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Rev. J. H. Townsend
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“AFTER THIS I
WILL RETURN”

OR

THE THREEFOLD OUTLOOK

BY

THE REV. J. H. TOWNSEND, D.D.

Vicar of St. Mark's, Tunbridge Wells

AUTHOR OF “A BRIGHT TO-MORROW,” “THE
BRIGHTENING EAST,” “STILL UPWARD,”

“PEN PICTURES OF BIBLE
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The Threefold Outlook

ERRATA.

Page 35, three lines from bottom, read ἐθνη.

Page 81, four lines from bottom, read γνώσις.

been rejected by His people, and the little handful of men who heard their Master speak of coming woes "trembled for the Ark of God."

The Third when the Infant Church met together for the first time as a corporate body to face a difficulty which threatened its very existence. On each of these occasions there was a seer, One speaking by His own knowledge, the

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The Threefold Outlook

THE Bible records three critical periods in religious history. The First after the Babylonian Captivity, when Church and State were trying to adapt themselves to altered conditions in Jerusalem, and men looked forward fearfully to the future.

The Second when the Messiah had been rejected by His people, and the little handful of men who heard their Master speak of coming woes "trembled for the Ark of God."

The Third when the Infant Church met together for the first time as a corporate body to face a difficulty which threatened its very existence. On each of these occasions there was a seer, One speaking by His own knowledge, the

other two by knowledge imparted to them, who looking on into the future and describing the regulated plan on which God intended to work, calmed the fears of His people.

Zechariah, the prophet of the First and Second Advents, had a priceless opportunity, and not only influenced the men of his generation so well as to reform the nation, but also was inspired to give more particulars than any other prophet of ultimate deliverance from the terrible trials of his race in the days that seem now to be approaching.

The Lord Jesus, the Great Central Figure of history, Who saw Past Present and Future at a glance, left to His faithful ones a clue to His actions which would be able to lead them along the perplexing maze of the days to come, and whose value has never seemed so great as at this very moment. Last of all, our Lord's Brother, Chairman of the great assembly that met in Jerusalem,

was inspired by the Holy Spirit to calm the excited feelings of the early Church by showing that nothing took God by surprise, but that from the first, He had laid down a plan of operations which was to be found in the Bible.

These three utterances, outlooks into the future at very different times, whose lines of thought seem now to be converging to a point perhaps not very far away, are more and more important as the days pass by; may they quicken in us that earnest prayerfulness, fervent diligence, and eager alertness that should characterize those who watch for that

“One, far off, Divine Event
To which the whole Creation moves.”

In the following pages I propose first to examine the words of the Master Himself; secondly, the message of His prophet, and last of all, the inspired utterance *ex cathedrâ* of His Apostle.

November, 1907.

J. H. T.

Chapter I

The Last Day of Our Lord's Ministry

MOST students of Scripture have noticed that the Gospels give us a diary more or less complete of the opening and closing weeks of our Lord's Ministry. St. John supplies the former, the latter is obtained from the three earlier writers. I do not think, however, that many have observed the particular order in which our Saviour arranged the Eight Parables of his last Discourses, and the questions addressed to Him by foes and friends.

I use the word "arranged" advisedly, for as it is no accident in nature that causes crystals to take perfect mathematical shapes, so it seems to me impossible to believe that the remarkable form in which these words have crystal-

lized should have been anything less than a carefully matured design.

The following ground plan will illustrate my meaning :—

St. Matthew xxi. 23—xxii. 14.

Four Parables *addressed to enemies*, regarding mainly the *First Advent*.

St. Matthew xxii. 15-46.

Plain answers to three questions *addressed by enemies*.

St. Matthew xxiii. 1—xxiv. 2.

Public denunciation of enemies.

St. Matthew xxiv. 3-44.

Plain answers to three questions *addressed by friends*.

St. Matthew xxiv. 45—xxv. 46.

Four Parables *addressed to friends*, regarding mainly the *Second Advent*.

Is it possible to imagine that such an oratorical scheme of argument was the result of accident? Nor is this all, for later on I shall endeavour to point out a similar plan pursued in chapter xxiv., a shrine within a temple, whose existence, taken with the other, gives us, I submit, a clear proof of our Lord's design to

NOTE.—The outline of events here given and in chapter iii. was first pointed out to me by a valued friend.

attract our notice and call our attention to a subject which He wishes us to study.

“When the Lord saw that he (Moses) turned aside to see, God called unto him ” and gave him a marvellous revelation of His purposes.

Chapter II

The Last Day in the Temple

ON the first Palm Sunday our Lord made His triumphal entry into the City, and, having with stern and searching glance "looked round about upon all things," went back to Bethany.

On Monday He judged the barren fig-tree, emblem of the Jewish Church and Nation, and cleansed the Temple.

On Tuesday He taught in the Temple, and being challenged by the chief priests and elders concerning His action of the previous day He uttered *Four Parables* as a decisive answer to that challenge. All the parables and answers were given on the memorable Tuesday before His death. There is no day in the history of man from the Creation to which the Bible gives so many pages. It was our Lord's last day of public ministry, and the record of teaching is very full. The Parables of

the Two Sons, The Husbandmen and the Vineyard, The Headstone, and the Marriage Supper, have a terrible ring about them — they were addressed to enemies who were standing by, raging in their hearts, longing but not yet daring to strike the calm majestic Figure Who sat in their midst scathing their sins though pitying their fate.

These parables tell of a great opportunity lost, of a Mighty Saviour rejected, of Divine love spurned. With the last parable another door closed, for never again did our Lord speak in public with that form of teaching which He had used so widely during His earthly public ministry.

The enemies renew their attacks, now under cover of respect for His authority as a Teacher (as Satan himself is at times transformed into the appearance of an angel of light), and they ask *Three Questions* concerning Duty, Life, and Love. Having dismissed the questions with wonderful words which awed those who asked them, and which have filled men with amazement ever since, the rejected Saviour took for a brief space the

place of Judge, and in the twenty-third chapter uttered the terrible *Denunciation* of a Nation and Church that had refused their King Messiah.

At the beginning of His Ministry in the Sermon on the Mount, Christ proclaimed a series of blessings on those who wished to be, and to live as, the servants of God; now at its close He utters eight Woes on false professors and faithless teachers who led men away from His service. Almost fierce in holy indignation is the challenge to those whose ancestors had killed the prophets, to "fill up the measure" of their fathers' guilt. He knew at the moment—and some standing by who had bribed the traitor three days before also knew—that the measure was actually filling, and He knew also, which they knew not, that three days more would see the nameless crime completed, "which shook the earth and veiled the sun." From verse 33 to 36 the climax of awful indictment and judgment is reached, and then a tear comes into the voice of the Judge, and in tones of exquisite pathos He wails over Jerusalem's lost opportunity. Man's free will had

thrust aside the loving counsels of God, and "Ye would not" was the epitaph placed by Christ's Hand upon the grave.

How marvellous the change that one day can bring about in a nation's state! On Monday, as He cleansed the Temple, He had said, "*My House* shall be called the House of Prayer," it was still His House, and had they even then seen the significance of His action and recognized His claim the nation might have been saved. But they did not, and in one short day their fate was sealed. Mark the ominous change of words at the close of this chapter: "*Your house* is left unto *you* desolate." And so the curtain falls at the end of this act in the terrible drama; but the Lord utters yet one more word of prediction, He turns His back upon His nation as He leaves the Temple, which was no longer the House of God, He reminds them of the cry with which, two days before, His disciples had welcomed Him to Jerusalem, and He tells them that not until that cry is the nation's watchword will He return to His people as their Messiah.

Chapter III

Questions from His Friends

THE Denunciation is over, and as a Teacher, Christ has done with His enemies. Now every thought and word is given to His Friends.

The reverse order is observed from that which we noticed in the first part of the subject, as a glance at the "ground plan" will show. Then it was Four Parables followed by Three Questions, now it is Three Questions followed by Four Parables. The listeners have changed, it is not now enemies sullenly forced to hear, but friends who hang upon His lips. The subject has changed, it is no longer the First Advent and humiliation but the Second Advent and the glory.

On that Spring evening, after they had left the Temple, and as they climbed the

western slope of the Mount of Olives, radiant perhaps with the light of the setting sun, the terrified disciples, amazed at the words which He had spoken a short space before about the coming destruction of their beautiful Temple, took the opportunity as the Lord sat down (perhaps to rest, perhaps for a last long look at the Temple where He had so often taught, or at Jerusalem the city of so much promise and blessing in the past but the scene in the future of such agonies and horror) to ask Him three earnest and eager questions—(a) *When shall these things be*, these devastations, these invasions of the enemy, these terrible calamities? (b) *What shall be the sign of Thy Coming?* (c) *What shall be the sign of the end of the Age?* In the Introduction I said that we should find in chapter xxiv. a lesser scheme or plan within the greater, it is as follows—the inverse order is again to be seen. He leaves the first question to the end and takes the second and third; in verses 4 and 5 He shows what shall *not* be the sign of His Coming, in verse 6, what shall *not* be the sign of the End; then at

greater length verses 7-14 what *shall* be the sign of the End, in verses 15-31 what *shall* be the sign of His Coming; then the first question is taken up in verses 32-35, and the Saviour points out that "these things" have a far-reaching meaning. The disciples thought that the destruction of the Temple, Christ's Coming, and the end of the age would all happen together; our Lord answers them in a way that shall be useful to them up to the capture and destruction of Jerusalem, and to others afterwards who shall be able to read His utterances in the light of subsequent events. These will be able in the course of time to see that the destruction of Jerusalem was only a wave in prophetic history, a figure of greater things to follow.

