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For each one the new year presents a new, clean page of experience.

CAN you recall those wonderful days (they seemed so terrible then), when you were in school, learning to write? Teacher had given you a beautiful copy-book with lines "just-so" for writing. She had, in a bold, steady hand, given you a line of writing at the top of the page. "Now all I want you to do is to copy this on the lines underneath, beginning just here; do you see?" she said.

Well, do you remember how it went? Three false starts, up above the line, now away below the line, wiggly, shaky curves—Oh! and a blot. What a mess! Where's that new ink rubber? Rub it out! Horror upon horror! A hole right through the paper! The lines blur, the page goes blank, the inevitable tears add their stains to the sorry sight.

"Now, Johnny, we'll turn the page. Here is a new, clean page. There, I have made you a new copy. Try again, son, and do better this time." What a wonderful being, that teacher!

The stained, torn, and blotted page of 1950 has been turned over. It's a happy, brand-new year to you all. 1951—untouched, unmarred,

and they earned no marks. Sitting stolidly in our seat, staring vaguely at the clean white page brought nothing better than, "Johnny, stay in at play-time, and make up the time you have wasted." There was nothing to do but get on with it, to try again, and to hope and hope and hope that it would be better this time.

The prospect of 1951 may seem more than you can bear. There is not only yourself to contend with, but the future looks so forbidding. You wonder, "What next? How can I go on?" Well, listen just once more, before you "bury your head in the sand" and "try to forget it all."

"Many have an idea that they must do some part of the work alone. They have trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of sin, but now they seek by their own efforts to live aright. But every such effort must fail. Jesus says, 'Without Me ye can do nothing.' . . . 'Abide in Me.' These words convey the idea of rest,

stability, confidence. Again He invites, 'Come unto Me, . . . and I will give you rest.' Matt. 11:28, 29. . . . This rest is not found in inactivity [staring at the new white page]; for in the Saviour's invitation the promise of rest is united with the call to labour [take up that pen again]: 'Take My yoke upon you, . . . and ye shall find rest.' Matt. 11:29."—"Steps to Christ," pages 54, 55.

What was that you said? You feel better about it now? Oh, good! Yes, I seem to remember that one of my teachers was patient enough to take my hand and guide it as, falteringly, I started out on the new page. My good friend, let the Divine Teacher take your hand. Put your hand in His, and keep it there. Say every day of this new year—this new page in the book: "Take me, O Lord, as wholly Thine. I lay all my plans at Thy feet. Use me to-day in Thy service. Abide with me, and let all my work be wrought in Thee." (*Ibid.*, page 54). "Hold my hand."

God's New Year Gifts

By E. A. Butters

THESE are very few people who really enjoy either giving or receiving second-hand presents at any time. Our God is the Giver of every good and perfect gift. For the New Year, 1951, He offers us a series of new gifts: things that will make this new year far happier than ever any other year has been.

You look back over the three hundred and sixty-five days that are past and say, "I can see nothing but failure." You have tried to do the right thing, but alas, you did the wrong one. You really intended to say the kindly word, but when you opened your mouth you scolded. You realized then and you realize now that there is something wrong within you. Don't worry; you are not the only one feeling like that. A great man like Paul did too. He tells us all about it in the seventh chapter of Romans (see especially verse 19): "The good that I would I do not: but the evil I would not, that I do."

Now God offers us a New Year present that will remedy that situation. He wants to give you a *new heart*. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within

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LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE

What Does It Hold?

By Arthur S. Maxwell

If only there were someone who could read the future accurately, how the world would beat a path to his door! What a fortune he would make!

The speculator would be there to learn the course of the stock-market; the gambler would rush to find out how the races would come out; business men in droves would want to discover whether prices of raw materials would rise or fall; military strategists would seek to know where the next threat to the nation's safety would appear; parents would inquire as to the fate of their children, and doctors of their patients; while everyone embarking upon some new enterprise would hasten to inquire about its outcome. Obviously there would be complications. Indeed, one has but to consider for a moment the possibilities of such knowledge to decide that it is a merciful Providence that has cast a veil about the future and hid it from our eyes.

Considerable advances, it is true, have been made in forecasting changes in the weather, but the best equipped weather bureau in the country rarely dares to predict rain or sunshine more than four days in advance. Likewise there has been much scientific investigation of trends of popular opinion, but how wrong pollsters can be has been revealed on more than one election night.

