

LET THERE BE LIGHT

OLD TESTAMENT STORIES APPLIED
TO EVERYDAY LIFE

by

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Chapter 1



INTRODUCTION

SOME people love the Bible; others hate it. Some believe it is literally true; others believe it is all myth and legend. Some read it daily; others never open it. To some it is almost the breath of life; to others it means nothing.

Between these extremes are a great host of intermediary people who are more or less familiar with the best known stories and the great Biblical characters. Many of these would like to know and understand more, and a great number feel instinctively that there is something unique about the Bible, and that somehow, somewhere, the Bible holds the answer to the problem of being, even in this unbelieving age, if only we can find the key. If this were not so, why has the Bible survived and come down to us as it has? Why do more people possess a Bible than any other single book ever published? Why have more books been written about the Bible than any other one subject, while the comparable literature of other tribes and nations is practically unknown to the average man and woman?

Surely these facts justify the feeling that the Bible is unique. Yet, in spite of this, few people, except Bible scholars and authorities, know much of the fascinating story of how the Bible came into being. The majority of people, including those who love it most, feel that many passages contradict each other, and they dislike a great deal of the Old Testament because of the atrocities and cruelty depicted in so many of the stories.

But recent research has brought to light some wonderful facts about the Bible. Above all it has revealed an interpretation of the Bible which reconciles the many seeming inconsistencies, and explains away the atrocities and cruelties. It shows that the Bible is an ordered and logical sequence of teachings which can be taken as a practical guide in all the details of our daily lives, no matter to what walk of life we belong. It also shows

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that the Bible really does hold the answer to the manifold and seemingly unanswerable problems which confront the world to-day.

Historically the Bible has been proved to be very inaccurate, but it is now generally recognized that the compilers were not primarily concerned with the historical aspect. Their aim and object was to show how the spiritual understanding of God developed to their people. Biologists say that the physical development of each individual follows the same course as the physical evolution of the race. In the same way, the Bible, which was compiled to depict the spiritual evolution of the Hebrew people, is also a perfect illustration of the spiritual development of each one of us. For example, the Bible tells us that Noah built an ark which floated upon the water, and so saved himself and his family when a great flood destroyed everything else. At different times in our experience we are all of us, like Noah, nearly overwhelmed by a flood of trouble. Then we, too, need to build ourselves an ark that will float upon the surface of the trouble, and lift us on to the safety of Mount Ararat (holy ground). Again, God is supposed to have told Abraham to leave his old home in Ur of the Chaldees, and to travel into an unknown land where God would bless him and make him a great nation. When we are dissatisfied with old beliefs, and we seek a new philosophy of life which we feel will be in line with ultimate reality, we are like Abraham leaving Ur to look for "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11: 10). When the good in us wrestles with our lower impulses, we are like Jacob, who wrestled alone all night until an angel (one of God's thoughts) put the thigh of his baser self out of joint, and thus gave the victory to his better self.

From these few examples it can be seen that these Bible stories tell of experiences that come to each one of us, and so they are *our* story, and, spiritually understood, they furnish the answer to every problem that may confront us. The inspired writers used historical events; they used old myths and legends; they used real people and imaginary people; they used all the details of daily living to illustrate their points. But they realized clearly that thoughts and ideas were the fundamental realities

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of being, and that as a man "thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23: 7). So we find that what are depicted in the Bible as people and events, in *our* lives become thoughts and ideas, while the atrocities (such as the wholesale slaughter in cold blood of men, women and children) which appear in some stories, represent in our lives the elimination from our characters of all that is unlike God.

Here it might be as well to give some indication of how the word "God" is used in this book, for there are tremendously divergent views about what God is, or is not. As a child, the writer was taught to think of God as a glorified super-human person. As she grew up, this idea became unworkable, and she was apt to say, "There is no such God!" But soon she began to think, "Nevertheless there must be *something* on which one can base one's attitude towards life. What is it?" By degrees she began to realize that that "something" could be summed up by the word "good." One could base one's thinking and conduct on what was good, what was right, what was true. She began to see that there was what one might call a law of good, or a principle of good, just as there was a law or principle of mathematics or of music. She began to see that this law or principle of good was to her what most people would call their "God." But for a long time she avoided using the word "God" because it conjured up a picture of the childish idea of God which she had rejected. So she adopted the habit of substituting the word "good" for "God" whenever she came across it. In this way her prejudice was broken down, and she found she could study the Bible and other books happily, instead of with warfare in her heart. From that time on her conception of God as *infinite good* has gone on developing and expanding, and becoming more and more definite as she has come to understand more of the Bible. She could now give a much fuller definition of God than the one word "good," but she hopes that in reading this book the reader will accept as a starting point that the word "God" is used to denote all that is fundamentally good, and so let the idea develop from that standpoint.

For the benefit of those who know little about this subject, the next chapter gives a very brief summary of the history of

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the Hebrew people, and of how they came to give us the Old Testament. Some knowledge of these facts is necessary before either the Old Testament or the New can be fully appreciated, for the New Testament, telling of the life and teaching of Jesus, was but the outcome and fulfilment of the Old Testament.

Chapter 2



A SUMMARY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

THOUGH the Bible begins with the story of the seven days of creation, it is now generally recognized that this story was written at a much later date than those that follow it, and therefore this summary of the history of the Old Testament begins with the second story—that of Adam and Eve.

The story of the creation of man out of the dust of the ground was supposed to have taken place in 4004 B.C., but it was not until some three thousand years later that the Hebrews learnt to read and write, and all the stories prior to this date were therefore passed down by word of mouth from father to son, and cannot be relied on for historical accuracy. This story of Adam and Eve is thought to have originated as a Babylonian myth, which the Hebrews adopted, and which they later adapted to present certain spiritual facts. The story of Noah and the flood, which follows, is thought to come from the same source, and has been used in the same way.

These stories are followed by those of the wanderings of Abraham in search of "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11: 10). Abraham may or may not have been a real person. The theory has been put forward that these legends probably concern the wanderings of Hebrew tribes rather than persons, but historically little or nothing is known about them. Again the stories are used for their spiritual, rather than historic, value.

Abraham's son, Isaac, was the father of Jacob, whose twelve sons were in turn supposed to be the founders of the twelve tribes of Israel. In a well-known story one of these twelve sons, Joseph, was sold by his jealous brothers to be a slave in Egypt, where, through dependence on God, he displayed such wisdom that he rose to be the ruler of the land, and saved the situation when seven years of plenty were followed by seven years of famine. This famine forced Jacob to send his sons to Egypt

to buy corn. Joseph recognized his brothers, and after testing them, forgave them, and persuaded them to bring their father and their families to live in Egypt.

The sojourn in Egypt may have lasted anything from two hundred to four hundred years, during which time the Hebrews are supposed to have increased greatly in numbers, and to have become slaves to the Egyptians. They were at last rescued by Moses who brought them out of Egypt, through the Red Sea on dry ground, and then led them in the wilderness for forty years, feeding them on manna and quails. During this time in the wilderness Moses is said to have given the people the Mosaic Law, which includes the Ten Commandments, and has been the basis of Jewish law from that day to this.

It is interesting to note, however, that there is no record in Egyptian history of either Joseph or Moses, nor of the Hebrews living in Egypt, and there certainly would have been if these had been *historic* events of the importance which they assume in the Bible. It seems probable, therefore, that again the traditional stories of the Hebrew people were used and embellished by the writers of later centuries, not so much for their historical importance, as for their spiritual value.

After their forty years in the wilderness, Joshua led the people across the Jordan into the Promised Land of Canaan, which was then conquered and divided amongst the twelve tribes. Here the Hebrews settled down in cities and villages instead of leading the nomadic life of shepherds. For some three hundred years they seem to have remained more or less separate tribes, ruled by judges who were chosen mostly for their spiritual leadership. Nevertheless, the people were constantly departing from the worship of the one God, as taught by Moses, and each time their unfaithfulness resulted in war with invading neighbours. It was, however, during this time that they learnt to read and write, probably from their northern neighbours, the Phoenicians.

At last the people demanded a king to rule over them, and the last and greatest of the judges, Samuel, at God's command, anointed first Saul, and then David, to be king of the Israelites, as the Hebrews are also frequently called.

David, who began life as a shepherd boy, was very spiritually

minged. He succeeded in uniting all twelve tribes into one kingdom, and for a short time under David and his son, Solomon, the Hebrews had a taste of political power and glory. Solomon was famous for his wealth and his wisdom, and he it was who built the temple in Jerusalem. But under his foolish son, Rehoboam, the kingdom split once more, the ten northern tribes breaking away to form the kingdom of Israel, leaving only Judah and Benjamin under Rehoboam in the southern kingdom of Judah.

The period that followed was the kingdom period, in which king followed king in quick succession in both kingdoms, and there was constant warfare, and much corruption and idolatry among the people. But it was also the great prophetic period, and it was during this time that many of the prophetic books were written, and that most of the great Hebrew prophets lived and taught and wrote. It was some of these prophets who first collected and wrote down the old myths and legends and traditional stories, using them to illustrate the spiritual growth of their people. These collections were the beginning of that part of the Bible which we now know as the Old Testament.

The first collection of stories was written in the southern kingdom of Judah about 850 B.C., and came to be known as the Jahweh Document, because in it God was referred to as Jahweh (Jehovah, or Lord God). This record contained the Adam and Eve story; Noah; and many other Old Testament stories.

About a hundred years later, a similar book was prepared in the northern kingdom of Israel, containing many, but not all, of the stories of the Jahweh Document, with some additions. This book was known as the Elohist Document because in it God was called Elohim, or God.

Not very long after the writing of this Elohist Document, the northern kingdom of Israel was completely destroyed by the Assyrians and never again became an independent state. But the precious Elohist Document was saved and carried south into Judah, where it was later combined with the Jahweh Document.

But things were not going too well in Judah, and idolatry

and corruption were rife, and many of the kings persecuted priests and prophets. During one such period of persecution, a third book, Deuteronomy, or the Second Book of the Law, was written and hidden in the temple for safety. Here it was found during the reign of Josiah, who ordered it to be read to the people, and thereby caused a great, though short-lived, religious revival.

The people of Judah considered themselves the chosen people of God, and thought that while they had Jerusalem and the temple they were safe from all enemies. Nevertheless they were far from being faithful to the teachings of their great spiritual leaders, and in spite of many warnings from Jeremiah and other prophets, their religion deteriorated into mere ritual and idolatry.