Some in our day have strangely lost hold of the teaching of this passage by explaining it as referring wholly to the woes of the Jewish nation under Titus, and go so far as to say that Christ's Coming was fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem. According to such teachers Psalm xxii. was concerned only with David and his sorrows. We know that it had a first fulfilment in him, but a greater

wave had to follow, and in the opening verses of Psalm xxii. are to be found seven actual circumstances that received their greater fulfilment at the Cross of Christ. So surely it is here ; as we proceed we shall see that our Lord intended His followers to look far, far beyond the times in which they were living, and then after recounting events which would take a very long time in their fulfilment, He uses the same word and says, "When ye shall see all these things, know that He is near." "All these things," we note that qualifying word. To the disciples "these things" meant the troubles which rose so ominously in the near future ; to Christ, however, who saw the far-off days, the near were a pattern of the distant, but for the sake of those to come after, that they should not think the prophecy exhausted by the earlier woes, He says, "*all* these things."

It has been objected to this view that our Lord uses the word "ye," "when ye shall see," and that He adds further, "This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled." These expressions, it is contended, seem to show

that only what was included in the experience of those then on earth could have been described here. In reply to this, I would venture to refer to what I have written elsewhere concerning the meaning of "this generation" as referring to the Jewish race, an interpretation which I believe to be the true one.*

We find, moreover, "ye" and "you" frequently addressed to living men with a fulness which the present time cannot exhaust, *e.g.*, St. Matt. xxviii. 20, "Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the age." If the word "you" refers in that passage to the Church in its corporate capacity up to *the very same period of time* as that contemplated in St. Matt. xxiv. 33, 34, why should it have a limited signification here? Our Lord therefore says to His disciples, "When ye, my faithful ones, all down the age see all these things being fulfilled, know that He whom you expect is near, at the doors."

Although we have seen the parallel of time and of language existing in St. Matt. xxiv. and xxviii., we must not think that

* "Spiral Stairs," chapter ii., Hodder and Stoughton.

the *same class* of persons were addressed in each case. Actually, those to whom our Lord spoke in St. Matt. xxiv. were among the number who listened when He uttered the closing words of chapter xxviii., but they represented *two different classes of people*. In chapter xxviii. Christ spoke to those as representing His Church, in the chapter before us the same men represented the faithful Jewish Remnant, to whom so much of the Old Testament is addressed. These men were in themselves heirs of the covenants made with Abraham and David, having promises that were national and temporal; and the same men were shortly to become heirs of the Covenant made with Christ on behalf of His Church, having promises that were spiritual and heavenly. The former Covenant was for God's ancient people alone, the latter was soon to include every nation and tongue and language. We must not confuse promises made to these two classes merely because at the time when they were spoken the same individuals represented the two. Therefore as we read chapters xxiv. and xxv. we shall do well not to read into them the condition or character of the Church,

nor to confuse the earlier Coming of Christ for His Church, with that later phase of His Coming which is there described.

The Coming spoken of in chapters xxiv. and xxv. is that of the Messiah to "reign over the house of Jacob for ever." This reign had been promised from very early times, it was the theme of many Psalms (*e.g.*, ii., xxii., xxiv., xlv. xlvi., l., lxvii., lxxviii., lxxii., etc). Prophets had given marvellous descriptions of it (*e.g.*, Isaiah, ii., xi., xxv., xxvi., xxvii., xxxii., etc., Ezekiel xxxiv.-xxxvii., besides numerous passages in Hosea, Joel, Amos, and Zechariah). Daniel gave a vivid description of the King Messiah coming to take up His Kingdom, ch. vii. 13, 14, and these words as we remember were quoted by our Lord in the Hall of Judgment (St. Matt. xxviii. 64) as specially descriptive of His Return to the Nation which had rejected Him. Daniel speaks of the returning One as the "Son of Man," and this is the expression chosen by our Lord, in the Gospels, to describe His office. *Whenever it is used we are to understand His relationship to His people as their Messiah.* Consequently the

phrase occurs more than 80 times in the Gospels, for these books describe our Lord's character and office with regard to the House of Israel, but it is not to be found in the Acts, or in any of the Epistles which have to do with Christ's Church, until we come to the Epistle of the Hebrews, where it occurs once. Then in the Revelation, the New Testament sequel to Daniel, where the very description of His appearance tallies with that in Dan. vii., the title "Son of Man" is resumed, and from the particulars regarding His Coming in chapters i. 7, xix., II-21, and xx. 1-5 we see plainly that it is the later phase of that Coming which is described, and not the Appearing for His Church.

In the chapters which we are considering, St. Matt. xxiv. and xxv., it is the Return of the Messiah, the Son of Man; the Return of the once-rejected One to those who shall then call upon Him in the foretold words "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of Jehovah."

The earlier phase of His Coming, for His Church, is that for which we look at any moment, not like the other dependent on certain national or prophetic events,

but dependent only on the Will of God. This is referred to in 1 Thess. iv., 2 Thess. ii. 1, 2, where "the Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our (the Saints) gathering together unto Him" is deliberately contrasted with "the Day of the Lord" (the Revised Version has given us the proper reading), Phil. iii. 20, 21, Romans xiv. 10 (Greek), 1. Cor. iii. 13-15, iv. 5. The three last-named refer, I believe, entirely to the Judgment of the Saints which shall take place when Christ comes for His Church and sees and examines the work done for Him in His absence.

St. Matt. xxiv. and xxv. have reference not primarily if at all to His Church, but, as above stated, to His Coming as Jewish Messiah to His ancient people. Great stress is accordingly laid upon His Majesty and His triumph. He comes to establish the Kingdom of Heaven on earth; nothing that offends or that does iniquity shall be found in that Kingdom, so at His Coming the Son of Man shall send forth His angels who shall gather out of the Kingdom all the tares, severing the wicked from the just; then two men shall be in the field, or two women grind-

ing in the mill, the evil one in either case shall be taken away by the angels for punishment, and the faithful one left in the Kingdom where the Reign of Righteousness is established (St. Matt. xiii. and xxiv.). The beautiful Kingdom upon earth is described in Isaiah xi., and when David in spirit saw the picture rise before him in Psalm lxxii. he concludes with this exclamation, "The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended," in other words "he has nothing left to pray for!" Then the immemorial strife with sin shall cease, wrong will not be called right nor shall God's faithful ones be lightly esteemed, for the righteous shall shine as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father.

Chapter IV

Parables for Friends

THE three questions have been answered; but our Lord does not rise. His disciples hang upon His words, such a revelation of the future had never before fallen from His lips, for He had many things to say to them, and this was perhaps the last opportunity. The scheme of teaching was not yet complete. It had begun with Four Parables addressed to enemies. He would now utter *Four Parables* to His friends.

The first of these deals with collective responsibility, the second with personal responsibility to their absent Messiah, while the third treats of work done for Him in His absence. The parables of the Evil Servant and of the Virgins refer to the condition within, that of the Talents to service without. We shall not attempt to expound them in all their particulars

because probably the time has not yet come when all can be understood. It is possible, however, to clear away misunderstanding and to arrive at some idea of their scope by, in the first place, treating them negatively.

These parables are not to be interpreted of the Church.

We are all familiar with interesting and erudite expositions of them, especially that of the Ten Virgins, in which the very points of time to which they refer are carefully marked out, this to the experiences of the early Church, this to the darkness of the Middle Ages, this to the period of the Reformation, and so forth. If our canon of interpretation be correct, these are wrong, for, as has been observed above, the Church is not contemplated in these parables, it is the condition of the faithful Jewish remnant as Jews towards their Jewish Messiah, and their actions on His behalf, which is the subject of these three parables. The Church is not in the field of vision. This will appear more clearly in the fourth parable. To apply these to the Church and to draw abundance of spiritual teaching therefrom is

most legitimate and very profitable, but the moment that we pass from application to interpretation we are off the path, and it is this unfortunate procedure which has involved many writers in inextricable confusion of thought. One illustration will suffice. In the parable of the Ten Virgins it is the almost universal custom to interpret the Wise and Foolish Virgins as two sections of the Church, whereas Scripture always calls the Church by the name of the Bride. "The Virgins that be her fellows bear her company," but the Virgins are not the Bride. There are three characters in an Eastern wedding, the Bridegroom, the Bride, and the Virgins ; they occupy obviously quite distinct places, and must not be confused together. The Bride is not named in the parable. Why? Because its teaching is about the Jews, and they, as Jews, are not the Bride, which is made up, under different spiritual conditions, of Jews and Gentiles. In this parable the Bride, though understood as a necessary part of the story, does not come into view because, as we have said before, the attention is now riveted, not on the Bride, but her

companions. The interpretation of the parable must be confined to the readiness of the faithful Jewish remnant to meet their Messiah when He comes for His Church, the Bride. Probably the future contains the elements of interpretation in itself, which will be made clear when the time comes, but to interpret the attitude of the Virgins as the attitude of the Bride implies a confusion of ideas that is quite astonishing.