The fact is that, while some men try their best to read the future and talk with confidence about things to come, their prognostications mostly prove futile, like the gossamer guesses of the nightly news commentator which vanish amid the realities of the next day's events. True, a newspaper columnist, reasoning from cause to effect, sometimes makes a correct



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Mr. Vishinsky forcibly puts the Soviet view before the United Nations Assembly.

forecast, and duly boasts inordinately of his powers—but never does he admit how many times his predictions have been proved false.

Are we to conclude, therefore, that nothing whatever may be known about the future? Certainly not. God, who knows the end from the beginning, has seen fit to reveal certain features of the course of history, and these facts He wants us to know in order that we may adjust our lives to His programme.

A Light in a Dark Place

No crystal ball is needed to acquire this information, nor any spirit medium. It is plainly set forth in the Bible for all to read. As the apostle Peter wrote long ago: "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the Daystar arise." 2 Peter 1:19.

The Bible is largely a book of prophecy. It contains a multitude of divinely inspired predictions concerning the affairs of men and nations from the beginning to the end of time. Most of these have been fulfilled, but some are still in process of fulfilment, and it is these

that are of particular interest to mankind to-day. Indeed, the most solemn attention should be focused upon them, for they are as it were the voice of God to our day and generation. They are His revelation of the future to the world of 1951.

What are these prophecies? Where are they to be found? What do they portend?

Among them there is *the prophecy of the coming kingdom*. (Dan. 2:44.) Here, following an amazing prediction of the rise and fall of empires, of the passing, in sequence, of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, and the break up of the Roman Empire into the nations of modern Europe, we have this dramatic forecast: "In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed." This is still future; but it is "certain" and "sure." Verse 45. And as it is the only part of this long historical revelation which has not yet come to pass, we must conclude that its fulfilment will not be long delayed.

Then there is *the prophecy of the time of trouble*. (Dan. 12:1.) This, too, comes at the end of a long line of predicted events, most of which have long since occurred. Then we read: "At that time shall Michael stand up, the great Prince which standeth for the children of thy people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time." The world has seen trouble; plenty of it. But this awesome prediction indicates that more and worse is to come.

Signs of Our Times

With this coincides *Christ's prophecy of "fearful sights and great signs."* Luke 21:11. Truly there have been terrifying events in other ages, but as our Lord outlined the future to His disciples He made it plain that, near the end of the world, strife, turmoil, and terror

would increase and multiply until the hearts of men would fail "them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken." Verse 26. As He looked down the vista of the ages He saw no era of international brotherhood preceding His return, but rather scenes more frightening than mankind has ever experienced.

There is also *the prophecy of the conflict between capital and labour*, foreshadowed in James 5:1-8. To some extent this has been fulfilled already, but more is to follow. Still ahead of us is the climax of the age-long struggle between the "haves" and the "have nots," now taking shape before our eyes.

There is in addition *the prophecy of the moral decay of society* (2 Tim. 3:1-5), which is to become "worse and worse" until the end. (Verse 13.) Amply fulfilled in recent years, as the current crime investigations so clearly testify, we must expect even more ugly developments of this sort as time draws to its close.

Lastly, there is *the prophecy of the passing of liberty*. (Rev. 13:15-17.) Indications of this sad and terrible trend have been increasing in recent years. One by one the lights of freedom have been extinguished by the growing menace of the police state. And here we read that, as a crowning calamity, a religious totalitarianism will eventually seize the very stronghold of liberty itself!

Redemption Draws Nigh

What a dismal prospect! some will exclaim. It is indeed. And its discouraging aspects

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© International News
The North Atlantic
Council meets to
discuss European
defence.



AMONG RO

By R.



Photo by R.D.V.

Remains of the Vestal Virgins' temple at the foot of the Palatine Hill.

A QUIET rest on the steps of the City Councillors' Palace on the Capitoline Hill, we found to be most refreshing. Here we were on the site of the ancient Capitol, where the heroic Julius Cæsar was treacherously stabbed; and before us was the piazza where Brutus harangued the crowds after the murder.