At last in 597 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, invaded Judah and captured Jerusalem. He installed a puppet government in Jerusalem, returning to Babylon with many captives, including the young prophet Ezekiel, and other priests and prophets. These men took with them into captivity copies of their three precious histories,—the Jahweh, Elohist, and Deuteronomistic Documents,—and these they pondered and pondered, ever developing their own spiritual understanding.

Meanwhile the puppet king of Jerusalem thought he could double-cross King Nebuchadnezzar, and he turned to the king of Egypt for help to win his independence. Nebuchadnezzar heard of this, and invaded Jerusalem again, and this time he completely destroyed Jerusalem with its temple, leaving no Jews in the land except the poorest peasants.

To the Jews it seemed that everything was lost, but thanks to the prophets, working faithfully in captivity in Babylon, the national disaster became a blessing to the whole world.

The prophets rightly believed that their spiritual leaders had been blessed with greater spiritual understanding than any other people, and that the development of that spiritual understanding was shown in the stories embodied in their three histories. The more they pondered the spiritual facts, the clearer it all became to them. From time immemorial, the Hebrews and neighbouring races had taken the number seven to indicate perfection, and so it was quite natural that they

should think of God as having a sevenfold nature. They also naturally felt that man must approach God through seven definite stages of thought and development, corresponding to the seven aspects of God's character. They felt that in the main their histories brought out these seven stages fairly clearly, but they began editing the documents, and where necessary changing them slightly, or inserting new passages, to bring out more and more clearly the sevenfold nature of spiritual development. They also started work on a fourth document—the Priestly Document—which embodied most of the other three documents, as well as some original writings of their own. Among these original writings was the story of the days of creation which we now find right at the beginning of the Bible, but which was almost certainly written by the prophet Ezekiel. The prophets evidently felt that if the full significance of the sevenfold development of the whole story, as they saw it, was to be appreciated by all readers, they must provide a key to it, and this they did by writing the story of the seven days of creation, and placing it right at the beginning of the combined manuscripts. This story of the days of creation is dealt with more fully in the next chapter, and it is followed by a selection of stories to show how these days of creation do indeed provide the key to the spiritual understanding of the Bible.

The captivity in Babylon probably lasted about seventy years, and then King Cyrus allowed those Jews who wished to do so to return to Jerusalem, one party under Ezra, and another under Nehemiah, and they were allowed to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. Of course they took with them their precious books, and it was during the time between the return from captivity and the birth of Jesus that the four books (the Jahweh, Elohist, Deuteronomic and Priestly Documents) finally took the form they have to-day of six books,—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, and Joshua,—which come at the beginning of our Bible.

These six books, together with the writings which come under the names of various prophets, are the works that Jesus referred to when he spoke of "the law and the prophets." These were later combined with various more historical books,

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such as Kings and Chronicles, and with "The Writings," or poetical books, such as Psalms, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, to form our Old Testament, but the final arrangement of books was not completed until about a hundred years after the Christian Era.

Chapter 3



THE DAYS OF CREATION

AT one time it was firmly believed that God literally created the heavens and the earth in six days, and rested on the seventh day, as recounted at the beginning of Genesis.

The growth of scientific knowledge has proved that, from the material point of view, this process of evolution took millions of years. But if we discount the time-factor, the story gives a wonderful picture of ordered and logical development as it appeared to the most learned men of those days, and it provided a splendid illustration for the prophets who were in search of a way of summarizing the spiritual development of mankind. They took the current theory of the development of the world, and they applied it to the development of ideas. This story considered as the story of our own, and other people's spiritual development, is a fascinating study, and it is from this standpoint that it is considered here.

The story begins: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1: 1). The word translated "beginning," has really the meaning of "fundamental source" or "principle," and one of the early translations actually reads, "In principle God created the heaven and the earth." This at once lifts the story into the realm of thoughts and ideas, rather than a material creation, and Peake's Commentary on the Bible points out that in this first chapter of Genesis there is no mention of anything being *made* materially. The creation takes place entirely through the *word* of God. "And God said, Let there be . . . and it was so."

So in principle—that is in idea, in mind,—God created, or unfolded, the heaven and the earth. One might almost say that in His own Mind, God unfolded ideas about Himself (the heaven) and presented them to us (the earth).

But "the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep" (Genesis 1: 2). Our thought—

our spiritual thought—was vague and empty, and we were ignorant of the deep things of God. Is there any darkness to compare with the darkness of ignorance?

“And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters” (Genesis 1: 2). The Christ that is latent in each one of us moves in the vagueness and ignorance of our thought, and makes us cry out, “Oh, what is it all about? What is the meaning of life?”

We may say, “But how can the prophets be referring to the Christ when this was written long before the coming of Jesus?” Well, Jesus said of the Christ, the Spirit of God, which he embodied, “Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8: 58). The human Jesus appeared on earth only for about thirty-three years, but the Christ has neither “beginning of days, nor end of life” (Hebrews 7: 3), and the prophets evidently knew much about the Christ, or they could not have prophesied as they did.

In Revelation it says of the Christ, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (Revelation 3: 20). This is much the same statement as “the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” The Christ knocks at the door of our vague and unformed thought, and when we cry out, “What does it all mean?” we are opening the door, and the Christ comes in and feeds us. We mentally hear God say, “Let there be light: and there was light” (Genesis 1: 3).

What is light? Well, Jesus said, “I am the light of the world” (John 8: 12). So the light that comes to us is the Christ,—God’s revelation to us of His own nature. It is God’s ideas coming to us as thoughts and ideas,—ideas of wisdom and intelligence, of reason and knowledge.

In Genesis, chapter 1, verse 5, follows a very interesting statement, “And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.” If the Bible is read from the standpoint of the development of our own spiritual ideas, we find that “day” is used to show that thought is clear, and “night” to show that it is troubled and full of doubt and fear. The Hebrew day was

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reckoned from sunset one evening to sunset the next evening; so the evening of their day came before the morning, and not, as with us, at the end of the day. It was therefore natural for the prophets to speak of "evening and morning" rather than "morning and evening," but in these days of creation the terms have a deeper meaning. After sunset the light fades rapidly, and nothing can be seen clearly. Mentally, therefore, evening is a time when thought is muddled and puzzled, as when we cried out, "What is it all about?" "Morning" if when the dawn comes and brings light,—when the answer begins to dawn in our consciousness. It is full "day" when we have understood and fully accepted the answer.

So to these Hebrew prophets, spiritual development starts for each one of us in the "evening" of thought, when we become aware of our ignorance and long for the light of knowledge of the things that really matter. The "morning" comes as we begin to realize that God is infinite divine intelligence, wisdom, knowledge, forever speaking to us through the light of good thoughts. As the conviction grows that God is infinite intelligence coming to us as good thoughts and ideas, the first stage of our spiritual development is accomplished—
"And the evening and the morning were the first day."

"But," we may say, "how can we know which are God's thoughts and ideas? Which are good thoughts? So many of our thoughts seem to be mixed!" This is the "evening" of the second day. In the second day we read, "And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters" (Genesis 1: 6). The word "firmament" means something that makes firm. The waters indicate thought that is fluid, not crystallized or set. The "morning" of our second day seems to come when we realize that we have an absolute standard, or "firmament," by which to judge thoughts and determine which are God's thoughts, and which are not. This firmament seems to be the recognition that what we call "God" is absolute good,—good so pure that it has not the slightest taint of evil, nor even any knowledge of evil. As we begin to judge our thoughts and ideas from the standard of the "firmament" of absolute goodness and purity, so we begin to separate ourselves from, and to reject, anything

that is not absolutely good. Then we are accomplishing the second stage of our spiritual development, of which the prophets wrote, "And the evening and the morning were the second day."

"But," we may say again, "is it possible to do this in this world where evil is so much to the fore, and nothing seems to be wholly good?" This is the "evening" of the third day, where we read, "And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear" (Genesis 1: 9). In other words, let us gather together in our thought all that we know is good, and let us consolidate it by pondering it and thinking about it so that it becomes more and more real and definite to us. Then we shall find that we are no longer floundering about in uncertainties, but have some "dry land" of certain, definite ideas upon which to work.

A second thing happens in that third day. "God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself" (Genesis 1: 11). As soon as we have some "dry land," or "earth" upon which to work, as soon as our recognition of God as infinite good becomes definite and consolidated, it begins to "bring forth." We begin to get results. First we grow "grass,"—simple, straightforward, good thoughts spring up all through our thinking. These develop into "herb yielding seed." Good thoughts bring forth the seeds of ideas which grow and develop continuously. In fact, they develop into "the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself." The ideas grow bigger and bigger, and bring forth much fruit. They become really practical in daily life. This is the third stage of spiritual development, of which the prophets write, "And the evening and the morning were the third day."

Next comes the query, "How can these ideas become practical?" This is the "evening" of the fourth day, and the answer given is, "And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven. . . . And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also" (Genesis 1: 14, 16). Here the prophets use the sun, moon, and stars to illustrate their meaning. The "sun"

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represents God giving light to the whole world and ruling over the "day." When our thought is clear and untroubled, we turn direct to God for guidance, recognizing Him as the one infinite, fundamental good, from which all good, all light, flows in a never-ending stream of good thoughts, good ideas, good impulses, which direct and govern our every thought and action. But when it is "night" and our thought is troubled and full of fear and doubt, then we turn to the "moon" for light. Now of course, the moon has no light of its own, but reflects the sun's light. When the bulk of the earth is between us and the sun, shutting out the sunlight from us, the moon picks up the light from the sun and reflects it back to us. So when the cares of this world and all the mass of evil thoughts hide God's light from us, the Christ picks up that light and rules "over the night," bringing us light even in our darkest moments. How often when we have been in a tight corner, or nearly overwhelmed with trouble, have some of us asked ourselves, "What would Jesus have done in such circumstances?" The answer is practical. He would have opened the door of his thought to the Christ. If we do that, the Christ is there with a ray of light for us—a good thought, a good impulse, to show us what to do. This is the fruit of understanding the first three days of creation. The prophets call each individual who picks up and uses that light, a "star," and as we become "stars" we find that the "evening and the morning were the fourth day."