It is interesting to observe that in the earliest Christian times this distinction was remembered, but it was afterwards forgotten. A proof of this is to be found in the fact noticed by Dean Alford that some early versions insert the words "and the Bride" at the close of the first verse. Without entering into any discussion as to the genuineness of the words themselves, they form an interesting testimony to the feeling of the copyists that without them there was no reference to the Church in the parable. That is our contention. St. Paul directs (Rom. xii. 6) that prophecy, or preaching and exposition of the Scriptures, should always be according to the proportion or analogy of the faith; now surely it is a violation of all such analogy

and proportion to interpret that which is said of the Virgins in the Bride's company as if it had been said of the Bride?

Morally and practically, the teaching of these parables and of those in St. Matt. xiii. applies to the Church, but their true subject is the Kingdom, and entrance into this began before the revelation of the Mystery of the Church, and will probably continue after the removal of the Church from the Earth.

The parable of the Talents refers to a trust given by their Master to faithful ones among the Jewish people for service in His absence. The oracles of God committed to them of old and their testimony in the midst of heathen nations to the one true God, together with the matters mentioned in Rom. ix. 4 and 5, may form, with other things, the Talents entrusted to them. The last of these, viz., the testimony to their Messiah seems already to be taking shape. Apart from the altered attitude towards the Blessed One Whom their fathers crucified, and the public recognition now often given to the Lord by Jewish leaders of thought as a great Teacher to be deeply revered, there are to

be met with not infrequently most striking acknowledgments by individual Jews, who have not yet accepted Christianity, of the fact that the Jesus of Nazareth who was rejected by their nation was really and truly the Messiah of their people.

In November, 1906, there appeared in "Trusting and Toiling" a letter—perhaps as extraordinary as any letter written for many years—from a Jew to an Oriental Archbishop. "I am a Jew, but by conviction I am a Christian, and the more I study the Gospel, the more loud does the voice of this inward conviction become. . . . I am one of a nation considered hostile to Christ and to Christianity. Against that [charge] I am ready to fight with all the powers of my soul. . . . Sooner or later, the Jews will accept Christ with great joy, as a father meets an injured and cast-off son. The moment of the reconciliation of the Jews with Christ will be the greatest in the history of mankind. It seems to me that this moment is approaching. I have no outward witnesses to prove it; but I believe it because it cries aloud in my soul."

Besides individual testimony of this

kind it is remarkable to observe a movement in the national conscience illustrated by the following: Here is a prayer (translated by Mr. Bergmann, the translator of the New Testament into Yiddish) used year by year in every synagogue on the Day of Atonement: "Messiah, our righteousness, is departed from us; horror hath seized us, and we have no one to justify us. He hath borne the yoke of our iniquities, and is wounded because of our transgressions. He beareth our sins upon His shoulders that we may find pardon for our iniquities. We shall be healed by His wounds at the time when the Eternal will re-create Him a new Creature. Oh, bring Him up from the circle of the earth, raise Him up from sin, that we may hear Him the second time, on Mount Lebanon, through Yinon." Who can say but that this knowledge ripening into conviction may form part of the Talents to be used by Jews throughout the world after the Church has gone, and for the individual use of this testimony among the nations they will render an account when the Messiah returns with His Church to establish His Kingdom upon Earth.

Chapter V

The Fourth Parable

THE Judgment of the Living Nations This is not the Judgment of the Saints described in Romans xiv. 10, 1 Cor. iii. 13-15, iv. 5, ix. 24-27, etc.; nor is it the Judgment of the Great White Throne (Rev. xx. 11-15); it differs from these two in time and character. The three feasts, Passover Pentecost and Tabernacles, being each of them Harvest Festivals were types of the three Seasons of Judgment, *viz.*, that of the Saints at our Lord's Coming, of the Nations at the beginning of the Millennial Reign, of the dead at the conclusion of that Reign. The first will be a judgment of the Living and the Dead; the second of the Living only (*τὰ ἔθνη* is used 150 times in N.T. for the living nations and never for the dead nations); the third only of the Dead. The

first will be a judgment of (award upon) the good for their works; the second a judgment of good and bad; the third a judgment of the bad.* It is with the second phase of this Season of Judgment that we have now to do. The judgment of the living nations for their treatment of the Jews is the subject of this parable. After the Church has gone, Jewish preachers will go forth into the world bearing the message of the "Gospel of the Kingdom" (St. Matt. xxiv. 14). This present time is the season of the preaching of "the Gospel of the Grace of God" (Acts xx. 24), but the season of grace will close at the Coming of the Lord for His Church, —then probably after the Return and Conversion of the Jews their messengers will go forth preaching the Gospel of the Coming King, and when He comes with His Church the imagery of these Parables will commence. The subject of this Judgment is not concerning faith or want of faith, not the acceptance or rejection of the Saviour of Men, but simply and solely

* NOTE.—For a fuller treatment of this subject the reader is referred to "Watching for the Dawn," chapter iii., Marshall Brothers, Ltd.

the treatment of "My brethren"—the Jews—by the nations of the earth.

In the Old Testament we find the history of the nations enlarged upon or almost ignored as it intersected that of the Ancient people of God. It is just the same here. "I am poor and needy, but the Lord thinketh upon me" has a national as well as an individual interpretation. The Judge is dealing with the treatment of His people by the various Christian nations and peoples of the earth. "He is not ashamed to call them brethren," said the Apostle with regard to our Lord's relationship with the Jew at His First Advent, neither will He be ashamed of the name at His Second Coming. Surrounded by the Majesty of heaven, sitting on the clouds as His Chariot, with all the Nations of the World trembling at His feet He will for the last time appear as the Redeemer of His ancient people, and will judge the cause of those who still are and shall be forever "beloved for the fathers' sakes."

The condition of the Jews as described here is one with which we are terribly familiar through the daily press. In

Russia especially, but not only in that land, the Jew is to be seen now "hungry and thirsty," "in prison," "a stranger," *i.e.*, hunted from his home. Even in this land where the Jew is best treated we are not ignorant of the expression "undesirable alien." This description of their sad condition given in the parable seems to give us the time of the Judgment of the Nations. During the Millennial Reign instead of being persecuted they shall be held in honour; they will then be lords over those whose servants they had been. In Isaiah lx. there is a sublime description, not of the "Enlargement of the Church" as the heading of our English Bible complacently describes it with the characteristic manner so common to Christian people, of ignoring the existence of the Jew, and of appropriating to the Church things and promises which never belonged to it. No—the description here is the "enlargement of Israel during the Reign of Christ upon the earth." The 14th verse of this chapter in Isaiah shows a very different state of things from that which obtains now. "The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending

unto thee, and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet." The Judgment of the Nations must therefore evidently take place before the Millennial Reign while the Jewish people are still in the condition there described.

This judgment deals with things that now exist. Before the eyes of the world there is at this moment going on a persecution of the Jews, of which the words in St. Matt. xxv. 35 and 36 are the calm judicial expression.

We need not dwell upon ancient history and its sad record which involves every nation in the world except, perhaps, Persia. The judgment of the living nations may soon take place, and it has to do with those nations whose names occur in our daily papers. The anti-Semitic movement which has arisen in many European countries is responsible for those very things with which the Son of Man shall charge the nations.

A very remarkable feature of this judgment is that it deals with *sins of omission*. The Judge does not dwell upon charges of active cruelty, but upon *neglect*.

This should make even Christian England think. For centuries she has not persecuted the Jew, and she has even led the way in admitting him to social and political privilege.

This will not be forgotten by the Judge. Yet it cannot be denied that few professing Christians have a kindly feeling to that people, and probably it has never occurred to one Englishman in a thousand that in a sense the Jew is at this moment our Lord's visible representative upon earth. Christians have calmly pocketed all Scriptural blessings and promises, and have made up their minds that the Jew is a negligible quantity, one who at some future time may get some scraps of blessing, but who at the present is beyond their scope. Not only is this an outrage upon true Scriptural interpretation in general, but it is an ignoring of our Lord's special declaration here. "You have not done it unto *Me*"—you have neglected the Jew, and in this you who owe all to *Me* have lost your opportunity of showing your gratitude, for thus you have neglected *Me*.

It will be an astonishment to some professedly Christian nations in the Judg-

ment Day to learn that in neglecting to stand up for the persecuted Jew they were actually neglecting Christ. The words of the Judge refer to sins of omission, what then will He say to those nations who have deliberately laid themselves out to oppress and persecute the Jew ?

The Old Testament prophecies leave us in no doubt. "The day of vengeance" for those oppressors is continually predicted. When our Lord preached in the synagogue at Nazareth, and quoted Isaiah lxi., concerning "the acceptable year of the Lord," He said that the season of grace had come—and he deliberately stopped short in the sentence, for "the day of vengeance" had not yet come. But it shall come. The Day of Salvation arrived; the day of vengeance is not far off.