We felt too hot, however, to be unduly impressed by any past happenings associated with the place. Our interest was reserved for the fine statue of Marcus Aurelius in the centre—the only thing of ancient Rome remaining on this famous hill—and the Capitoline Museum on the other side. Just behind rose the tower of the church of the jewel-encrusted

olive wood idol, known as the "holy bambino"—St. Maria in Ara Coeli—a fitting monument to the idolatrous paganism which Christianity was supposed to have condemned and supplanted.

City of Ruins

On the other side of the hill we looked down upon a city of ruins. Spread out in a vast sweep toward the distant Colosseum, and flanked by the ruin-adorned Palatine Hill, were the pillars and arches, the statues and stones, of the ancient Roman Forum. It was a scene of picturesque desolation—the pathetic grave of what was once the peerless glory of Imperial Rome. Immediately below us were the pillars of the ancient Temple of Saturn—the sole remains of the building, already old in our Lord's day, before which those pagan crowds would sit spellbound as they listened to the eloquent speeches of Cicero, which he delivered from the now ruined Rostra.

It wasn't long before we found our way to the Via Sacra at the far end of the Forum, paid our entrance fee of thirty lire, and climbed the slight hill to the Arch of Titus. It was hard to believe that this peaceful road, covered with its broken and irregular stones, and well adorned with weeds and wild flowers, once bore the grand triumphal processions of the victorious Cæsars as they made their way through the wildly exultant crowds to the Forum.

History's Most Terrible Siege

Of all the relics of Imperial Rome, few stirred us so deeply as this arch; for it commemorates the most terrible siege in the whole of history, and is remarkable testimony to the truth of one of our Lord's prophecies. It was built by Titus after his triumphant return from the burnt-out embers of ancient Jerusalem. Our Lord had said of this city: "Thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and . . . keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground." Luke 19:43, 44. Such a predic-

ROME'S RUINS

VINE

tion was not kindly received by the Jewish leaders, nor was it seriously considered by them to have any relation to their future destiny. Christ's merciful warning merely served to intensify the bitter hatred which prevailed against Him.

But in A.D. 70, because of the persistent refusal of those Jews to accept Christianity, God permitted the great siege to come. This was speedily followed by hunger, starvation, horrifying outbreaks of cannibalism, and the eventual destruction which wiped out hundreds of thousands in its devastating vortex.

Unwise it surely is, to ignore the Word of prophecy; yet how persistently have men failed in this respect.

The arch sculptures picture the triumphal march of Titus, and actually show the seven-branched candlestick and the table of show-bread from the Jewish Temple being displayed as objects of curiosity before the wondering eyes of the surging masses which thronged the streets. Faintly, in the background, can be seen in relief the desolated city, and on one side are the walls of that splendid temple, split by the fury of the conflagration, and tottering precariously in the act of ruin. The rapine and licence of an enraged soldiery are pictured in the distance. Thus fell to final ruin that obstinate city over which the compassionate Jesus had wept.

Similar Desolation

And here we were midst a scene of similar desolation. Ancient Rome, once the proud metropolis of a great world empire, has deteriorated into a ghost city—silent by day, save for the shrill song of a myriad crickets and the occasional voices of sight-seers; and deserted at night, save for the bats and owls.

For centuries the place was abandoned after foreign plunderers had done their worst, and

during this time it was used as a dumping ground for rubbish. In the Middle Ages it endured the humiliation of serving as a cattle market. Its name was changed from Forum Romanum into Campo Vaccino — without doubt, a more degrading indignity for such a place, than to be abandoned to dogs and cats and humbler creatures as at present.

Much of ancient Rome, however, was taken and used for more modern buildings. Many a ton of Imperial masonry has passed under the Arch of Titus and down the Via Sacra, to serve the mundane purpose of providing building material for Italian homes. This "quarrying" has now ceased, and plenty still remains to feed the keen imagination.

Priestesses of the "Fire God"

In the centre of the spectral pillars and stones stand the remains of the shrine of the fire god, Vesta. A mere fragment, indeed, but enough to indicate the departed glory of the place. Here the white-clad Vestal Virgins, in honour of the fire god, preserved their "sacred" fire for over a thousand years. The penalty for letting the fire go out was flogging at the hands of the Pontifex Maximus. It was the custom in times of crisis to offer special prayers to Vesta, as well as to Appollo and Mars.