"But," we ask, "can I really use God's light, God's thoughts practically in my everyday life? Will they really help to solve my daily problems? Will they really bring practical results?" This is the "evening" of the fifth day, and in the fifth day we read, "And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven" (Genesis 1 : 20). Fish are the most prolific form of life, and so are frequently used in the Bible to illustrate the way in which the ideas of God become living and vital to us once we open the door to the Christ, and become a "star." Once that happens, the ideas certainly "multiply." Our thought teems with ideas, practical ideas, which, if we use them, become the "fowl that

fly above the earth." Everything to do with our daily living is uplifted. We look at it from a higher level. The abundance of ideas shows itself in greater abundance in our daily lives, and the higher outlook enables us more and more to see that God's ideas never die but are eternal. They are, and were, and ever shall be. Therefore we look at life from the standpoint of immortality instead of mortality which ends in death. This is the fifth stage of spiritual thought, of which the prophets wrote, "And the evening and the morning were the fifth day."

"But," we say, "people won't like it if we take up these new ideas. They will say we are silly, and it will probably make a barrier between us and our family and friends." This is the "evening" of the sixth day, and the answer is given in two parts. First we read "And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and the beast of the earth after his kind" (Genesis 1: 24). Do you remember that the "earth," or "dry land," of the third day represents our consolidated ideas of good? The feeling of certainty about what is good, which we have begun to prove to be practical and to bring good results, now "brings forth" "cattle," "creeping things," and "beasts." Further study of the Bible shows that these seem to stand for moral qualities. Our "cattle" seem to be qualities such as perseverance, persistent effort, faithfulness, and alertness. Our "creeping things" are patience and tact. Our "beasts" are strength of character and moral courage.

Our feeling of certainty about the practicality of good develops in us this strength of character and moral qualities, which enable us to take our stand for a higher outlook on life. It also gives us the "creeping things," the patience and tact (and how few of us like creeping things!), which, if developed, will give us the wisdom not to force our new ideas on others, but to present them gently, and often more by example than by words.

As our character develops in this way, the second unfolding of the sixth day takes place. "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every

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creeping thing" (Genesis 1: 26). Through these "days," our true self (the man and woman that we all long to be, and feel that we fundamentally are) has been developing. We begin to see that this true self is something absolutely good, absolutely Godlike, and that it has dominion over (it possesses and can make use of) all the moral qualities, all the abundance of ideas, and all the uplifting thoughts.

It also says, "God blessed *them*." This man, made in God's image and likeness, does not refer just to ourselves. It is the truth about the fundamental true self of every man, woman, and child. As we think about this, we shall remember that however unpleasant or bad anyone may seem to be, underneath it all is the true self made in God's image and likeness, even if it does seem to be very undeveloped. Then we begin to look for this true self wherever it may appear, and by so doing, we help to bring it out and to develop it. Henry Drummond wrote in *The Greatest Thing in the World*, "You will find, if you think for a moment, that the people who influence you are the people who believe in you. In an atmosphere of suspicion men shrivel up; but in that atmosphere they expand, and find encouragement and educative fellowship." So, as we begin to see God's man in everyone, far from it making barriers, we find that it breaks them down; that it promotes love and friendship; that it helps everyone; and that it establishes better relationships all round.

As this happens, we begin to see what the prophets meant when they wrote, "And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day."

With the realization of the perfection of God's man, our "evenings" of muddled and dark thought are finished, and the seventh day (which comes at the beginning of chapter two of Genesis), has no evening or morning. It just "is." The prophets wrote, "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made" (Genesis 2: 1, 2). As we begin to see that "God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good," and as we realize that this "creation"

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was the unfoldment of ideas to us, then, in this seventh stage of our spiritual development, we realize that God's creation has always been complete, and perfect, and wholly good. Take a mathematical example. Was there ever a time when 3×6 was not 18? We did not always know it, and when we first learnt it, it seemed as though a new idea was born, was created to us. But really it was only the unfolding to us of a fact that had always been, and our acceptance of this fact. So we begin to see that "whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it" (Ecclesiastes 3: 14). All God's thoughts are for ever complete and available, and all we have to do is to claim them as our own, and let them operate in our thinking to cast out anything that is not good, until the light of the Christ has completely banished the darkness of everything unlike God.

This gives a wonderful sense of restfulness—not of inactivity, but of activity so peaceful, rhythmical, and harmonious that, like beautiful music, it rests and refreshes.

So here, briefly, is the story the prophets told of seven stages of developing thought, leading from ignorance of God up to the realization of the perfection of God's creation as made manifest through man made in God's image and likeness. There is a wealth of detail not touched upon here, but as you read, and re-read, and ponder these "days," you will find that the ideas go on unfolding and developing to you, and that thought rises continually towards that seventh day of perfection for which we all long, and which is ours as we come to understand it.

Chapter 4



ADAM AND EVE

IN the Bible the days of creation are followed immediately by the story of Adam and Eve. This is a much older story, which appeared in the Jahweh Document, and is, in fact, based on an old Hebrew and Babylonian myth. At first sight it appears to contradict absolutely the previous story of the days of creation. But when the two are compared, it seems obvious that the prophets adapted it to represent the "darkness" of thought which is ignorant of God as good; and the futility and misery that results when man tries to work on his own without understanding God, good; and how this misery gradually causes man to wake up to the truth about God and man as sketched in the days of creation.

The new story begins in verse 4 of chapter 2 of Genesis, where you will notice that it is no longer *God* who creates by His word, but the *Lord God* who makes things out of "the dust of the ground." Now the term "*Lord God*" is used to denote a manlike idea of God,—not a God who is wholly good, and who is "of purer eyes than to behold evil" (Habakkuk 1: 13) as was the God of chapter 1, but a God who both loves and hates; who is capable of anger and cruelty; who changes his mind, and certainly does not manifest unflinching and unerring wisdom!

Verse 4 begins, "These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth, when they *were* created." Note that the heavens and earth *were* created already before the *Lord God* got to work to remake them!

Then in verses 5 and 6 we read, "The *Lord God* had not caused it to rain upon the earth. . . . But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground." The whole trouble comes from that mist. A mist or fog may completely blot out the whole landscape. You may be in the midst of the most beautiful scenery, but if there is a thick fog,

you might just as well be in ugly surroundings. Objects which are not completely blotted out, are distorted and misrepresented. I once heard a man say that the most realistic dragon he had ever seen was a cart-horse standing under a street lamp in a thick fog. Smoke seemed to be issuing from its nostrils; its eyes seemed to be shooting fire; and its body trailed away and was lost in the mist. When a mist goes up in our thinking, it turns our conception of God, as infinite good, into the *Lord* God, a mixture of good and evil, and instead of man made in God's image and likeness, we get man made of "the dust of the ground." The mist is darkness instead of light. So "There went up a mist from the earth" is the exact opposite of the "Let there be light" of the first day of creation.

But to return to verse 5, this account of the *Lord* God's creation begins by saying that he had not caused it to rain. That implies of course that the ground was completely dry—just dust. Now a mist is caused by moisture rising from damp ground, so where did this mist come from? I am sure the prophets said that it had not rained in order to show that this Adam story is just delusion, caused by a mist that had no origin!

The story goes on, "And the *Lord* God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life" (Genesis 2: 7). Now anything you do with dust, or make from dust, has no permanency. If you write in the dust, a sweep of the hand obliterates it. Even if you damp the dust with the "mist" that "watered the whole face of the ground," you may be able to model with it, but your model is easily crushed to bits, or will crumble when it gets dry. So the *Lord* God's man was a thing "of few days" and he proved to be "full of trouble" (Job 14: 1). Yet this is the man into whose nostrils the *Lord* God is supposed to have breathed the breath of life. In the second day of creation we had the firmament to *divide* God's thoughts from worldly thoughts. Here the *Lord* God is supposed to be putting God's thoughts into dust, into that which has no permanency! This man of dust seems to be the sinner, the mortal man, in each one of us.

In the first story, everything that man required was provided before man actually appeared. Here the first thing the *Lord*

God did was to make man; and then he discovered that man had none of the things he needed, and so, instead of the sense of abundance and blessing that permeates the first story, the second is dominated by a sense of lack, and, from the outset, man is thoroughly dissatisfied.

The *Lord* God finds that the man he has made has nowhere to live and nothing to eat, so he plants a garden for him in Eden, and makes "every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food" to grow in that garden. One theory is that that garden was the mortal material body, and that the trees were the five physical senses. Certainly that explanation seems to fit in with the rest of the story.

Verse 9 continues, "the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil." It seems that those two trees were really one and the same. The tree of life throughout the Bible undoubtedly stands for the real understanding of God as infinite good. The tree of knowledge of good and evil seems to stand for that understanding seen through the mist of distorted thinking. It presents God not as infinite good, but as a mixture of good and evil. You will notice that after this reference, the two aspects are never again presented together. It is *either* the tree of knowledge, *or* the tree of life.

Well, the *Lord* God took his man of dust "and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and keep it" (Genesis 2: 15). Have we not been dressing and keeping the mortal body ever since?

Then the *Lord* God tells the man that he must not eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, for if he does, he will surely die (Genesis 2: 17). A false sense of God would kill all that is good in us.

But the man is lonely, so "out of the ground the *Lord* God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof" (Genesis 2: 19). In the third day of creation the *earth* (our consolidated and sure ideas of God), brought forth the grass, the herb, and the tree. But here, beasts and birds are formed out of the *ground*,—out of dust,—out of fleeting ideas

with no proper basis and therefore no permanency. They are based on nothingness. These beasts and birds seem to be the opposites of the moral qualities (or animals) and uplifting thoughts (or birds) of the first story. They seem to stand for animal qualities and preying thoughts. These were brought to Adam to be named, and in naming them he took them to himself, and made them a part of himself. Do not we do that too?

But Adam was still lonely. "There was not found an help meet for him." So the "*Lord* God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam . . . and he took one of his ribs," and out of the rib "made he a woman, and brought her unto the man" (Genesis 2 : 20-22). That deep sleep was a hypnotic sleep, and if you read on you will find that there is no mention of Adam ever really waking up again. The rest of the story is the story of a hypnotic dream. Here the *Lord* God hypnotizes the man he has made out of dust, in contrast to the fourth day of creation where God ruled over the day (clear thought), and the Christ ruled over the night (troubled thought).