Last year the "Manchester Courier" printed a long letter from a leading Jewish gentleman in that city from which the following sentences are extracted:—

"The noble utterances of many eminent Christian gentlemen . . . have fully recognised the fact that Christianity has been dishonoured by the foul deeds of those so-called Russian Christians who

have revelled in the shedding of blood. . . . Christmas is rapidly approaching, and once more there will be proclaimed throughout the land 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.' This great proclamation has no meaning whilst millions of God's creatures are persecuted by the inhuman monsters who have already ravaged 200 towns and villages, massacred over 2,000 persons, and maltreated more than 100,000 human beings, old and young. Christian men and women can render no greater glory unto God than by continuing 'to swell the volume of remonstrance' until peace and goodwill amongst all men are re-established in darkest Russia. . . . I appeal to the heart and conscience of united Christendom, Episcopalian, Non-conformist, and Roman Catholic, to sanctify their great festival by dedicating their thoughts, their prayers, and their energies to the uplifting of God's ancient people now writhing in the iron grip of Muscovite thralldom. Oh, that every Christian pulpit throughout the land would ring out on Christmas Day a message of hope, brotherhood, and deliver-

ance to the long-suffering and cruelly-persecuted remnant of Israel."

Since those words were written the number has risen from "200 towns and villages" to 637, and the massacres and maltreatments have proportionately increased also. That appeal was, I imagine, the first recorded in history where a Jew pleaded with Christians for mercy *in the name of Christianity*. The writer of that letter has since died, worn out with grief and labour for his people, but *Jesus lives, and He will be the Judge*.

* * * *

The King, Who is also Judge, pronounces judgment; those who had received His messengers and had sympathised with them in their persecutions and afflictions He invites to "inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world," for such had been God's purpose regarding the earth. The establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth had been the Divine plan all along, and now it was to be fulfilled, and they were now to enter into that Kingdom and enjoy its spiritual

blessings. Those on the contrary who had despised the messengers had also despised the King Who sent them, and they had to go into everlasting punishment.

The Saviour ceased to speak, and who in that awe-struck group would dare to break the silence? They had been borne onwards in thought at least two thousand years to a scene more awful than any that earth has ever witnessed. In their midst sat in humble dress One Whose majesty no language could describe. Once before (Chapter xiii.), when speaking of the future, He had alluded to "His angels," now for the first and last time in His life He had called Himself "THE KING."

What need we any further witness, for we ourselves have heard of His own mouth!

* * * *

In the preceding pages an attempt has been made to examine the ground plan laid down by our Lord on the last day of His public ministry. It is, I think, impossible to believe that such a scheme of teaching could have been accidental. To thoughtful minds this idea will com-

mend itself—the deliberate choice and inverted order of Parable and Question Denunciation and Prophecy was intended both to arrest the attention of those who in calmer moments should read the words themselves, and to impress the mind with the majestic calm of Him Who in the midst of seething troubles and in the face of agony unparalled could yet take the pains to frame His words with such consummate wisdom.

Chapter VI

The Prophet's Message

Zechariah's Visions

IT was about this very time of year, 2420 years ago, that Zechariah voiced the message of God to the Jews in Jerusalem. The month corresponded to our November, the three harvests of the year were over, and winter was coming on. The outlook was far from bright, religiously and politically: the ruined city walls reminded the Jews that as a state they had no existence; the rebuilding of the Temple had ceased for about fifteen years; harvests had been bad, and Haggai had already reminded the people of that to which their consciences no doubt bore testimony, that God was displeased with them for rebuilding their own dwellings and allowing the House of God still to lie waste.

Then amid these depressing surroundings the clarion voice of Zechariah ringing through the streets of Jerusalem called, like another John Baptist, to Repentance.

Zechariah's Place in Schemes of Prophecy

The call was brief, but it thrilled through the hearts of the depressed people and was like a tonic to their life: they sprang to their work and carried it on joyfully and rapidly to a triumphant issue.

Zechariah stands out as the central and greatest figure among the three who prophesied after the return from Babylon. He is also the last of another mighty three, Isaiah and Daniel being his predecessors, whom we may describe as the Pre-Captivity, the Captivity, and the Post-Captivity prophets; who refer to the Atonement in relation to the three divisions into which the nation had been separated by the sins and failures of Solomon and Jeroboam, viz., Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. Yet again he is the centre of the three Apocalyptic Prophets, his two companions being Daniel in the old

Testament and St. John in the New. These were the mightiest Three of all, who each wrote prophecies that were explained by angel interpreters sent by the Lord Himself, and who, each of them, brings us through the tangle and confusion of earthly history into the presence of the King at His return.

If therefore we wish to get a clear view of Zechariah's place in prophecy and of those Visions which form such an important part of his writings, we must endeavour to gain a distinct idea of God's dealings with Israel and the Gentile nations in relation to Israel. For this purpose the prophecies of Isaiah and Daniel must be before the mind in order to fill in appropriately the deliverances of Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem, which are described in the closing chapters of Zechariah.

I have already spoken of *Isaiah*, *Daniel*, and *Zechariah* as one of three combinations of prophets. The opening words of *Isaiah's* prophecy tell us that he wrote about "*Judah and Jerusalem.*" Ephraim is by him regarded as joined to the Gentiles and therefore an enemy, for the present at least, though afterwards to be reconciled,

Daniel in this connection is narrower still, for chap. ix. of his prophecy is concerned with the "people," and the "city," i.e., Jerusalem. *Zechariah* has the widest commission, he treats of "Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem." The Messiah Prophet (or the Shepherd) is to die in Jerusalem, that Royal Priest who should stand as Mediator between Jehovah and the Nation in such a way as to save Israel and bring blessing to the Gentiles "when the eyes of man as of all the tribes of Israel shall be towards the Lord." Then God's gracious purpose of blessing shall be accomplished when all the earth shall be filled with His glory—"It shall yet come to pass that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities; and the inhabitants of one city shall go to another saying, "Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord and to seek the Lord of hosts, I will go also; yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem and to pray before the Lord." Chap. viii. 20-22.

Zechariah's prophecies have always been considered by Jewish writers to be the most obscure of all in Holy Scripture;

partly perhaps because they need the aid of Gospel light to reveal much of their hidden truths. Perhaps for another reason : in Ezekiel x. the prophet sees in a vision the departure from earth of the Cherubim and the glory of the God of Israel. Owing to the rebellion and hardness of heart of His ancient people the visible sign of God's *more direct* government had been removed. But He was not going to desert them, He would still control their destinies by indirect agencies and by providential arrangements, for they were still "beloved for the fathers' sakes." May not this be a reason for the comparative obscurity of these prophecies?—they have to deal with secondary rather than primary causes, with indirect, rather than direct agencies.

The Seven Visions in Outline

It was "a night to be much remembered," not only in the life of the prophet himself but for his own people, and for all who study the prophetic word, when He with Whom dwelleth the Light, sent His search-light into the darkness of the

ages yet to come, and revealed His future purposes.

In the Seven Visions seen successively in a single night, God showed the *principles* on which He would act in bringing about His purposes for Israel; principles which never before had been laid open to human sight. Israel had failed and as a nation she was dead; here then in man's extremity was God's opportunity to show that through His old promise to David He could bring about the restitution of all things "which He had spoken by the mouth of His holy prophets since the world began." Will not Israel yet cry aloud in deep contrition to God and say—"Thou hast consumed us because of our iniquities, but now, O Lord, Thou art our Father, we are the *clay* and Thou our potter, and we are all the work of Thy Hand"?

It is remarkable that Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel all refer to the symbolism which describes Israel as clay in the hands of the potter. In Jeremiah we have the double picture (chapters xviii. and xix.) of the potter breaking up the material which he had shaped into a vessel and

then using the same clay again to form another vessel after a different pattern. In Daniel it was the discarded and useless fragments of the clay which became united with the metals in the image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream; but in *Zechariah* the faithfulness of God is seen in doing what He had promised to Jeremiah, and remodelling after a new pattern an Israel constituted according to His will.

The Ark of the Covenant had vanished (hidden away by Jeremiah before the capture of the city, as the Jews have always said), there was now no "kingdom of priests," no "holy Nation," so Joshua the High Priest and Zerubbabel the governor and heir to the throne are used in striking imagery to show how God would bring it all to pass through Him who was to be Priest upon His throne. These Seven Visions constitute the first section of the book; the second part, chapters. vii. and viii., treats of the results following from the working out of the principles in the first six chapters as regards Israel, Judah and Jerusalem; the third section, which forms the rest of the book, describes the effect upon the earth at large of the

principles above mentioned; it describes the Advents, Messiah as Priest, and Messiah as King, and Israel's behaviour on each of these momentous occasions.

The Seven Visions seen as in a map before the eye present the following scheme, for which and some other suggestions I am indebted to a learned friend.

The 1st (chap. i. 8-17). False peace under the kingdom of the Gentiles.

The 2nd (chap. i. 18-21). Providential workings to break up the heathen powers and to restore Judah, Israel and Jerusalem.

The 3rd (chap. ii. 1-13). Deliverance of the true Israel out of Babylon.

The 4th (chap. iii. 1-10). Priesthood and Royalty remodelled, Israel changed before *God* after the pattern of the Messiah.

The 5th (chap. iv. 1-14). Royalty and Priesthood remodelled, Israel changed before *men* after the pattern of the Messiah.

The 6th (chap. v. 1-11). The evil of the false Israel sent back to Babylon.

The 7th (chap. vi. 1-8). Providential dealings to break up the Empires of Daniel vii. and restore Judah, Israel and

Jerusalem. (In the same chapter as the last, and immediately following, is a kind of appendix which appears to correspond to the first and to complete the series).