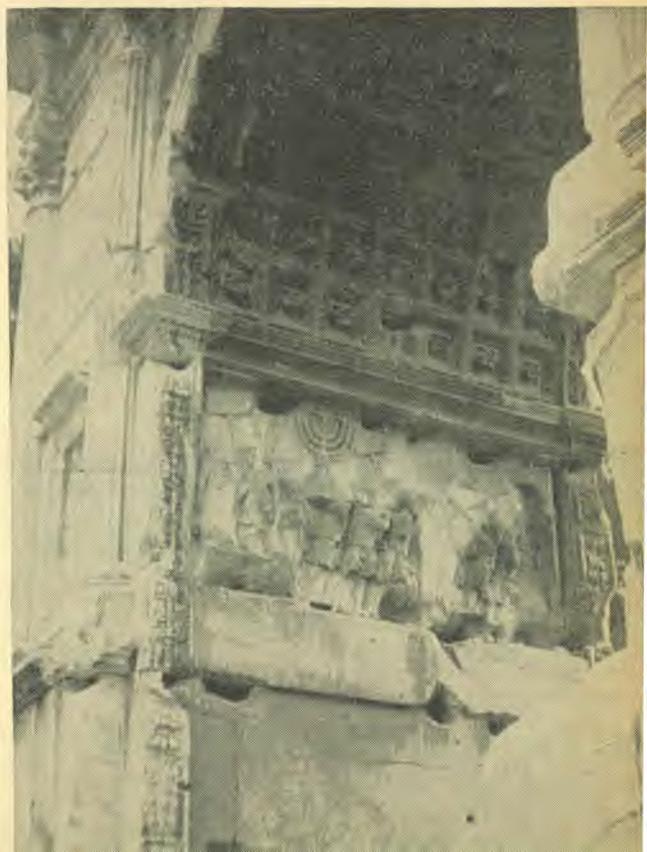


Photo by R.D.V.

The Arch of Titus showing the Jewish trophies brought to Rome after the destruction of Jerusalem.

JANUARY 25, 1951

We climbed over the rubble into what seemed to be a garden behind, but which was once the Vestals' House. Here are still standing—but now exposed to the elements—rows of broken figures which once represented the "mother superiors" of the Vestal Virgins.

Whatever virtuous tendency, if any, attached to their idolatrous religion, it certainly was not ennobling or refining. For here lived the girls whose "thumbs down" verdict upon some hapless gladiator in the infamous Colosseum, was a regular excuse for needlessly flooding the place with human blood. Maidenly refinement and normal decency were thrown to the winds by these white-garbed guardians of the "eternal fire." Their horrible blood lust led them to revel in the hideous sight of massacred Christians and disembowelled gladiators.

The Bible speaks of the "brutish" man. But here we were in the wrecked abode of "brutish" maidens—the revered keepers of the flame—hardened and calloused by their estrangement from the true God of love.

"All is Vanity"

We clambered over more hot, dusty ruins toward the foot of the precipitous Palatine Hill, where Romulus first built the city of Rome. We were soon beside yet another relic of the numerous gods represented in the Forum—gods who have happily sunk into obscurity. Towering skyward from the rubble are three elegant pillars—the sole remains of the temple devoted to Castor and Pollux.

After a brief visit to the ruined church of St. Maria Antiqua beside the Temple of Augustus, we walked along the Via Nova and climbed the Palatine Hill so that we could better appreciate the unique sight of the Forum.

We could almost trace the word "Ichabod" across the whole devastated scene.

We were not the first to be impressed with the vanity of man's works. The Austrian Empress Elizabeth gloomily remarked toward the close of her tragic life: "What is the good of our efforts, since none of our works last; since, before a century has passed, everything that to-day seems to us so urgent and so substantial, everything that we have most loved, everything that has cost us so much trouble, will have completely disappeared?" "All is vanity," declared the wise man; and he went on to declare: "I have seen all the works that are done under the sun: and, behold, all is vanity." Eccles. 1:2, 14.

Few remember much of ancient Rome. That proud empire, as Bible prophecy foresaw, has so completely vanished as to be scarcely a memory. Of all the mighty leaders who rocked and stirred the world in their time, few are readily remembered beside Julius Cæsar and the infamous Nero.

Lives of Enduring Value

Which all emphasizes the barrenness of life without God. If our sole concern on earth is to serve ourselves, then life is futile indeed. We die; our work and memory is soon forgotten; and the final judgment will convey us to eternal darkness and oblivion. It is only as we seek to glorify the living God and to serve His eternal purpose, that our lives and labour will have any real worth or lasting virtue.