Of the woman it says, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2 : 24). Man's true Father and Mother is God, the creator of all things good, but man, who is hypnotized into believing that mortal material life is the only reality, loses his sense of God as the one divine Parent, and turns to sex for the fulfilment of his desires.

Chapter two ends with "And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed" (Genesis 2 : 25). In Bible language we are "clothed" with our understanding of God. These two, the man and his wife, had no understanding of God, but they were so hypnotized by material living that they were unaware of any lack. Are there not many people like that to-day?

Chapter three introduces the serpent, who reappears many times in the Bible, and represents the devil, or personified evil,—every thing that is unlike God, good. This serpent claims to have been made by the *Lord* God, but it talks about God, saying, "Hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" (Genesis 3 : 1).

The woman replied that they might eat of all but the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. If they ate that they would die.

The serpent answered, "Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened (you will begin to understand everything), and ye shall be as gods (not God!), knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3: 4-5). That old serpent is much too subtle to try to tempt us with something that is wholly evil. Nobody wants anything that is wholly bad. But if it is a mixture of good and evil, we are much more likely to fall. In this case the woman decided it was desirable to investigate both good and evil, and to gain first-hand experience of both. So she ate the fruit, and gave some to her husband, and he also ate it.

"And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked" (Genesis 3: 7). How often that sort of thing happens to us! When we deliberately indulge in something we know to be wrong, do we not nearly always find that instead of giving us the pleasure we expected of it, it leaves us with a feeling of dissatisfaction, of "nakedness"? It is only a very distorted sense that really believes that something good can come from evil, and so deliberately indulges in evil. And it is when we find that the fruits of evil cause misery instead of pleasure that our eyes are opened. We begin to awake,—begin to throw off the hypnotic influence,—but, like Adam and Eve, we usually try to hide our nakedness and shame. They sewed fig leaves together, and hid among the trees of the garden (the five physical senses). We, too, do that. We try to find happiness through the physical senses. But it is no good. We hear the *Lord God* "walking in the garden." Our conscience troubles us. We hear the call, "Adam, where art thou?" and like Adam we answer, "I heard thy voice in the garden (in my conscience), and I was afraid, because I was naked (I had no understanding); and I hid myself" (Genesis 3: 9-10).

When questioned about what he had done, Adam threw the blame on to Eve, but Eve's reply was simply, "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat" (Genesis 3: 13). She was the first to realize that the trouble began by listening to the serpent. Listening to the serpent had dragged thought down into the

very depths of despair, whereas in the fifth day of creation the "fowl" lifted thought to higher levels of spirituality and happiness.

The *Lord* God then proceeds to curse all three of them, the serpent, the woman, and the man! What a contrast between these curses and the blessings of the sixth day of creation where man was given dominion over everything!

The serpent is cursed to go in the dust and to eat nothing but dust. In fact it is reminded that it is only dust, and therefore has no permanency, no ultimate reality. The *Lord* God also says he "will put enmity between thee and the woman, and . . . her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Genesis 3: 15). It is interesting that the original meaning of the old English word "bruise" is "break." The serpent's head is to be broken, which implies that the true womanhood in each one of us will eventually destroy the serpent, destroy evil. (We all have many woman qualities and many man qualities whatever our sex.) During the period of struggle, however, the serpent will break the woman's heel. A broken heel does not destroy, but it certainly impedes progress.

The curse on the woman is that "in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children." When applied to human childbirth, and all the difficulties involved in bringing up children, how true that is! What difficulties we meet! But it applies equally to any idea to which we give birth, if we are believing in a mixture of good and evil. The curse continues, "and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (Genesis 3: 16). According to the Bible, "Thy Maker is thine husband" (Isaiah 54: 5), and if our desire is for God, and he rules over us, whether we are male or female, all is well. But when the desire is for sex, and that rules over us, what a curse it is indeed!

Then poor old Adam comes in for his share of the curse. He is told that "cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth; . . . in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return unto the ground; . . . for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Genesis 3: 17-19). The ground is dust,—fleeting, baseless, materialistic beliefs, and

theories. The Adam in us labours very hard to grow things from that basis, and all that happens is that we find "thorns and thistles," horrid pricks and knocks, until at last the very painfulness of the process persuades us of its futility. We see that "Adam" is no use, and we let him return to dust, nothingness, and we pin our faith on man made in God's image and likeness.

And so we come to the end of this story where "the *Lord* God sent him (Adam) forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken" (Genesis 3: 23). So Adam is eventually turned out of our body (Eden) to make room for the perfection of man made in God's image and likeness, and Cherubims (God's thoughts) are placed outside the garden with "a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life" (Genesis 3: 24). So, when we turn Adam (the false sense of man) out of our thinking, we shall find that God's thoughts will guard the entrance to our consciousness with the flaming sword of Truth, which protects all that is good, but utterly destroys all that is false. Then we shall find in the midst of us the tree of life, the understanding of God, and we shall rise to the consciousness of the seventh day of perfection, where thought rests in the completeness and loveliness of God's creation.

Chapter 5



CAIN AND ABEL

WE now come to the story of Cain and Abel, the sons of Adam and Eve. This is one of the stories which to most people appears grossly unfair, but which, considered from the point of view from which we have taken the days of creation and the story of Adam and Eve, becomes truly wonderful.

The key to this story is given in verse 2 of chapter 4 of Genesis. "And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground."

This is the first reference in the Bible to sheep and shepherds, but anyone who knows the Bible well could immediately think of many more such references. These terms are used in two ways. Sometimes God is the Shepherd, and we are His sheep, His thoughts and ideas. But when men are referred to as shepherds, it means that they are thinkers, looking after their flocks of thoughts. It was not by chance that Luke says that angels appeared to shepherds to tell them of the birth of Jesus (Luke 2: 8-15). Those who watched their thoughts and kept them safe by "night" (in darkness, doubt and fear), were ready to accept a new revelation of the Christ-idea as brought to them by angels (God's thoughts).

Well, Abel was a keeper of sheep. He was a thinker and looked after his thoughts, always trying to improve them. But Cain took after his father, Adam. He was a tiller of the ground. He worked in the dust, in mortal beliefs, and that which the dust brought forth was "thorns also and thistles" (Genesis 3: 18), or, in other words, passion, hatred, revenge, pride, and all the conglomeration of human failings.

When Cain and Abel both decided to give an offering to the Lord (this is the *Lord* God again, not God), Cain brought some of his "thorns and thistles," the fruit of the ground, but Abel "brought of the firstlings of his flock." He brought his best thoughts. Was it any wonder that "the Lord had respect unto

Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect" (Genesis 4: 4-5)? Is it not always the good in us which is appreciated, while nobody likes the bad in us?

"And Cain was very wroth." When people turn from us because of our anger or pride or hate, it makes the Cain in us very angry, and the fact that we, too, hear the Lord (our conscience) saying to us, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?" often only seems to make matters worse. Like Cain, we then rise up against our brother Abel (our better self), and kill him.

Then we hear the Lord again speaking through our conscience saying, "What hast thou done?" and we begin to see the "Cain" in ourselves in all its ugliness. But, just as Adam was turned out of the garden of Eden, so the Lord says to the Cain in us, "A fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be" (Genesis 4: 12). Cain complains that everyone finding him will try to kill him, but the Lord answers, "Whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him" (Genesis 4: 15). We cannot kill Cain. We cannot use one evil to destroy another. If we do, we are like the man of whom Jesus spoke when he said "the last state of that man is worse than the first" (Matthew 12: 45). The only way to get rid of evil is to replace the wrong with the right, the darkness with the light, and that is done in a sevenfold way through the development of the seven days of creation.

And so we read the comforting statement, "And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod" (Genesis 4: 16). The "Cain" in us is driven out by the light of God's thoughts, and goes to dwell in the land of Nod, which means darkness or oblivion. He just disappears completely out of our consciousness.

But the story does not really end there, for in verse 25 it says, "And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth: For God, said she, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew." Anything good can never really be slain. The "Cain" may rise against the "Abel" in us, and may seem to overpower him, but when

LET THERE BE LIGHT

“Cain” has been dealt with, and has gone into the land of Nod, the “Abel” reappears in a higher form as “Seth,” of whom it says, “Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord” (Genesis 4: 26). Then we begin to have a higher understanding of the nature of God.

Chapter 6



NOAH

THE story of Noah, like that of Adam and Eve, was founded on a Babylonian myth, but it is interesting to know that a similar story appears in practically every mythology all over the world, and at least thirty-six different versions are known. None of the others, however, has been lifted to the high spiritual level of the story of Noah as given by the Hebrew prophets.

We read, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth . . . and it repented the Lord that he had made man . . . And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth. . . . But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord" (Genesis 6: 5-8).

Now the God of the days of creation who "saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Genesis 1: 31), could not now be seeing that same creation as wicked, and therefore be thinking of destroying it. Nor could anything that was wholly good have become so wicked. It is really expressing what Noah thought about God as he surveyed the material world, and "Noah" may be you or me, anybody and everybody.

The name "Noah" means rest or comfort, and the story shows that Noah had a clear sense of the "firmament" of the second day of creation, which recognized the goodness and purity of God, and so purified the mortal picture by separating good from evil. Noah saw that the purity must destroy the wickedness as inevitably as light destroys darkness, but he also saw that, while the warfare lasts, there often seems to be a great flood of trouble.

When such an experience comes to us, if we are Noah, and listening for the still small voice, we shall hear the command, "Make thee an ark of gopher wood," and if we are wise, we shall follow the instructions faithfully. Some commentaries say that the word "gopher" means "suitable." Make yourself an

ark of suitable ideas, of all the good thoughts and ideas you can muster. "Rooms shalt thou make in the ark." Make a right place in it for every idea, and "pitch it within and without with pitch" (Genesis 6: 14). "Pitch," according to Scofield, is the same word elsewhere translated "atonement," which means "at-one-ment." The ark is to be made watertight, trouble-proof, by the sense of man's oneness with God. Is there anything that would give a greater sense of safety than the feeling that man is at-one with God, infinite good?

There is to be a window in the ark, for it is essential to let in the light of God's thoughts; and a door through which thoughts can come in and out. There are also to be three storeys,—three states of thought,—belief, faith, and understanding. We begin by believing in a God that is infinite good. As we ponder this idea and develop it, our belief grows into the faith that overcomes mountainous difficulties, but our work is never absolutely sure and certain until that faith has become spiritual understanding, and, in the words of Peter, we can give a reason for the hope that is in us (1 Peter 3: 15).