(Chap. vi. 9-15). True peace under the kingdom of the Messiah.

Chapter VII

First Vision

IN the Vision by night a *Horseman* is seen standing in a lowly place among the myrtle trees, and three other attendants on horses of different colours stand behind Him. The foremost rider is called, in verse 11, "The Angel of Jehovah that stood among the myrtle trees." There can be therefore little doubt Whose Presence is signified by these words; the Same Who once before when His people were in trouble intimated His presence among them in the lowly burning bush, and later still was seen with them in the fiery furnace. Now there is no fiery persecution, only neglect and depression, they are therefore represented as being in a lowly place, and by night.

The *Myrtle* suggests the Jewish people in more ways than one, (1) by its origin—

Fausset tells us that it was probably imported into Palestine from Babylon in the time of Isaiah who is the first sacred writer to mention it. In Samaria and Galilee on the banks of rivers it still abounds. The plant is a native of Persia, and Esther received her name "The Myrtle" (Hadassah) in the Persian court. There is, I think, a significance in its choice, for it was Babylon first and afterwards Persia who reduced the Jews to their humble and dependent condition.

(2) Their condition supplies also another suggestion. That nation once, in the days of Solomon, so powerful that all neighbouring kings brought in their tribute, is now in very different case; then it might have been symbolized by a stately Cedar, now, it is like a lowly myrtle. But the myrtle though lowly has lovely flowers, and its dark glossy leaves, always fragrant, breathe forth a wonderful sweetness *when bruised*,—which things are an allegory. The Jews mourned over their depressed condition, but to God this circumstance made them doubly sweet, and the Angel of the Covenant standing among the myrtles testified to

their safety under His protecting Presence.

There were three *horses*, having presumably riders upon them, who stand behind the first Horseman. A horse is the symbol of divine energy of government in the earth, and here we may expect that it has special reference to those governments which had then, and would have in the future, something special to do with the Jews. In Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream there were *four* successive empires described, and one, the Babylonian, was then in touch with the Jews, for it held them in captivity. In Zechariah's time the first of these empires had gone ; *three* remained to be considered, therefore *three horses* are seen in the Vision.

Perhaps it may here be more accurate to say that besides the divine energy of government, these figures behind the leading horseman have the character of the providentially administering spirits of the empires rather than of the empires themselves. The first of the three horses is of the same colour as that ridden by the Leader Who stood among the myrtles, perhaps because Cyrus and the Persians

had delivered and favoured the people of God, and thus exhibited the same spirit as that which Christ will manifest in the day of His power.

I am aware that many writers take another view of the meaning belonging to the three attendant horsemen—some speak of them as symbols of War, Pestilence and Victory; St. Jerome thought that they represented the Babylonian (red), the Medo-Persian (speckled), and the Greek (white, or black, as not yet existent). Others have seen in them angelic messengers of wrath, mercy, or both together. But none of these seem to me to agree with the scope of the whole prophecy which deals with the principles by which God would through Gentile nations bring about His purposes for Israel.

Without going further into detail the *teaching of the First Vision* seems to be this—God had committed the government of the earth to certain Gentile empires, He had used them in the past to chastise His people for their sins, that work was now accomplished and He was angry with these nations for having

exceeded the duty to which He had called them.

The Persian empire was now firmly established and was at peace, but though its leader Cyrus had in former years shown a Christ-like sympathy with the captives in Babylon (for which reason perhaps he is called in Isaiah xlv. 1, Cyrus the Lord's Messiah), the rulers who succeeded him, and the nation in general, had no sympathy with the Jews in their low and afflicted state. This displeased Him Who looked on this people as His special care, and this Vision declared that God was devising means for the execution of His purposes; these means were His providential agency, a thought worked out all through the Visions, an agency whose results we may behold but whose method of working is hidden from our eyes.

The prophet learns from this Vision that Jehovah is watching events in His jealousy for David's throne, and he is commissioned to give God's assurance to the Jews that the temple should be rebuilt, and the architect's plan and builder's line used for the new streets

that should arise on the old foundations not only in Jerusalem but all through the land.

“These words of comfort primarily related to the state of the Jews after the Captivity,” says old Thomas Scott the Commentator, and he goes on to express his belief that this was only a shadow of events yet to come. I think that we shall agree with him, and for us in these latter days the message of the First Vision cries with a yet louder voice.

Since 1881, when Ignatieff began his infamous persecution of the Jews in Russia, their sufferings have been prolonged and terrible. Now and again there is an outburst of awful malignity, like that of Kischeneff, five or six years ago, but all pales before the horrors of November 1905: twenty-five thousand in Southern Russia alone butchered with outrage and indignity, one hundred thousand mutilated, is an estimate probably under the mark, for, since it was made, the news reached Europe of many villages and smaller towns where the Jewish population were simply wiped out and hastily buried.

Is not Christ with His ancient people in their affliction now as He was with their fathers in Egypt and in Babylon? Is not His sympathy as tender with them as when, in the words of the 12th verse, He pleaded with God on their behalf? And is not His indignation as hot with their enemies as it was of old? And further, will He not show His deep displeasure with the European "nations that are at ease" unless they come forward with no mere empty protests, but with some plan of rescue from their fiendish persecutors, and perhaps a deportation of such as are willing to some place of safety, or better still, to their own old land?

God invites us, as He did His prophet of old who had seen this marvellous Vision, to proclaim His sympathy, and to announce His glorious projects for His ancient and deeply suffering people. This appears to me to be the present teaching for us of the First of Zechariah's Visions.

Chapter VIII

The Breaks in Zechariah's Prophecies

THERE is an important feature in the prophecies of this book to which allusion must be made. I mean "the breaks" as they are called, those points where the stream of fulfilment is arrested in its course for a time. Jordan was thus stopped short to let God's people pass, and so the course of Divine prophecy is in certain places held up, for God's Church, in the present time of grace, to play its part; when that period is over the stream of events that form sacred prophecy will flow on in the old channel as of yore.

One of these is to be found in Chapter ix. On the first Palm Sunday, verse 9 was fulfilled, verse 10 is still future. Again in Chap. xi., verses 13 and 14 refer as we all know to the betrayal of our Lord and the dissolution of the Civil and Ecclesi-

astical state which followed a few years later, but between those events and the three following verses what a gulf of time ! But the Jews will return to their land, nay, they are there already in their thousands, and very soon perhaps this evil shepherd will arise, the " One who shall come in his own name, and him they will receive."

Yet again in Chapter xiii. between verses 7 and 9 all the history of Christendom is written ; but there is a time coming when the parenthesis of this period in which we live shall be over, when the course of prophecy shall be resumed and then a short work shall the Lord make upon the earth, cutting it short in righteousness.

Upon the Zionist movement I need not here say much, as all are familiar with the marvellous National Revival, now in progress for the last nine years, in which we seem to see before our eyes, as in what we now call " Living Pictures," the actual fulfilment of the vision of an earlier Prophet, Ezekiel. But it has an important bearing upon our subject ; as taken with the revival of the lands of Palestine, Egypt and Assyria, it appears

to point to the speedy termination of the intervals between the partial and final fulfilments of Zechariah's prophecies.

The Jewish Colonies in Palestine, the wonderful progress made under the guidance and control of England in Egypt, and the Baghdad Railway together with the proposed opening out of the canals and water-courses of Shinar for the purpose of bringing back to life the millions of acres of that great overflowing territory, all these are to the student of prophecy most unmistakable signs that "the days are at hand the effect of every vision." "Blessed be Egypt My people, Assyria the work of Mine Hand, and Israel Mine Inheritance."

These words tell us that God will bring about through His providential agencies the true restoration of these lands in His own time. It may be that as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses by imitation more than by opposition, so Satan may try to forestall God's promises to His people by an endeavour to restore them in some other way, so as to bring about a mock millennium; if so this may deceive many, but not those who remember God's words, "I will overturn, overturn, over-

turn, until He come Whose right it is, and I will give it Him."

It is promised in the word of prophecy that "the wise (by which we understand those that humbly seek for Divine wisdom and try to discern the signs of the times) shall understand"; if then those of us who seek for divine teaching think that we see clear indications that the prophecies of Zechariah, as well as those of other seers, are about to enter on their closing phases; if even the daily press and the magazine writers now discuss the return of the Jews to their own land as a thing likely to happen very soon, which ten years ago they would have laughed to scorn as the dream of a fool or a madman, if further the same up-to-date persons notice these remarkable revivals of old world Empires and long down-trodden regions, surely we have good cause to sing and rejoice! It is not for nothing that God puts out these signals. I quote again the illustration used in Chapter i., for I can find none better for my purpose. When He "saw that Moses turned aside to see" the wonder of the burning bush God revealed to His servant the wonders

that He was about to do. "I am come down to deliver," He said. *He is coming again to deliver that very race*; but we expect Him first of all to come for His waiting Church. If then we seem to see the signs of that later Coming in the fulfilment of prophetic events, how much nearer must be the earlier Appearing! For the Jewish people He will come as the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings, for us He will come as the Bright and Morning Star which shines just before the dawn. "Yet a little while, and He that shall come will come and will not tarry"; meanwhile, "The just shall live by his faith."