It is true that the memory of us may be forgotten; but as builders for eternity we will, in the final reckoning day, be raised from our obscure resting places to live and labour in that coming world of bliss, where everything—including ourselves—will be imperishable.

We thought how eloquently those broken pillars and disorderly stones proclaimed the futility of men's works, as we made our way once more past the Arch of Titus and down the Via Sacra to the Colosseum.

(Next Time: "I Visit the Colosseum.")

Photo by R.D.V.

The Capitoline Museum on the summit of Rome's most famous hill. In front is a statue of the emperor, Marcus Aurelius.

OUR TIMES



THE CURE for Sin



By Peter L. Parker

FROM the day when the human babe curls his lips in his first winning smile, through youth and manhood, to the time when old age brings its tender philosophizing and longing reminiscences, the human being makes the most fascinating study.

Man, rejoicing in creative power raises up tall skyscrapers, spreads out busy factories, dedicates dignified cathedrals, and spans the rivers of the world with massive steel bridges. He ribbons the land with roads and railways, and with amazing rapidity speeds along them in beetle-like cars and steaming trains.

Huge metal-framed birds reach out to every corner of the world under his control; a flight through the air faster than sound fails to shock his imagination. Mighty ships, each carrying enough people to populate a sizeable town, plough daily through the oceans.

Meeting the world's physical needs, man drugs pain, regrafts skin, removes appendices, cuts away tumours, fills decayed teeth, makes artificial limbs, and introduces a thousand medical amenities.

By careful thought and close scrutiny of stone tablets, old tombs, pyramids, cave drawings, and aged manuscripts, the histories of men and nations are written from the kingdom of Accad to the time of King George VI and President Truman. Emperors, popes, and politicians are brought to life in books as if they all lived just yesterday.

In democratic countries men of initiative aspire to prominent government positions and in their zeal for rights and liberties, promote laws for the benefit and assistance of the people, and by these the warm glow of loyal patriotism is encouraged. Learned men study



"Come unto Me."

law and justice that the innocent might be protected and the criminal punished.

Yet how sorry we are to note a strange and fearful blot, unreasonable, unaccountable, and foreign to life's sweetest blend, marring the good record of man's aspiring capabilities. A simple penetrating name has been given to this moral intrusion, and that name is *sin*.

Sin appeared in its fateful form even before the day that Cain rose up to slay his brother Abel. And since, greed has moved man to conquer kingdoms, unmindful of man's desire for peace, liberty, and freedom. Intolerance has caused him to wax hot with anger against his antagonists and condemn them to cold execution and cruel martyrdom. Adultery has brought confusion, broken hearts, and mockery to the sacredness of marriage, and desertion to homes. Backbiting has brought hard-earned honour and reputation to the dust. Jealousy has made a man sleepless in his bed until he should lift his guilty arm in the stroke of vengeance. Intemperance has caused prodigious waste of precious means, prodigious sap-

ping of vital life forces; man, made in the image of God has been degraded by alcohol to the gutter.

Oh, why, pure angels must wonder, does God permit sin and sinners to exist a moment longer? Why does not Omnipotence in a moment close this earth's history and end it all?

God's Way Out

There is a reason why this has not occurred—at least, not yet. The Bible clearly defines what sin is, what sin does, where it eventually will lead. It defines, praise be to Him, a God who "so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16.

The half has never yet been told, a fraction not yet understood, concerning Jesus, the Saviour of mankind, the One who alone lived sinless on earth. He suffered every conceivable mental perplexity and every temptation, and endured amazing physical torture on the cross in order that those who believe in Him may be saved.

Jesus lives to-day, and His presence may be realized by those who daily attune their spiritual perception by study of His Word. There are possibilities for man far better than any material, intellectual, or worldly-honoured pursuit ever known. As yet unrealized are the heights of love for God and man's neighbour which will ennoble his entire being; depths of sympathy which will draw out compassion for the meanest and poorest sinner in humanity; breadth of purpose which will cover every race, tribe, creed, and colour in its mission to serve them.

Abundant life and spiritual progress are available to every man and woman, boy and girl, who will take Jesus as His Saviour and the motivating power of his life.

Are you, reader, looking for something more real and worth-while than the material and intellectual provisions of this world? Jesus Christ is the way. Have you, reader, been disappointed with the very best that humanity offers in compassion and companionship? Jesus is the never-failing Friend of mankind.