Then "the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark" (Genesis 7: 1). We must take all our "house" with us into the safety of the ark. Our "house" is where we live, and so, mentally, our "house" is our consciousness,—everything of which we are conscious. We must take all our thoughts and ideas and beliefs with us. "Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of the beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female" (Genesis 7: 2). Why, I wonder, has everybody always talked of the animals going in "two by two," and completely overlooked the important fact that the clean beasts were to go in by *sevens*? The clean beasts are, of course, the cattle and beasts of the sixth day of creation,—good thoughts and moral qualities,—and they must be perfect, and so the prophets used that symbol of perfection, "seven." But we also take two of the unclean beasts,—the animal qualities which Adam named and took to himself. When we go into the ark, which we might say is our highest idea of the Christ, we have to take the mortal part of ourselves with us, but we take it "by two," recognizing its impurity and the need for using the

“firmament” to separate between the good and the evil, the real and the unreal. The experience in the ark should transform and purify these undesirable thoughts.

“And Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth” (Genesis 7: 6). That does not mean that Noah was literally six hundred years old. When the story began, he was five hundred years old, so it is rather ridiculous to think he should have taken a hundred years to build the ark! But remember that the name Noah means “rest” and “comfort,” the rest and comfort in your thinking and in mine, and how can we put an age to that? Obviously the prophets meant to convey some idea other than that of age. Six hundred is 6×100 . The six would seem to represent the sixth day of creation in which man made in God’s image and likeness appeared. A hundred is 10×10 . Ten was an important number to the Hebrews. It originated with the ten fingers, and because we use our fingers in nearly everything we do, the prophets adopted it to represent the application of our understanding of God to everything we do in our lives. When they wanted to emphasize this thought particularly, they made it $10 \times 10 = 100$, or even $10 \times 10 \times 10 = 1000$. So the fact that Noah is said to be six hundred years old when he entered the ark would seem to imply that the prophets were using a kind of shorthand (which would have been readily understood by the readers of their day) to convey the idea that Noah understood something of man made in God’s image and likeness, and that he used this in his daily living.

“The same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights” (Genesis 7: 11-12). When we begin to apply our understanding of the perfect man to the human problem, it just seems to stir up all the latent evil all round us, and it often seems to rain trouble for “forty days and forty nights.” But it also opens the windows of heaven to us, and they “pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it” (Malachi 3: 10). So we need not be frightened or discouraged at this seeming flood of trouble, but, like Noah, we should take refuge in the safety of the ark, and look for the blessings.

“In the selfsame day entered Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah’s wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark” (Genesis 7: 13). In these stories, when we put ourselves in the position of the principal character, we find that our “wife” is our highest conception of the Christ-ideal, which we take to ourselves, to which we marry ourselves, and to which we must be faithful. Our “sons” are our thought processes, or the ideas to which we give birth.

As the story proceeds, we find that “Ham” represents our lowest thoughts,—sensual thoughts, and thoughts which often exult over others’ failings. “Shem” represents our moral thoughts, much more kindly, but thoughts which rebuke the “Ham” in us. “Japheth” stands for our spiritual thoughts and our understanding of God, and of God’s man. In the story you will find that the order is frequently given as Shem, Ham and Japheth, though the logical sequence would seem to be Ham, Shem and Japheth. This is because the emphasis in this story of the flood is on Shem,—the kindly, good thoughts that rebuke the “Ham” in us.

When Noah had taken all his thought-family, including the animals and birds, into the ark, it says, “and the Lord shut him in” (Genesis 7: 16). When trouble comes, we can take all our consciousness into the ark of our understanding of the Christ-idea, and the Lord will shut us in with Noah, with that understanding of God which gives us rest and comfort.

“And the waters increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lift up above the earth” (Genesis 7: 17). If we have put ourselves in the ark, the more the flood of trouble seems to increase, the higher it lifts us up, without touching us or in any way harming us. We have all the blessings without being troubled by the flood water!

Meanwhile the evil is destroying itself in the flood. “The waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills (the biggest evils) . . . were covered, . . . And all flesh died. . . . All in whose nostrils was the breath of life” (Genesis 7: 19–22). Do you remember that it was the Adam-man into whose nostrils the *Lord* God breathed the breath of life? To the “Noah” in us, lifted up in the ark, the Adam-man in each one of us, with all his attendant troubles, died.

“And God remembered Noah”—or perhaps we ought to say, Noah remembered God . . . “and the waters asswaged” (Genesis 8: 1). “And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat” (Genesis 8: 4). “Ararat” means “holy ground,” or, as Scofield puts it, “the new heaven and the new earth.” The ark rested on what, to the “Noah” in us, was a new conception of the heaven and earth.

Then Noah opened the window of the ark, and he sent out a raven to see if the floods were gone. Now a raven is a bird of prey. It is one of Adam’s birds, an unclean bird or thought, and it could not help Noah. It went “to and fro” without getting anywhere, and it never came back.

Then Noah sent out a dove, which stands for purity and peace. But the flood had not abated sufficiently, and the dove returned to the ark, and Noah “put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark; And he stayed yet other seven days; and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark; and the dove came in to him in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf pluckt off. . . . And he stayed yet other seven days; and sent forth the dove; which returned not again unto him any more” (Genesis 8: 9-12). Had you ever noticed before how frequently the seven days are referred to in these stories? The first time we send out a dove—one of the thoughts of purity and peace which we have developed in the ark—we usually send it out from the lowest storey of the ark—belief. We *believe* that God is good and pure and will give us peace. But belief cannot do much for us, and our dove comes back, and if we are wise, we take it in, and develop it by gaining a better understanding of the seven days of creation. Then we send the dove out again from the second storey of faith, and this time it brings us back an olive leaf,—a promise of good things. The olive tree provided the Hebrews with oil, which they used extensively for cooking, and also for anointing their kings. Because of this latter use, oil was used by the prophets as a symbol of consecration. So the second time the dove brought back, not only a promise of oil, but also a reminder to Noah that he needed still more consecration and purity of thought. So again Noah worked over the seven days of creation until he

could send out his dove from the top storey of understanding. Then the dove did not return, for the flood was gone. The understanding of God had destroyed it.

“And Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and, behold, the face of the ground was dry” (Genesis 8: 13). Isaiah says, “He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations” (Isaiah 25: 7). When we have used the “firmament” of the second day to divide the waters from the waters and destroy the flood, then we find we can remove the covering, or vail, which was hiding from us the truth about God and the truth about man, and we find that the “dry land” of the third day has appeared. Our ideas are definite and certain.

Then God told Noah to go forth out of the ark. We must always be ready to go forward. Sometimes when we have had to cope with a flood of trouble, and have built ourselves an ark, and have seen the flood successfully overcome, we are inclined to say, “This is good enough for me. I need not go any further.” But God demands of us that we shall always go forward, and never be satisfied with anything short of perfection. So the end of the story records God’s promise, “I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth” (Genesis 9: 13). The rainbow has seven colours, and as it appears upon a cloud, it provided the prophets with a wonderful illustration to remind us that every cloud, every difficulty, can be dealt with through the understanding of the sevenfold nature of God.

But Noah did not always go forward. After all he had seen and proved, he “began to be an husbandman” (Genesis 9: 20). He allowed himself to slide back, and he became, like Adam, a tiller of the ground. He planted a vineyard, and the fruit of it made him drunk, and he “was uncovered within his tent” (Genesis 9: 21). Do you remember that with Adam and Eve the first effect of eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil was that they knew that they were naked? The first fruit of tilling the soil, trying to mingle good with evil, is always the same. Noah, too, became naked. He lost his understanding of God.

Then his son Ham saw his father’s nakedness and went and

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told his brothers about it. Our sensual thoughts love talking and gloating over our own and other people's failings. But Shem and Japheth would not look at their father's nakedness. They "took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father" (Genesis 9: 23). Shem, the kindly part of our natures which rebukes evil, and Japheth, the part which understands God and God's man, never see the nakedness as part of man. They take the garment of understanding, and with it they clothe man until he appears "clothed and in his right mind" (Mark 5: 15).

Finally Noah curses Ham, and blesses Shem and Japheth, finishing up with "God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan (Ham's son) shall be his servant" (Genesis 9: 27). Japheth, our spiritual understanding, will be enlarged, and it will dwell in the tents of Shem. The moral qualities will belong to it, and Canaan, the physical, will be its servant.

Chapter 7



ABRAHAM

WITH the story of Abraham, we start on a fresh section of the Bible story. The Hebrews, who believed that spiritual development took place through seven progressive stages of understanding, also believed that each of these stages or "days" took a thousand years to develop in human history. Hence Peter's remark that "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Peter 3:8). The first thousand-year period started with Adam, whose date is reckoned symbolically by the prophets as 4004 B.C., and continues to the time of Noah, roughly about 3000 B.C. The story of this period records how the "Let there be light" of the first day of creation dispels the "mist" that went up from the earth. Then Adam returns to dust, and Cain goes out into the land of Nod, nothingness, and later Enoch is translated.

Noah is supposed to have lived nine hundred and fifty years, and his story fills practically the whole of the second thousand-year period. In it, Noah uses the "firmament" of the second day of creation, here symbolized by the ark, to deal with the flood of materialistic beliefs and troubles.

Abraham was supposed to have been born in 1996 B.C., and his appearance ushers in the third thousand-year period. But whereas the first two periods are illustrated by one main story, this third period is told in much greater detail, and includes the stories of Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua and the Judges.

So far we have considered each story in a certain amount of detail, but it is obvious that unless this book is to run into several volumes, every chapter cannot be so considered. Much must be left out, and so from now onwards, only a few of the chief incidents will be taken. You will notice in the stories of this third period how frequently incidents happen on "the third day," and how all are concerned with developing a

clearer and more definite idea of God, and how, when this "dry land" has appeared, it brings forth "grass," and "herb," and "tree."

However, within this framework of the thousand-year period, nearly every story, including this one of Abraham, is itself developed in seven stages corresponding to the seven days of creation.

In Genesis 1: 2-3 the story of the days of creation starts with, ". . . and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, 'Let there be light: and there was light.'"