Chapter IX

The First Church Council and Foreign Missions

IT was a favourite saying of the late Canon Hoare that in Acts xiv. 27 there was recorded an account of the first Church Missionary Meeting. On this occasion St. Paul and Barnabas were the speakers, and all the church people in Antioch came together to hear these great missionaries tell "all that God had done with them, and how He had opened the door of faith unto the (heathen) nations." A few years later there arose one of those practical difficulties which still come up for decision in the Foreign Mission field, *viz.*, how far the converts from heathenism are to be obliged to submit to the doctrine and discipline of the mother Church.

It was too serious a matter for a few individuals to determine, the mind of the whole Church must be taken, and so for the first time the Christian Church in its

corporate capacity assembled at Jerusalem, the then, and ever, Metropolis of Christendom. We know not where they met; it is hardly likely that any building could have held the great gathering, for it was now twenty years since our Lord's Ascension, and we know that not long after this the Christian Jews were reckoned by "many thousands" (Acts xxi. 20). Perhaps they met in the open air where "the multitude" (ch. xv. 12) could easily see and listen to the speakers who should debate on this momentous question. We know the name of the Chairman of this meeting, and the names of those who were the principal speakers towards the end. There had been a considerable debate by men who held strong and diverse views, when the Apostle of the Circumcision, as St. Paul subsequently called him, rose and spoke weighty words that tended to freedom. He was followed by thrilling missionary testimonies from the lips of the two Pioneers in the field mentioned above. Then the President, St. James, the first bishop of Jerusalem, summed up the discussion, and gave his "ruling" from the chair (ver. 19-21).

Our business at present, however, does not concern itself with the point at issue before the Council, but rather with the remarkable words which fell from the Chairman's lips before giving his decision.

We can have no doubt that he uttered them under the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In verse 28 that guidance is claimed for the conclusion arrived at, therefore it may be assumed for the process of reasoning by which it was reached.

In verses 14, 16, and 17 the inspired Apostle sketches out the plan of operations upon which God would act during the present Dispensation and in that which is to follow. No human being would dare thus to lay down the law for God unless he knew absolutely that, as one of old was able to say,—“The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue” (2 Sam. xxiii. 2).

This being so, how important to note that plan of operations. (1) A careful study of its meaning may save us from making mistakes as regards God's intentions in Missionary work, and thus (2) we may be preserved from wrong expectations.

Chapter X

Wrong Expectations

THAT wrong expectations are abroad among Christian people is manifest, founded, as I think, upon an erroneous view of God's intentions; and these are productive of disappointment and weariness of spirit because, in the opinion of those who hold them, God is not carrying out His work as He led them to expect it; the saddest result of all being a dimming of the Bright Hope of the Lord's Return at any moment which was given as a cheer a stimulus and an expectation for every hour of the Church's life. One of the ideas that is very frequently to be heard on platforms and in pulpits is that *the World must be evangelized before the Coming of Christ*. I have heard earnest men pleading for help somewhat in this fashion—"You are delaying the Return of our

Lord by your slackness in sending forth preachers to the heathen, for He cannot return till the world has been evangelized." Bands of noble workers for God have put before them this grand motto, "The world to be evangelized in this generation." All credit to them for the desire, it springs from loyalty to their Lord and Master. We are familiar with the maps of black squares representing the heathen and Mohammedan world, with here and there a small white patch representing Christian populations, and we are asked how we can expect the Coming of our Master when His last commands have been so neglected? To this we reply that we cannot find any statement in the New Testament that the world is to be evangelized before our Saviour's Coming; and we submit that it is a confusion of thought and a misunderstanding of Christ's words which leads to such a conclusion.* St. Matt. xxiv. 14 lends no support to this view, for "the Gospel of the kingdom" is not the same as the "Gospel of

* For a fuller exposition of this thought the reader is referred to "A Bright To-morrow," chapter iii. page 39.

the Grace of God"; "the End" is a period in time after the Coming of Christ; and the "preachers" are not our faithful missionaries, for at that time they and the Church shall be "with the Lord." It is not then, I humbly submit, the intention of God that the World should be evangelized before the Coming of Christ.

Another idea which I think should also be described as mistaken is that *the Gospel must be first preached to "every creature."* This rests, of course, upon our Lord's command (St. Mark xv. 15) "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." Here we have our Marching Orders, the Missionary Charter of the Church. But our Master *brings in no point of time.* He says nothing about His Coming in connection with this command, therefore let no man join together what He has kept asunder. Accordingly no one has a right to say as I have sometimes heard it affirmed—"Our Lord cannot return until every individual upon earth has heard the Gospel." This is bad enough, but when there is added to it this deduction, "such a consummation is impossible for long enough, therefore our

Lord's Coming is not nigh," we see the danger lying hidden in this thought, the servant becomes slothful, he begins to eat and drink with the drunken. A notable example of the danger of this mode of reasoning often recurs to my memory. Many years ago when I was a young clergyman I heard a well-known missionary preach for one of the great missionary societies. In the vestry afterwards I was astonished to hear him speak scornfully about the near return of our Lord; he characterized the hope as a great mistake, resting his assertion on the statement just quoted. I thought to myself "how dangerous to the spiritual life to allow such a thought," and I confess that I was not surprised to hear a year or two afterwards of the disappearance of this man under a cloud upon grave and well-established charges. God will not allow the slothful servant to continue in His Service who says "My Lord delayeth His Coming."

But let us examine the command a little closer. The Revised Version shows what the reader of the Greek Testament knew before, that the grammatical construction

does not allow the expression "every creature" to be synonymous with the idea of "every individual." "The whole Creation" is the area understood; no land, no class of mankind, to be omitted or ignored, but the individual is not intended to be described in these words. When our late Queen was proclaimed Empress of India the announcement was made in certain definite places, but there was no provision that each one of the hundreds of millions should individually be told it; this was never contemplated, and as a matter of fact many did not hear it for years, and some never knew it, but it was done sufficiently, and it was an historic fact.

Of course, I do not mean that anything short of individual faith can bring individual salvation, but what I wish to emphasize is that *in this passage* it is the fact of an universal Gospel that is emphasized, a Gospel for every race and clime, instead of a message for a special favoured people as in the Old Dispensation. It is a striking commentary on these words which we read in Colossians i. 23, where St. Paul affirms that in his

day *the Gospel had been already* "preached to every creature." The meaning, of course, being that through faithful Christian missionaries the trumpet of the Gospel had been blown in every known land during the first thirty years after the Ascension of our Lord. It is the duty of the Church in every generation of our Lord's absence to proclaim that Gospel in all lands, but officially to reach each individual at the present, or at any given time, is not contemplated in these words.

Moreover, it is never asserted that the Gospel must be preached among all the nations at any fixed period, *i.e.*, simultaneously. I remember once hearing that faithful and beloved veteran, the late Canon Garrett—a learned prophetic student, whose writings gave me my first impulse in this direction—lay down this point very clearly. The New Testament, he pointed out, never uses the word "simultaneous" or anything like it in this bearing. There were Apostolic Churches in North Africa and in other regions where now the light does not shine, but the Gospel was once preached there, they had their chance. Those,

therefore, who still cling to the belief that the preaching (or non-preaching) of the Gospel to all nations has some restraining power upon the Return of our Lord and are saddened thereby may draw comfort from these words of Canon Garrett.

Moreover, this interpretation of the meaning of these words agrees with type and history. David, the anointed, but not as yet the accepted, king, had faithful ones who in his absence "in a far country" did their very best "to make David king," 2 Chron. xii.

They were not all of one tribe, on the contrary, they were zealous and loyal men from every tribe who, attracted by his personality, and believing that he was their true sovereign, gave up everything for him, left home and kindred and faced dangers and difficulties, so that in the end he might be acknowledged by all. Did they succeed? *Not till his return.* It was a few here and there who flocked to his standard but when the time came for him to take the kingdom he returned with his faithful ones around him and then, but not till then, was he crowned king.

So we believe it shall be with the Son of

David He the true, the anointed, though not yet accepted King, is now, by His mighty personality, and by the preaching of the Gospel through His faithful and devoted followers, taking out of the world a people for His name out of every nation, some gathered in early times out of nations that were then existing but have now passed away, some in the nations that are now, but not till His Return with His faithful ones around Him (the second phase of His Coming) shall the world be evangelized and He be acknowledged King over all.

What was foreshadowed in type is also to be seen in history. When our Lord was upon earth He Who spake as never man spake gathered out only a few who believed on Him. It is possible that the five hundred of I Cor. xv. 6 may have been the total number of His faithful disciples. At all events it was the few as He Himself testified who entered in at the strait gate. "Yes," someone may reply, "but He promised to His followers 'greater things than these shall ye do.'" Granted, but His followers who went out with His commission, and strengthened by miraculous gifts

of the Holy Spirit, did they convert the world? Notice St. Paul's custom. That apostle used to go into a place, enter the Synagogue and preach to the Jews; if they refused he went to the Gentiles in the same place, stopping for some days or weeks or months, once delaying for a term of three years, and then after a certain number had been drawn out of heathenism into Christianity he went elsewhere to do the same thing. He never expected to convert everybody, but by God's grace "to take out of every place a people for His name."