Reader, do you feel sometimes, that the terrible blot of sin has made indelible marks on your heart? My brother, my sister, you are the object of the tenderest interest of a whole

heavenly universe, for the Word of God says that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

God's New Year Gifts

(Continued from page 5.)

you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh."

Once a Christian gentleman asked a friend, who was watching a pig wallow in the mud, how he could make the pig as clean in its habits as a cat. The friend could not answer, so he was told the only way was to give it a cat's heart, then it would be a new creature. The new heart that God is willing to give us will make us new creatures. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." 2 Cor. 5:17.

A new creature with a new heart is a very wonderful thing, but every living thing must also have food—really good, sustaining food. Here again God has a gift to give the new creature. Not the husks that the prodigal tried to eat, but milk; and, later in the experience, meat. "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby." 1 Peter 2:2. This Word will find its way into the heart and aid in the new life. "Thy Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee." Psa. 119:11. That then is another solution to our problem. Hide God's Word in the new heart and those awful failures will not be so frequent.

Perhaps the story of the woman at the well illustrates another of God's new year gifts to us. He offers us a new drink, not ordinary water but living water. "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." We may have tried to get satisfaction at other fountains, broken cisterns, Jeremiah calls them, but have found that they all fail. Jesus will give us, for the asking, living water that will spring up to everlasting life.

If we were to look back in all seriousness at the sins of the past year, we would surely hang our heads for very shame like the publican, and say, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." Above all things we need God's mercy. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not."

God promises us also new power in the new year. "Ye shall receive power," the promise reads, "after that the Holy Ghost is come upon

you." Power to live the Christ-like life and bear the true witness before our fellow men and women—that is what we need.

Surely with these precious gifts that God is willing to give us we have something to sing about, and that is another of His presents, a new song. "He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God." Psa. 40:3. This wonderful, new song will not cease this year or next, but will go on for ever and ever, for we read of the saints in the New Jerusalem singing the same new song on the sea of glass.



Christ Will Really Come

(Continued from page 5.)

nowhere teaches the "gradual" second coming of Christ which will eventually encompass the whole human race. There is nothing "gradual" about Peter's description of the return of Christ. "The Lord, . . ." the inspired apostle declares, "is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." 2 Peter 3:9. But "the day of the Lord [that is His promised coming] will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up," to make way "for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." Verses 10, 13.

The second coming is no gradual coming over long ages of time. It will be a catastrophic event which will break in upon the world at a particular moment of time determined by God. At that time His Son will return "the second time" (Heb. 9:28) to open the gates of death for the deliverance of His sleeping children, to consummate the salvation of the righteous living, to destroy the incorrigibly wicked, to cleanse the earth with divine fire, and to recreate it as the eternal abode of the redeemed.

When this "divine event to which all creation moves" will take place none can precisely state. But if we will read "the signs of the times" as eagerly as we seek "to discern the face of the sky" (Matt. 16:3), we cannot but come to the startling conclusion that it is not only certain but "near, even at the doors."



Looking into the Future

(Continued from page 7.)

would be well-nigh overwhelming were it not for the many prophecies of deliverance.

When we read of "the time of trouble such as never was" we are assured that "at that time thy people shall be delivered." Dan. 12:1.

When Christ warned of "fearful sights and great signs," He added: "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." Luke 21:28.

When the embattled nations are vanquished at Armageddon by the King of kings and Lord of lords, then "the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High." Dan. 7:27; Rev. 16:13-16.

Thus as we stand upon the threshold of another new year, peering eagerly into the future, we see not only darkness, but light; not only the cruel and ugly things which frighten men, but the great and blessed hope which brings them courage. As God draws back the veil of the future by the hands of His prophets we glimpse again the great drama of the ages, now moving into its final desperate phases before the final triumph of righteousness at the return in glory and power of Jesus Christ.

With this knowledge of God's plans and purposes there is no need to fear the future. Rather it should cause us to rejoice in the love, the wisdom, and the power of God, and to give ourselves anew and unreservedly to Him.

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THE CHILDREN'S



Pages

With Jesus in the Clouds

By B. A. Walton

THIS is not a sermon about what will happen when Jesus comes; it is a story of something that really happened to us when we were returning from South Africa to our mission station in East Nigeria.