The story of Abraham (or Abram, as he is called at first) states, "Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, . . . and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12: 1-3). Abram, according to the Bible, had been living in Ur of the Chaldees, which was one of the great centres of civilization of the ancient world, and was famous for its astronomers and astrologers. To the Hebrew writers, with their strongly developed spiritual sense, this represented the gross darkness of heathenism, and so Abram was told by God to come out of that darkness into the light of an understanding of God, which would bless all the families of the earth, and which was symbolized as the Promised Land. The same call to come out of ignorance into the light of understanding comes constantly to each one of us, and if we are Abram, we shall listen and obey.

With Abram was his wife, Sarai, and his nephew, Lot. As in the story of Noah, Sarai was the ideal to which Abram had wedded himself, but Lot represented the lower side of Abram's nature. Abram was a spiritual seeker who really longed to live always in the consciousness of God, good, but there was another side of him which loved the material, sensuous side of life, and this comes into the story as Lot.

Both Abram and Lot were shepherds and had large flocks—many thoughts,—and it is not surprising that there was "strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle" (Genesis 13: 7). As so often happens with us, there

was strife in Abram's own thinking between his spiritual side and his sensual side. So Abram saw that he must separate from Lot, saw that he must use the firmament of the second day of creation to separate his good thoughts from his sensual thoughts. Lot chose to go into the plain of Sodom and Gomorrah which looked like "the garden of the Lord"—Eden. He was really the Adam in Abram, and so he chose to live where Adam lived.

But to Abram himself, after the separation, the Lord said, "Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: . . . Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee" (Genesis 13: 14, 17). As in the third day of creation the "dry land" appeared following the second day of separation, so here the "Abram" in us begins to find his "dry land," the earth, or the definite and certain ideas of God which we are to inherit. Abram is also promised a son—we see that the earth will bring forth, that our ideas will bear fruit, just as the earth did in the third day of creation.

But like so many of us, Abram was impatient because this did not happen at once, and acting on Sarai's advice he tried to hurry things and took Hagar, Sarai's bondmaid, to wife, and she brought forth a son, Ishmael. But when we use human expedients to try to hasten spiritual development, it never works, and later Hagar and Ishmael caused considerable trouble.

Meanwhile, however, because Abram was a sincere spiritual seeker, he went forward. As his understanding of God became more certain and definite, both he and Sarai were renamed. Instead of being known as Abram (lofty father) he became Abraham (father of a multitude), and Sarai (my princess) became Sarah (princess). In both cases the vision broadened.

Then one day Abraham was sitting at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. His tent or dwelling-place was his consciousness, and it was full day—the evening and the morning had become the fourth day. His thoughts about God were very clear. He saw that "God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night:

he made the stars also" (Genesis 1 : 16). As he looked up he saw three men standing by him, but he addressed them not as "My Lords" but as "My Lord." He caught a glimpse of the Trinity, the one God who is at the same time Father, Son and Holy Ghost, or, as we should be more inclined to express it to-day, Father, Son and Mother. These three men promised him that Sarah should have a son. Really at this point Abraham became a "star" in the fourth day of creation. He began to reflect "the greater light" and so he saw that if God were Father, Mother and Son, all in one, he also must show forth fatherhood, motherhood and sonship in his thoughts. His ideal, Sarah, must develop into the motherhood which could bring forth a son.

This episode is followed by the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, when Lot is rescued by angels, and finally goes up into the mountain. The new sense of God as Father, Son and Mother destroyed for Abraham, as it will for us, the lust of sex (typified by Sodom and Gomorrah), and his lower nature, Lot, is at last sent up into the mountains—is transformed into something higher and holier.

That lifting up at once suggests the fifth day of creation, and the fowl that "fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven" (Genesis 1 : 20). That day was also the day of the fish which brought forth abundantly, the day of abundant life, and so in the story, Abraham also begins to multiply, and we come to the birth of Isaac, the promised son.

To Abraham, Isaac represented the embodiment of his conception of man made in God's image and likeness as described in the sixth day of creation. Sarah saw that Ishmael, the son of the bondwoman, or mortal man, mocked this conception of spiritual man, and she saw that the two could not live together. So she prevailed upon Abraham to get rid of Hagar and Ishmael, and concentrate entirely on Isaac, or man made in God's image and likeness. We too need to listen to the Sarah in us, and let our false sense of sonship go.

Finally in this story, we come to the temptation which assailed Abraham to sacrifice his dearly beloved son. In those days the sacrifice of the first-born was a common religious practice. The theology of the day taught that the *Lord* God,

Jehovah, needed to be appeased, and that he was pleased with the sacrifice of all that men loved most dearly. Men were taught to work themselves up into a frenzy of religious emotionalism, and in this state to kill and burn upon the altar their first-born sons. Abraham thought that God told him to do this very thing, and so he took Isaac up into the mountain, and prepared the altar, and laid the wood upon it, and even bound Isaac and placed him upon the wood. But instead of working himself up into emotionalism, Abraham had gone up the mountain—he had lifted his thought to God. And so just at the crucial moment, as he stretched out his hand to take the knife to slay Isaac, “the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, . . . Lay not thine hand upon the lad” (Genesis 22 : 11, 12). Angels are God’s thoughts, and a thought straight from God showed Abraham the wrongness of what he was about to do. God had seen “all that he had made, and, behold, it was very good” (Genesis 1 : 31), and in the seventh day everything was complete, and perfect, and fulfilled, and God rested. The false sense of man had gone when Ishmael had been sent away. *That* was all that had to be sacrificed, and the true sense of man must rest in the understanding of a God who is Love.

“And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son” (Genesis 22 : 13). That ram stood for the false theological teaching that would have made Abraham sacrifice his highest sense of man. You will notice that the ram was “behind him.” Abraham had outgrown it, and he had the wisdom to sacrifice it, burn it up once and for all, for Abraham was always ready to go forward in his journey to an ever higher understanding of God. We also must be ever ready to go forward, sacrificing that which we have outgrown, but realizing that this never means giving up anything really good.

Chapter 8



JACOB

THE next character of importance to appear in the Bible is Jacob, whose story is told in great detail. We have not space to consider that detail here, but will take just an outline of the main story with one incident taken more fully.

Esau and Jacob were the twin sons of Isaac and Rebekah, and even before birth "the children struggled together within her" (Genesis 25: 22), and that struggle was continued as the children grew. They represented the two sides of our nature, Jacob being the spiritual side, and Esau the earthly side. Describing them it says, "Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents" (Genesis 25: 27). Esau was a man of action, pursuing material pleasures, but Jacob was a shepherd, a thinker, looking after his thoughts.

Esau, as the elder, would normally inherit from his father the birthright and the blessing, which included the promise given to Abraham that his seed should multiply and that "in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 22: 18). This meant nothing to Esau, but a great deal to Jacob, and one day when Esau came in very hungry, he readily agreed that Jacob could have the birthright in exchange for the food he was cooking. Esau chose the material in preference to the spiritual.

However, he was not so ready to part with the blessing, though Rebekah and Jacob realized that it would be wasted on him. They knew that Jacob would make much better use of it, and so, while Esau was out hunting, they deceived Isaac into giving the blessing to Jacob. Certainly it was right that the blessing should go to Jacob, but when we try to forward spiritual growth by doubtful means, we always have to pay the penalty. Jacob had to flee from home because of Esau's wrath. He went to his uncle Laban at Haran and lived there for

twenty years, but was continually being deceived by Laban, just as he had deceived his father and Esau, until he finally saw the necessity for dealing with the duplicity in his own character. We often have that experience. The very faults in others from which we suffer most are so often the ones which are latent in ourselves, and only as we deal with them in ourselves do we cease to be the victim of their manifestation in other people.

Jacob loved Rachel, Laban's younger daughter, and he agreed to work for Laban for seven years to win her for his wife. Rachel seems to have stood for the highest ideal of the Christ of which Jacob could conceive, and he worked for seven years to make this his own, and those years "seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her" (Genesis 29: 20). They were in fact the seven days of creation, seven stages of unfolding thought, through which Jacob strove to lift his thought to the understanding of the Christ-idea so that he could "marry" it and live with it always. But he still did not face up to the duplicity in his own character, and so Laban deceived him and he found he had married Leah, the elder daughter, instead of Rachel. Leah was "tender eyed," or, as a modern translation puts it, she "had weak eyes." She did not see and understand God as clearly as did Rachel, but she was the highest ideal to which Jacob could wed himself at that point. However, by working another "seven years" he did at length succeed in becoming wedded to the higher ideal, Rachel.

Then follows the account of the birth of Jacob's eleven sons and one daughter (Benjamin, the twelfth son, was born much later, after the return to Canaan). Also we get Jacob's bargain with Laban that he should have all the speckled and spotted goats and all the brown sheep as his wages. By placing striped rods among the stronger of the flocks at the time of conception, Jacob contrived that all the stronger lambs and kids should fall to his lot, but the weaker ones to Laban. This caused considerable ill-feeling, and Jacob determined to return to his own country.

The place where Jacob was tending the flocks was "three

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days' journey" from Laban's home. Jacob knew more of the first three days of creation than did Laban. To Laban the light had hardly begun to break, but Jacob's ideas of God, good, were becoming definite and clear. The "dry land" was appearing, for this was the third thousand-year period.

So Jacob and his family packed all their tents and belongings on to camels, and while the women and children rode other camels, the menservants led the flocks in advance, and the whole party started on the return journey to Canaan.

Word soon reached Laban that Jacob had gone, and he immediately set off in pursuit. But on the way God appeared to him in a dream telling him not to hurt Jacob, and so when he overtook him after "seven days' journey," the meeting was one of reconciliation, and the two made a covenant and parted friends. Jacob really began to deal with the duplicity in himself.

Then Jacob heard that his brother Esau was on the way to meet him with four hundred men, and he was terrified. The first thing he did was to divide his party and his flocks into two bands, hoping that if Esau came upon one and destroyed it, the other would escape. Then, having turned to God in prayer, he picked out goats and sheep, camels and asses, from among his flocks and sent them on ahead as a present for Esau. Finally he took his wives and children and made them cross to the other side of a brook where they encamped for the night for greater safety, while Jacob himself remained alone on his side of the brook.