Chapter XI

Plan of Operations. First Period

Having noticed these, as I believe, mistaken ideas which tend to discourage some, and weaken the faith and deaden the hope of others, I turn to the plan of operations laid down by the inspired Apostle St. James, at the Council of Jerusalem.

There are three Periods described and three distinct lines of action. Verse 14. "God at the first did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His Name." Here we find the first stage of operations which began with St. Peter's visit to Cornelius. That Apostle, because of his faithful confession (St. Matt. xvi. 16), was given "the keys of the kingdom of heaven," *i.e.*, he was to have the

privilege of opening two doors of mercy, one, on the day of Pentecost when by his sermon he brought 3,000 Jews to acknowledge their crucified Messiah, the other, some eight years later, when he was permitted to break down the wall of separation at Cæsarea, and bring the first Gentiles, as such, into the Christian fold.

That event marked the beginning of the new Church Period which is still going on. The day of Pentecost is generally called the Birthday of the Christian Church. I think that this is a mistaken view of its position in the Divine Economy. St. Peter, in his sermon on that day, distinctly states that the miraculous outpouring was a fulfilment of Joel's prophecy. Joel knew nothing of the Church, that mystery was revealed to St. Paul. I do not think that we find any trace of it in the Old Testament. The conversion of the Gentiles is to be found nearly everywhere in the Old Testament, but that is not by any means the same thing. It took many years even for the Apostles to learn the teaching concerning the equality of Jew and

Gentile in the Church. Joel prophesied of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the faithful Jews who would receive their Messiah. The gift came on a Jewish Feast and upon Jews alone. Seven or eight years later, in the house of Cornelius, when the Holy Spirit fell upon Gentiles for the first time, the Church Period began. That, and not the Day of Pentecost; was the Church's Birthday.

What then is characteristic of this period? Not the evangelizing of the world, but, God visiting the nations "to take out of them a people for His Name." Not now a world-wide conversion; that, or something like it, is coming, when "all shall know Me from the least unto the greatest," "when the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the whole earth as the waters cover the sea," but not yet: we must not anticipate God's purposes, and we must ask for that *ἐπιγνώσις*, or *discernment* between times and seasons (a deeper thing than mere knowledge *γνώσις*) for which St. Paul prayed so often on behalf of his converts. Here then we learn that in this period in which we now live, God's plan is by preaching

the gospel to different nations *to take out of them* a people for His Name." St. Paul affirmed the same truth a few years later when writing his letter to the Christians at Rome ; he states there (Rom. xi. 25) "That blindness in part is happened unto Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." That word "fulness" (πλήρωμα) does not mean "all the nations" or "the riches of the nations," but as Bishop Lightfoot teaches us, "the full tale" or "the complement" of a fixed number like the number of the Elect known to God. So that here it exactly corresponds with St. James' words, and signifies a certain number "out of the nations" who shall believe the gospel of the grace of God.

This, then, is the scope of Missionary work in this Dispensation "to take out of the nations" by the Holy Spirit's power through preaching a people for His Name. This is the work now being carried on by faithful men and women in heathen lands.

A work for which every effort should be made, no self-denial thought too great, and earnest and constant prayer be offered to our God and Saviour. Thank God

for the awakening interest of the Church in Foreign Missions. May it increase ten thousand fold!

How inspiring is the prospect! No dreary computations of men and means so multiplied that in a number of years to come it may be possible to contemplate the end desired as coming within the range of possibility. Far from this! If God is in His sovereign grace "taking out of the nations" a certain number for His present purpose, that number may be reached this year—this month—to-morrow—*to-day!*

No greater stimulus to hopeful work can be imagined than that which is supplied by God's own statement through His Apostle of the Plan of Operations.

Chapter XII

Plan of Operations: Second Period

THE next period is given to us in verse 16:—

“After this I will return, and will build again the Tabernacle of David which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up.” We turn to the book of the prophet Amos, whence these words are taken, and we are struck at once with this most astonishing discovery: the first five words of the sentence occur neither in the Hebrew nor the Septuagint, they are added by the Apostle, speaking as we know under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, *to explain to his hearers and to us the sequence of time.* When Amos wrote his prophecy the events of Acts xv. 14 had of course not occurred, for they had only begun to take shape many hundreds of years

later with the conversion of Cornelius, therefore St. James deliberately prefaces the quotation from Amos with these explanatory words, which he puts into the mouth of the Lord: "*After this I will return, and will build again the Tabernacle of David which is fallen down.*" When Amos uttered his prophecy the Tabernacle of David, *i.e.*, the Jewish Temple and Ritual and the Theocratic state was in full power and vigour, the high priest of that day could drive out of the temple the intruding king, in whose brow God caused the leprosy to appear, showing thus that He approved of the high priest's words. The prophet, however, foresaw terrible days to come; in chapter ix., 9, he describes the future dispersion of the Jewish race "among all nations," an event which had not taken place even when St. James expounded the prophecy. There had been a partial dispersion of the Ten Tribes in Assyria and later of Judah in Babylon, but the "sifting among all nations" did not happen until after the siege and capture of Jerusalem. Mark closely therefore the way in which the apostle carefully inserts the different

events and the order in which they are to occur. First Period—the Gospel Dispensation, the visiting of the Gentiles and taking out of them a people for God's name; then the Second Period, "After this I will return and will build again the Tabernacle of David which is fallen down." I know of no clearer exposition of prophetic scripture in the New Testament than that which is to be found in the opening words of verse 16.

Let us now analyse the apostle's words and see what they contain. "After this," *i.e.*, at the end of this Gospel Dispensation, when the exact number known to God is taken out of the nations to form the Body of Christ (Eph. iii. 1-6., 1 Cor. xii. 13, &c.), Christ "will return" and will establish His kingdom upon earth. The angel Gabriel who foretold His Birth said "The Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David; and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end." I have discussed elsewhere* the objections to the literal fulfilment of this prophecy and have endeavoured to

* "A Bright To-morrow," p. 44 &c.

point out that the three verses of St. Luke i. 31, 32, 33, are all on the same footing as regards literal interpretation; you cannot reasonably say that verse 31 and the first half of verse 32 are to be understood literally, while the second half of verse 32 with verse 33 have only a spiritual meaning.

No fair-minded person could admit such a process of dissection. The first half of the passage was fulfilled literally, the second half will be literally fulfilled also.

St. James' quotation from Amos involves five events; viz, (1) The Return to Palestine; (2) The National Revival; (3) The Political Establishment; (4) The Ecclesiastical Rebuilding; and (5) The Conversion of the Nation. Some of these have been taking shape during the last decade. A few years ago in an article entitled "The Budding Fig Tree" I pointed out a number of recent events connected with the Jewish people which could not but arrest attention. Many more have happened since. (1) The Return may be said to have now taken place. A far greater number have come

back in the last few years than the number which returned with Zerubbabel. Three times that amount are now in the Holy Land. Those who came back from the Captivity in Babylon are stated to have been 42,360, and they constituted and were treated as the nucleus of a nation; why should not the 120,000 who are there now be similarly looked upon as the Return from the Dispersion? Objectors have said (a) "How can the nine or ten million Jews in the world return to a small country not larger than Wales?" (b) "And even if that were possible, do you imagine for a single moment that rich Jews in Berlin, Paris and London will leave their banks and their wealthy surroundings of luxury and go to live far away from their scenes of excitement and pleasure?"

The answer to both objections is very simple. Compared with the number of Jews in the world, only a small number will return, and they for the most part the poor and suffering, the persecuted and afflicted, together with the zealous and deeply patriotic, like those who are leading the present Zionist movement.

Only a small number comparatively returned from Babylon to Jerusalem after the Edict of Cyrus, the majority remained behind making money in a foreign land and following professions which brought them in good incomes. I know a Christian Jew in England, born in Persia, descended from those Jews who did not return from Babylon and who escaped massacre by Esther's intercession. His family have been the medical practitioners at the Court of the Shah of Persia from time immemorial. So now only a small representative number will return, yet their future conversion in their own land will doubtless influence their countrymen all over the world.

But the stream is flowing fast back to the old land. It was checked for a few years, and immigrant Jews were actually sent back by thousands, that, however, was only a temporary hindrance caused by Russian threats to Constantinople. Since the Japanese war the situation has changed; the Sultan of Turkey does not at present fear the wrath of Russia, and he is now not only permitting, *but for the first time actually encouraging* the poor perse-

cuted Jew to return and settle in the land of his ancestors. Every steamer from Odessa, it was recently stated in the public press, carries at least a hundred Jews to Palestine.

Another remarkable fact is that the present inhabitants of the land are turning out to give them room. The land is small and cannot hold the present occupiers as well as those who are to come back. The tenant is leaving the house that the landlord may take possession. Twenty-five thousand Syrians have passed out during the last few years and gone to North America, while many are seeking their home in Mexico and South America. This is a most singular state of things and worthy of careful observation, for such things do not happen by accident. Other things are preparing for their return in the land itself. Some years ago I stated at a public conference that the rainfall in Palestine, which had been for centuries very deficient, was steadily improving; a gentleman who was present controverted my statement on the ground, as he stated, of his own personal knowledge. I was glad to learn lately from a scientific

observer resident in Jerusalem that the increase is an unquestionable fact, and that between 1866 and 1892 the rainfall has increased 66 per cent. The record last year was over forty inches. This means a return to the marvellous fertility of former ages, a state of things unknown for more than a thousand years, which constitutes in itself an invitation to the return of Israel.