We had tried to get a passage by boat from Cape Town to Lagos, but berths were difficult to secure. The only other thing we could do was to go up by train through South Africa as far as Elizabethville, in the Belgian Congo and then take the plane to Lagos via Leopoldville. This wonderful trip would take us right up through central Africa, almost on the trail of David Livingstone, and five-year-old Margaret was thrilled. I suppose the thought of such a trip would be exciting enough for any boy or girl, wouldn't it? Of course, we looked forward to the trip too.

Soon the day arrived and with our luggage packed and our passports and visas in order, we boarded the train for our long journey. Little did we dream of the adventure that was in store for us! The train carried us along through strange and marvellous scenery, over mountains and across rivers. We saw giraffes, baboons, and lots of other animals, and once, as night was falling, we saw about a

dozen huge lions quite close to the railway line. Then one morning we woke up to find ourselves in Elizabethville. There we stayed a day then set off in the grey light of dawn the next morning in the bus



Little Margaret, the heroine of our story.

which was to take us to the airfield.

Once inside the plane we settled back into the cushions and as the motors roared into life we adjusted the safety straps for the take-off. The plane taxied to the end of the runway, we took one last look at Elizabethville, and with a rush and a roar the plane soared into the blue tropical

sky with only the drone of the engines to remind us that we were really flying.

It was only now that we began to look around inside the plane. We could see Captain Dewez and his co-pilot at the controls in front and behind them the radio-operator wearing ear-phones. Margaret sat over the port wing and we sat just behind her. There were seven other passengers beside ourselves.

After a while it seemed that the plane was entering a cloud. We had passed through clouds before, but they were white and this one was small and black and was only on one side of the plane around the port wing. Then out from the middle of the little black cloud long red tongues of flame began to leap. Margaret and her mother looked at me and said, "Is anything wrong, Daddy?" I said, "Yes, I think the wing of the plane is on fire." By this time the flames were big and had begun to eat along the wing toward us. There was much excitement in the plane. The pilots were hurriedly turning levers and screwing down taps, and the radio-operator was tapping his key and listening intently. Some of the passengers were crying and others just sat with blank faces. How thankful we were that we had said our prayers that morning and asked God to take us safely on our journey.

Margaret stood up and turned round and with the wondrous faith of a little child, as she saw the anxious, tearful faces, said, "What are you crying for? Don't worry, Jesus will take care of us." I thought of the petrol we had taken on board in the tanks not long before. The tanks were in the wings. We closed our eyes and prayed that God, who had brought us safely so far, would save us from this peril.

I do not know how long my eyes were closed, but when I looked again at the wing the flames had gone, and there was a gaping hole in the wing. How long the plane could stay up in this condition we did not know for with a full plane, only one engine—for the one on the burnt side had stopped—and a damaged wing the chances were not bright. How far must we go before we could land, we did not know, but the tops of the trees were much nearer now, and the pilots were plainly worried. But we were not worried, for God had already shown His hand and we knew that He had heard our prayers.

The one remaining engine kept running faithfully and on flew the plane, though no longer on an even keel. The tree tops crept nearer and nearer. Suddenly, when it seemed we had not much time left, both pilots turned round

at once toward us with both thumbs up in the air. We looked down again and there just a little distance ahead was an open space. In a few

COME TO-DAY

Come to the Saviour, dear child,
to-day,
Do not put off, oh! do not delay
Making Him your very own dear
Friend—
He'll bless and help you right to
the end.

Come to the Saviour, dear child,
to-day,
No one can hinder, why stop
away?
It is your own small self He would
bless,
And clothe you in His own right-
eousness.

Come to the Saviour, dear child,
to-day,
Salvation is free; take it, I pray.
Look upon Him who lovingly gave
His precious life that you might
be saved.

Come to the Saviour, dear child,
to-day,
Time is fast moving; come, while
you may!
The angels in heaven will rejoice
As you make the dear Saviour
your choice.

Margaret Bolton.

minutes the plane touched down and we were all soon out, glad to feel our feet safely on the ground once more. How all the passengers ran

around to congratulate each other and the crew! We too thanked the captain, but, as we drew aside from the rest we lifted our hearts to the One who is never far away when His children call and who had indeed borne us up in His hands that day.