Jacob had turned to God in prayer, but only half-heartedly. He had not been prepared to work this problem out entirely on a spiritual basis, doing only what was absolutely right. He had also thought to use appeasement. Now, however, he was alone on his side of the brook and it was "night." His thought was full of doubt and fear and misery. "And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day." (Genesis 32: 24). That man was his own lower nature. Don't we often wrestle with ourselves? The struggle

went on for a long time until at last an angel, one of God's thoughts, an impulse from his higher self, touched the thigh of his lower self and put it out of joint. When the thigh is out of joint one is weak and helpless, so Jacob had really won a victory over his lower nature, including his duplicity. Then this good impulse said, "Let me go, for the day breaketh," but Jacob wisely hung on to it, saying, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me" (Genesis 32: 26). How often when we get a good impulse like this,—a gleam of light showing us how to deal with a problem over which we are wrestling,—do we let it go before it has blessed us, before we have realized its full significance and made it our own and acted upon it! But Jacob was too wise to do that, and so he was renamed. "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed" (Genesis 32: 28). "Jacob" means "supplanter," but now that he had struggled with and overcome the duplicity, he became "Israel," which means "prince of God." He began to see both himself and others as man made in the image and likeness of God, good and pure, kind and loving.

After this experience Jacob's fear was gone, and "the sun rose upon him." It was "day." His thoughts were clear. "And Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men" (Genesis 33: 1). But no longer did Jacob want to flee from him and hide his wives and children. Instead he marshalled them and brought them forward to introduce them to Esau. "And he passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him" (Genesis 33: 3, 4). Each time he bowed, it seems that Jacob thought of one of the days of creation, so that with the sixth bow he saw Esau as man made in the image and likeness of God, and with the seventh he saw that he could rest with God in the realization of the perfection and completeness of God's creation, for he said to Esau, "I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me" (Genesis 33: 10).

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Esau then accepted the present that Jacob had sent to him, but it was no longer given to appease a wrathful and jealous man, but as a token of gratitude for God's goodness, and for the new-found love between the brothers resulting from this understanding.

Chapter 9



JOSEPH

ONE of the best-known stories of the Old Testament is that of Joseph, Jacob's favourite son, who was the elder son of his beloved wife, Rachel. But as you may remember from chapter 2, there is no mention of Joseph in Egyptian history, and therefore it seems probable that, though there may have been a real Joseph who saved his people at a time of severe famine, it was the Hebrew prophets of some thousand years later who gave the story the setting in which it has come down to us to-day.

The story of Joseph starts when he was seventeen years old when it is stated that his father Jacob, or Israel, "loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours" (Genesis 37: 3). In the story of Adam and Eve we saw that in Biblical language we are "clothed" with our understanding of God. Jacob taught Joseph, his most spiritually-minded son, all he knew about God, and thus made him a "coat" which is described as "of many colours." It seems almost certain that this coat was made of seven colours, and consisted of an understanding of the seven days of creation.

His brothers, who were far less spiritually-minded than Joseph, were jealous of him, and when he told them of two dreams he had had, this jealousy increased. In his first dream Joseph and his brothers were binding sheaves of corn, when his sheaf suddenly stood upright of itself, and all his brothers' sheaves started bowing to it. Secondly he dreamed that the sun, moon and stars bowed to him. Joseph realized, as we all must, that eventually all that is worldly-minded must bow and give way to that which is spiritual in us.

Shortly after this Jacob sent his ten elder sons to feed the flocks at Shechem. He put his worldly ideas in charge of his thoughts (flocks). Later he sent Joseph, his most spiritual idea, to see how they were getting on, but it says, "a certain

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man found him, and, behold, he was wandering in the field" (Genesis 37: 15). How often when we let our worldly ideas take charge of our thoughts, and then send a spiritual idea to see how they are getting on, that spiritual idea seems to get lost and goes "wandering in the field!" Instead of keeping itself pure, it seems to get all mixed up with material thoughts. It was in this muddled state of thought that Joseph came to his brothers, with the result that they stripped him of his coat of many colours—stripped him of his understanding of God—and sold him to some merchants to be carried to Egypt as a slave. That is just what happens to us. If we let our spiritual ideas go "wandering in the field," we temporarily seem to lose our understanding of God, good, and we find ourselves a "slave in Egypt," which, to the Hebrews, stood for the darkness of ignorance, idolatry and mysticism.

Meanwhile the brothers smeared the coat of many colours with blood and took it back to Jacob, and persuaded him that a wild beast had killed Joseph. They persuaded him that animal qualities had destroyed his spiritual idea, and nothing they could do comforted him for that loss.

Joseph, however, was very far from dead. In Egypt he was bought as a slave by Potiphar, captain of the guard to Pharaoh. He lost no time bemoaning his fate, but immediately set to work to recover his "coat," and the story says, "And the Lord was with Joseph . . . And his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand. And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand" (Genesis 39: 2-4).

But again circumstances arose which caused Joseph to lose his "coat" a second time. Potiphar's wife "cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me" (Genesis 39: 7). Joseph refused time after time, but at last came a day when she and Joseph were alone in the house, and this time "she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out" (Genesis 39: 12). Obviously, though Joseph did not yield to the temptation, he allowed it to steal his garment. He allowed it temporarily to trouble his thought and take from him his reliance on his

understanding of God. As a result of this he was thrown into prison. Do not such experiences always land us in the prison of misery and suffering?

However, again Joseph wasted no time in resentment and recrimination, but at once set to work to put his thoughts in order, with the result that the keeper of the prison soon appreciated what sort of a man he had in Joseph, and put him in charge of everything and everybody within the prison.

Then follows the story of Pharaoh's butler and baker. Both these men had offended Pharaoh, and had been cast into prison, where they dreamed dreams which troubled them, but which Joseph was able to interpret, and his interpretations proved correct.

The butler dreamed that he saw a vine with three branches which budded and blossomed until it brought forth ripe grapes which he squeezed into Pharaoh's cup, and then gave the cup to Pharaoh to drink.

Joseph interpreted the three branches as three days—the first three days of creation in which the light came, or budded in thought; it blossomed into a sense of goodness and purity; and then the earth brought forth fruit. Because the butler watched this happening, and took this fruit of the third day and gave it to Pharaoh, Joseph foretold that he would be reinstated in his office, and begged him, when this happened, to put in a word on his behalf to Pharaoh.

The baker dreamed that he was carrying on his head three white baskets filled with bakemeats for Pharaoh, but that birds came and stole these bakemeats out of his baskets while he was carrying them.

These baskets Joseph again interpreted as the three days, but whereas the butler watched them unfold, the baker filled them with ideas of his own making, and put them on his head. Being man-made,—that is, having no permanence,—birds of prey, like Noah's raven, stole those ideas away. Therefore Joseph foretold that the baker would be hanged. And he was.

Some time later Pharaoh had two dreams that troubled him, and none of the wise men of Egypt could tell him what they meant. Then at last the butler remembered Joseph and

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told Pharaoh about him. Pharaoh immediately sent to the prison, commanding that Joseph be brought before him, and when he recounted his dreams, Joseph had no difficulty in interpreting them, though he was careful to give the credit to God. "It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace," he said (Genesis 41: 16).

Pharaoh had dreamed that while he stood by the river he had seen seven beautiful fat cows come up out of the river and start feeding on the bank. Presently seven other cows came up, but they were the poorest and thinnest he had ever seen. Then the seven thin cows ate up the seven fat ones, but were just as thin afterwards as before.

The second dream was very similar. Pharaoh had seen seven lovely full ears of corn all growing on one stem, but seven shrivelled ears had grown up afterwards and had eaten up the full ears.

Joseph declared both dreams to have the same meaning, namely, that there would be seven years of plenty with good harvests, followed by seven years of famine when the crops failed, and the people would have to live on what had been stored during the good years. He advised Pharaoh to store the grain during the years of good harvests for use during the years of famine.

There is no record to correspond to these years of plenty and of famine in Egyptian history, so we conclude that the story-tellers were not recording history, but teaching through allegory. Do we experience anything corresponding to seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine? Such periods have nothing to do with time, but do not the years of plenty represent times when things are going well, and we have opportunities for learning about God, which the Hebrews always felt was done through a sevenfold process? And do not the years of famine represent all the troubles and difficulties we come up against in life? When they come, how grateful we are if we have taken Joseph's advice and stored up the fruits of our growing understanding of God, so that we can use it to overcome the sevenfold, or complete series, of troubles and difficulties we have to face.

Pharaoh was so impressed by Joseph's wisdom and under-

standing that he immediately made him ruler of all the land of Egypt, and put him in charge of the gathering up and storing of the fruits of the seven years of plenty. And if we are wise, we also shall put our "Joseph"—our spiritual sense—in charge of all we learn.

This time, instead of losing his "coat," Joseph was arrayed "in vestures of fine linen" (Genesis 41: 42).

Throughout the years of plenty, Joseph stored grain in all the cities of Egypt—he stored ideas and spiritual truths in every mind that would accept them. Then when the famine came, and the people found their own grain—their own ideas—failed them, they went to Joseph, "And Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians" (Genesis 41: 56).

But the famine was not only in Egypt. It was also felt in Canaan where Jacob and all Joseph's brothers were still living. Probably Jacob had been suffering from a sense of famine ever since he had lost Joseph, his most spiritual idea. At last he heard that there was corn to be bought in Egypt, and so he sent his ten eldest sons to Egypt to buy. But Benjamin, Joseph's younger brother, who was nearly as dear to Jacob as Joseph had been, he kept at home, "Lest peradventure mischief befall him" (Genesis 42: 4).

So it was that Joseph's ten brothers, who had sold him as a slave, came and bowed before him asking to be allowed to buy corn. Joseph recognized them at once, and remembered his dream when his brothers' sheaves had bowed to his sheaf. But the brothers failed to recognize in the Egyptian governor the lad they had sold into slavery.

To test his brothers, Joseph pretended to think they were spies, and so, in their efforts to prove their innocence, they told him much about their father and their youngest brother, Benjamin. Finally Joseph allowed them to take a little corn back to Canaan, while he kept one brother, Simeon, in prison as a hostage, and insisted that if they wanted more corn, they must bring Benjamin with them next time they came.