The Second Event is the National Revival. This awakening of the national life of Israel needs few words at this time.

Called into being by the first Zionist Congress ten years ago, it is a factor whose virility none can deny.

The following paragraph from the "Times," which appeared one day in July last, is an interesting commentary upon this branch of the subject :—

The Zionist Movement.—Sir F.A. Montefiore presided over a recent meeting held in support of the Jewish national movement, which aims at obtaining for the Jewish people "a legally secured, publicly recognised home in Palestine." Dr. M. Gaster, president of the English Zionist Federation, who has just returned from

Palestine, where he has been pursuing careful investigations in the interests of the movement, spoke of the economic aspect of the questions, remarking that the ravages of time could be successfully made good by Jewish settlers under proper conditions. He was surprised at the success of the Jewish colony established in Samaria twenty-five years ago. The land had been made fruitful, and the sides of barren rocks were now covered with luxuriant olive trees. It was untrue to say that land could not be bought in Palestine. A 999 years' lease of land could be got from the Sultan—a long enough period for them. Societies—Jewish societies—as well as individuals, could acquire land on condition that they worked it. If it were not worked for three years it reverted to the ownership of the Sultan. Altogether there were already thirty-two Jewish colonies in Palestine. They might be struggling, but they were being worked with a new spirit and will, in a land which the colonists felt to be their own sacred ground.”

The “drybones” of Ezekiel xxxvii. have indeed taken shape before the eyes

of this generation, in a wonderful national movement.

The political establishment of a "buffer" State like that of Switzerland, guaranteed by the Powers, is yet to come, but its day may be very near. The other events are making their presence felt, and this one being part of the programme, will show itself in due time.

The Fourth Event is the Ecclesiastical rebuilding, by which I mean the rebuilding of the Temple on the sacred site and the renewal of sacrifice and ritual. There seems to be no doubt in the minds of prophetic students that this will take place, and that the description given in Chapters xl.-xlviii. of the prophecy of Ezekiel, though probably allegorical in some matters, actually shadows forth a literal rebuilding and establishment of ritual as of old, from which there is significantly omitted the Ark of the Covenant, the High Priesthood, the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Pentecost, and the Evening Sacrifice!

About the Fifth Event Scripture leaves us in no manner of doubt. The Conversion of Israel is referred to and distinctly

prophesied over and over in both Old and New Testament. Such passages as Jeremiah xxxi., Ezekiel xi. and xxxvi., Zechariah xii. 10, and Romans xi. 11, 15, 26-32, will occur to every student of Scripture. Ezekiel xxxvi. is chiefly to be noted because of the point of time in the word "then" with which verse 25 begins. The Conversion of Israel will not take place during the present Dispersion, but "I will gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land, THEN will I sprinkle clean water upon you," &c.

The Return first and after that the Conversion.

This belongs to the latest part of this period which we have now under consideration, as is evident from Zechariah's account, and it will probably take place in the latter half of the "missing week," that seventieth week of years mentioned in the last verse of Daniel ix.* These, then, are the Five Events contained in the prophecy quoted by St. James, which

* For fuller particulars concerning this "missing week" the reader is referred to "The Brightening East," Chapter 2.

are to be completely fulfilled at our Lord's Return with His saints to reign upon the earth.

Around the literal Jerusalem at this present moment there lie down in the depths mighty stones laid by Phœnician builders at the command of Solomon. Some of these have been laid bare by explorers as they sunk deep shafts to seek for these foundations. Forgotten for thousands of years, they can now be examined and measured, and the marks put on them by the men of Tyre are easily recognized. So is it with God's purposes for the beloved City and people, the promises have been there for ages in the Scriptures, but hidden away under mistaken interpretations which have concealed their true meaning. These obstructions are being cleared away by one student of Scripture after another, and God's plan is seen to be changeless as the foundations of the everlasting hills.

Chapter XIII

Plan of Operations. Third Period

WE now come to the Third Period in God's Plan. *The First*—"God at the first did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name." That we have seen is the Gospel Dispensation in which we now live. *The Second*—"After this I will return and will build again the Tabernacle of David which is fallen down, and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up." That has to do with a time yet to come, but the beginning of which we are now permitted to see, as well as some of the agencies which are preparing for its future accomplishment. *The Third*—"That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom My name is called saith the Lord Who doeth all these things." This is

entirely future. Observe the word with which the verse begins—"that," implying no break of purpose, but all part of an orderly plan of which each step depends upon the one preceding. "I will return. . . . I will build again the Tabernacle. . . . I will build again the ruins. . . . I will set it up, *in order that* the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles," &c. The Conversion of the Jews is not merely because of His love for them, but to make them instruments for the Conversion of the world. This is exactly St. Paul's anticipation in Rom. xi. 12-15. When writing upon this very subject some five years after St. James' speech in the Council at Jerusalem he puts it thus: "If (the Jews') partial fall be the world's (spiritual) wealth and their lessening be the Gentiles' (spiritual) wealth, *how much more their fulness!*" And again — "If the throwing away of (the Jews) was the world's reconciliation (*i.e.*, the instrumental cause of the preaching of the Gospel to the nations) *what will their reception be, but life from the dead!*" To quote from Bishop Moule, whose paraphrase of the text I have just borrowed,

“When (the Jews) are ‘received again’ as this Scripture so definitely affirms that they shall be received, the case will be grandly different. . . . Israel will now be not only occasion but agent. The Jew, ubiquitous, cosmopolitan, yet invincibly national, coming back in living loyalty to the Son of David, the Son of God, will be a positive power in evangelisation such as the Church has never felt. . . . Whether as a central mass in Syria or as also a presence everywhere in the human world, Israel will thus be ready, once restored to God in Christ, to be a more than natural evangelizing power” (“The Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans,” by the Right Rev. the Lord Bishop of Durham, p. 300).

This is the time, perhaps, of which Isaiah (chap. ii.), Micah (chap. iv.) and other prophets write so glowingly, when “all nations” shall flock to the House of God. This probably is the state of things described in Revelation xxi., a passage often believed to be descriptive of heaven, whereas it is a picture of the New Jerusalem, which shall “*come down out of heaven,*” and its influence during the

millennial reign upon the converted nations of the world. "The *nations* of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it, and the kings of the earth do bring their honour and glory into it." Then all shall know God from the least unto the greatest; then the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the whole earth as the waters cover the sea.

God shall convert His ancient people that they may be His missionaries all over the earth, and by them His gracious and loving mercies shall have their fulfilment.

When St. Paul had been writing upon this very subject there burst upon his mind the glories of the Divine Plan, and his spirit was so overwhelmed within him that he could but cry aloud, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! . . .

"To Whom be glory for ever. Amen."

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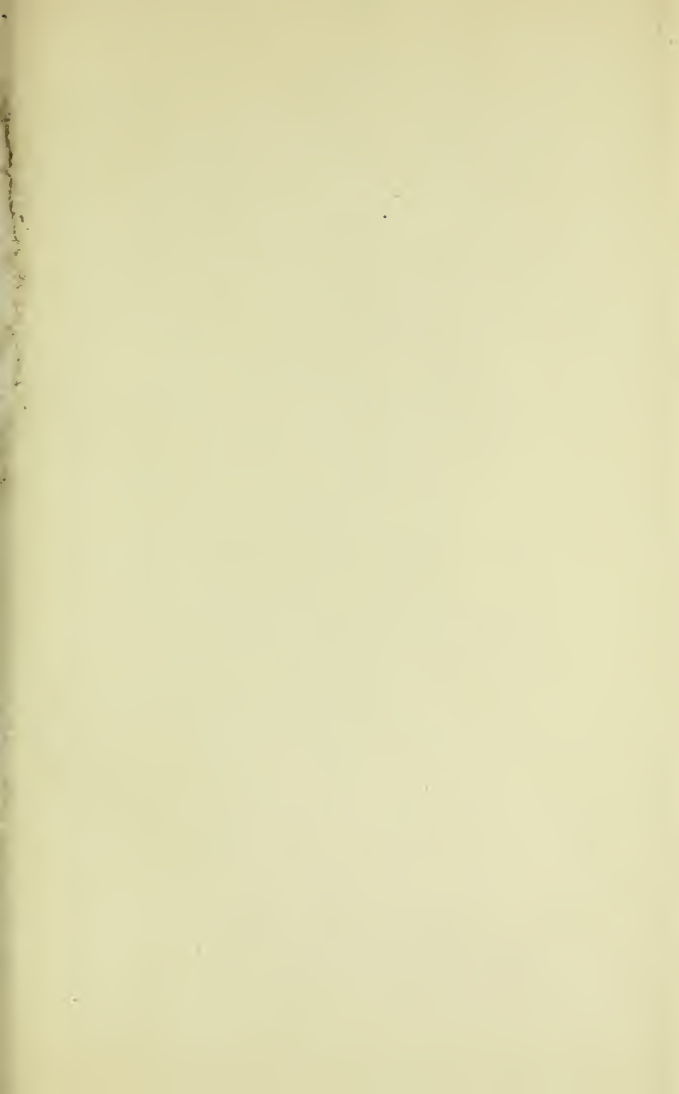
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