But the story doesn't end there. We were taken to an hotel in the nearest town where we had to wait several days. The next morning a man whom we recognized as one of our fellow-passengers came and introduced himself to us. "I am Turkish," he said, "though I live in the Congo and am a trader here. I have never been inside a Christian church and perhaps I may never go, but I want to tell you that your little girl has given the greatest sermon and testimony for Christ that I may ever hope to hear." Some days later, when we were safe in Leopoldville, the same Turkish gentleman took Margaret to a shop and bought her a beautiful dolly.

So now we have a dolly and some snaps and the autograph of the captain of the plane. We have a memory of a Turkish gentleman who heard about Jesus from a little girl in a burning plane high above the Congo jungles. But we also have something more. We have a faith that has been made stronger, and a little daughter whom no one will ever be able to convince that God does not hear and answer prayer.

See how nicely you can paint this picture and send it with your name, age, and address, to Auntie Eva, The Stanborough Press Ltd., Watford, Herts., not later than February 8th.

PAGE FIFTEEN

The Bible and
OUR TIMES
(Formerly "Present Truth")
Vol. 67. No. 2. Price 3d.
Printed and published in Great Britain
fortnightly on Thursday by
THE STANBOROUGH PRESS LTD.,
WATFORD, HERTS.
EDITOR : W. L. EMMERSON
Six months 5/6 post free
Twelve months 8/6 post free



JANUARY 25, 1951

STRAWS



WIND

"APOCALYPTIC SITUATION"

PREACHING in St. Paul's Cathedral recently Dr. W. R. Matthews described the present period as an "apocalyptic situation." "The steady, slow, march of history through the centuries," he said, "has quickened and we are confronted not with development, but with crisis and catastrophe."

NORTHERN DANGER

WRITING in the *New York Herald Tribune*, James M. Minifie says of the possibility of an attack on America from the north: "There is no adequate warning from the North. An enemy seeking to attack by the North Polar regions would have fairly easy going, because there is nothing to spot him until he gets within less than fifteen minutes' range of some of his major targets."

FORM OF EUROPEAN UNION

DISCUSSING the vexed question of the form which European Union should take, Oliver Herbert in the *Guardian* states: "The only solution of the European problem is that Europe should grow into a Commonwealth of independent nations, freely associated on the basis of their independence and linked together by preferential ties."

THE CHIEF FOCUS

"The most recent scenes in

the world drama have been set, with all their alarms and excursions, in the Pacific theatre; and most people seem to think that if the curtain rises again it will rise on the European stage," writes Ian Mikardo in *Tribune*. "Yet

significance that there is a considerable body of opinion in the United States which considers America's main effort should be put forth not in Europe but in the Far East. They are fittingly called "Asia-lationists."

"BLOTTED OUT"

Blotted out my sins, how blessed
Buried, buried in that deep red
sea:

Jesu's blood, shed for my cleansing:
I'm absolved, acquitted, free.

Precious gift, by faith I take it,
Help me keep it pure and white:
Ever looking unto Jesus,
Ever walking in the light.

Ever pressing onward, upward,
Guided by Thy gracious Word;
By the Holy Spirit's power,
Walking in Thy footsteps, Lord.

Come, Thou blessed Holy Spirit,
Help me, keep me, day by day,
Hold me now, henceforth, and
use me,
Seal my heart as Thine, I pray.
Mrs. T. Buchman.

there are still many competent strategists who hold to the view that the point on which the limelight should be focused remains, as it has been for a long time, the Middle East."

"ASIALATIONISTS"

It is not without prophetic



ORTHODOX CHURCH IN CHINA

THAT the Orthodox church is being allowed to occupy territory in the Far East from which the Western churches are being pushed out is indicated by the consecration of the first Chinese Orthodox bishop of Tsian-Sin. He was consecrated in Moscow by the supreme Patriarch.

BATTLE OF TOTALITARIANISMS

DISCUSSING the Vatican in *Public Opinion* as the "Cominform's chief enemy" the Rev. C. O. Rhodes concludes his article: "In the last resort the present world struggle will not be decided by military divisions, but by the rival power of faiths. The battle is between two totalitarianisms, one materialist and one spiritual. Both share the illusion that mankind can be saved by temporal power. For the spectator the question arises whether he prefers a totalitarianism with the cross at the centre or one that brandishes the hammer and sickle." "Yet that dilemma is not final," he adds. "Another and better way lies open before us."