At first Jacob refused to let Benjamin go with his brothers, but eventually the famine forced him to let the lad go. This time Joseph entertained his brothers at his house, and then gave them permission to take all the corn they could carry,

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but told his servant privately to hide his silver cup in Benjamin's sack. Soon after they had started on their homeward journey, Joseph sent his servant riding after them to arrest the man who had stolen the cup. When it was found in Benjamin's sack, the whole party turned back, and pleaded with Joseph to let Benjamin go for the sake of his father. Judah offered to remain a prisoner in his place.

This satisfied Joseph that his brothers had learnt to be much kinder since they had sold him into slavery, and so, sending all the Egyptians away, he made himself known to his brothers, forgiving them, and saying, "Be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life" (Genesis 45: 5). Sometimes when we seem to have been hardly used, we find later that it was the best thing that could have happened to us.

Joseph then sent his brothers back to Canaan with instructions to bring their father and their families to Egypt, where he promised to feed them during the remainder of the famine, and to give them land in Goshen.

Meanwhile Joseph was busy selling corn to the hungry Egyptians. First they brought him their money, and when all that was gone, he sold them grain in exchange for their cattle and their flocks. Finally when both money and cattle were gone, the people sold both themselves and their land to Pharaoh in exchange for the corn they needed. At first sight this appears brutal and hard-hearted on Joseph's part, but what is the real significance of the story? That which Joseph had stored up was spiritual ideas, the understanding of God that came through the seven stages of developing thought, given in the Bible as the days of creation. When difficult conditions made the Egyptians realize that they were starving mentally for lack of spiritual ideas, they came to Joseph, and he gave them bread,—he taught them some of the spiritual truths he knew,—and they left behind their "money," the love of which has been described as "the root of all evil," and so it stood for their most materialistic and worldly beliefs. When these were all gone, exchanged for spiritual truths, they brought their cattle and their flocks,—their better thoughts,—and exchanged them for even higher thoughts, until finally they

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sold themselves and their land,—they consecrated their every thought and act to the service of God, good.

And so, during our years of plenty, when we have opportunity to study the deep things of God, let us have a Joseph to store up these truths within us. Then, if years of famine come, if troubles and difficulties arise, we can turn to our Joseph, and he will help us to change our thinking, and by exchanging our material and worldly thoughts and beliefs for the more satisfying things of the Spirit, he will help us to overcome those difficulties.

Chapter 10



MOSES

THE story of Moses in the Bible fills four books,—Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy,—and gives in great detail the instructions for building the tabernacle and the ark of the covenant, and also all the Jewish laws and ordinances which came to be known as the Mosaic Law. Here, however, we shall consider only some of the main points from the story as it is given in Exodus.

After the death of Joseph and his brothers, “the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them” (Exodus 1: 7). But they were treated as slaves by the Egyptians.

Eventually the Pharaoh of the day ordered the destruction at birth of all male children born to the Hebrews, to try to weaken them. But one Hebrew mother hid her baby boy in the house for three months, and then made him an ark of bulrushes and hid him among the reeds at the edge of the river. Here he was found by Pharaoh’s daughter, who adopted the baby as her son, naming him Moses, and appointing his own mother as his nurse.

This story appears in slightly different forms in the folk-lore of many nations, and historically probably has little or no foundation. Nevertheless, it is a good story, but did the writers of these stories deliberately put it in because it meant something in the experience of each one of us?

You may remember that to the Hebrews, Egypt, in spite of her great civilization, stood for the darkness of ignorance, idolatry, and mysticism, because the Egyptians knew nothing about God, good, and their religion and worship was grossly materialistic. When our thought dwells for a long time with very materially minded people and surroundings, we may prosper in worldly things and increase abundantly, and

multiply, but we become slaves to those material things, and little by little they tend to destroy all that is spiritual in us. But there is still a "woman" within us which may bring forth a son, a spiritual idea, and if we are wise we hide that idea in our "house," our thinking, for "three months" (while we are thinking out the first three days of creation). When the "dry land" has appeared, and the idea is firmly established and definite in our thinking, we can make an "ark" for it,—just as Moses' mother did,—and in the ark this idea floats safely on the flood of troubles and worldly thoughts, until such time as it has grown and developed into the strength of manhood, and can bring us out of the bondage of Egypt into which we have fallen.

When Moses grew up he saw an Egyptian ill-treating a Hebrew, and he slew that Egyptian, and so had to flee from Egypt. He found refuge with Jethro, the priest of Midian, who had seven daughters, one of whom Moses married. Now it appears that Jethro was a monotheist, and it is thought that it was from him that Moses first learnt about the one God who came to mean so much to him,—the God whom Joseph served, but whom the Israelites had forsaken during their sojourn in Egypt.

Anyway the story says, "Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb" (Exodus 3: 1). Moses looked after the flock of thoughts he had received from Jethro, and he took them to the far side of the desert. Now in the Bible, the desert or wilderness nearly always stands for a lonely place where we have peace and quiet to think things out for ourselves, and you will notice that it is frequently in the desert or the wilderness that "angels," God's thoughts, come to the various Biblical characters to show them what to do. One of the great troubles of the world to-day seems to be that people have little time to think things out quietly for themselves, and so are rarely ready to entertain "angels,"—to receive direct inspiration. Moses, however, took his flock of new ideas into the desert to ponder them and think them out for himself, and they brought him to "the mountain of God,"—they lifted his thought right up to

God. There "the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed" (Exodus 3: 2). Various interpretations have been given to explain that episode of the burning bush, such as the sun shining on the red stems of a certain desert bush. But what does it mean to us? Do we ever have a similar experience? Undoubtedly Moses' thought had reached the third day of creation where his understanding of God had become like the "dry land," solid and definite, and where it began to bring forth "grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind" (Genesis 1: 11). The bush was a symbol of these ideas of the third day, and the inspired thought that came to Moses suddenly made him realize that these ideas were lasting and changeless, and that no "fire" could burn them up. Nothing could destroy them. Some time in our spiritual development we all come to realize that,—to see that no "fire" of any sort or kind can destroy the "bush" of spiritual ideas.

"And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight" (Exodus 3: 3). It was the turning point in Moses' career as it will be in ours, when we decide to investigate thoroughly the "deep things of God." Then Moses saw that he must save his people from the bondage of Egypt, from the bondage of ignorance and idolatry, and teach them what he had just learnt himself of the one God. In the Bible, this takes the form of a conversation with God in which God gives Moses his instructions. To us, God's commands usually come as a deep inner conviction as to what is right, but sometimes they come so clearly that we could easily express them in the form of a conversation with ourselves, or with God.

Moses asked by what name he should call God when he went to the children of Israel, and God is supposed to have replied, "I AM THAT I AM" (Exodus 3: 14). To many people that seems an extraordinary and rather senseless name. To the writer it meant nothing, until one day she came across it in a French translation as "JE SUIS CELUI QUI DIT JE SUIS," "I AM HE THAT SAYS I AM." That gave her a wonderful sense of the divine Being, the self-existent Principle of the universe,

for ever conscious of Itself, and for ever expressing Itself in ideas.

After many doubts and difficulties, Moses eventually came to Egypt to deliver the children of Israel. He went to Pharaoh and demanded that the Israelites be allowed to go a "three days' journey into the desert" to worship God (Exodus 5: 3). Moses demanded to be allowed to give his people spiritually the experience he had recently had, in which, on the third day in the desert, he had seen God as the great Being for ever saying "I AM."

Now Moses was undoubtedly a real man and a great historical leader, but his story has become interwoven with many traditions and legends, and the Hebrew prophets who recorded the story for us centuries later were much more concerned with its spiritual significance than with its historical accuracy. As we have already seen, the story of his birth and upbringing are almost certainly legends that have been attached to the great Hebrew leader, and it is also certain that the number of Israelites who were ever in Egypt has been vastly exaggerated. Again, in the story, Moses seems to have been able to have an audience with Pharaoh whenever he wished, whereas it is known from Egyptian history that the Pharaoh was always most jealously guarded, and practically nobody was allowed to approach him. And so we come to the conclusion that just as Egypt stands for ignorance and idolatry, so Pharaoh, king of Egypt, stands for the king of our own wrong thinking, and the plagues, which came upon Egypt as the result of Pharaoh's refusal to let the people go, were not terrible atrocities inflicted on a people who were really no worse than their neighbours, but were entirely mental processes and arguments by which Moses destroyed the idolatrous beliefs to which the Hebrews were adhering, thus preparing them for the acceptance of monotheism,—the recognition of but one God, infinite good.

This interpretation is far from belittling Moses' work. Which is the greater achievement,—to free a few thousand slaves and lead them out into the desert from whence, under his successor, they conquered the land of Canaan, or to lead a people from the worship of idols to the acknowledgement of one infinite

God, and so to lay the foundations of a spiritual understanding which later brought forth the great Hebrew prophets, and culminated some 1500 years later in the life and teaching of Jesus?

When Moses demanded that the children of Israel be allowed to go a "three days' journey into the desert" to worship God, Pharaoh refused, and, instead, increased the burden of work already imposed upon them. When the urge comes to us to learn more about God, but the "Pharaoh" in us refuses to let us obey that urge, it always seems to result in greater troubles and burdens. Moses then went to Pharaoh again, and again demanded the release of the Hebrews, and when Pharaoh refused, he brought the first plague upon Egypt.

Now as already stated, the plagues seem not to have been historical facts, but mental arguments by which the "Moses" in each one of us destroys the resistance of the "Pharaoh" in us, and deals with the wrong ideas which are preventing us from learning about God. In the Bible there are ten plagues, but in the original documents (see chapter 2), the Jahweh Document recorded seven plagues, and the Elohist and Priestly Documents five each. It is thought that the ten comes from combining the different accounts, and that really the plagues of lice and flies were only different renderings of the same plague, and that the same applies to the plagues of murrain and boils, and to those of locusts and darkness. Here therefore we shall consider them as seven plagues, and not as visitations upon the Egyptian people, but as the process of overcoming that which hinders our spiritual development.

In the first plague (Exodus 7: 19-25), Moses made his brother Aaron stretch forth his rod over the rivers and streams; and all water in the land of Egypt turned to blood for seven days. In Egypt the River Nile was looked upon as the great creative power, giving life to all things. As we begin to find that everything created materially dies, and is so easily and quickly destroyed, it is as though the river becomes blood to us. We find that our ideas of life are really more ideas of death, and we are ready to look for a more permanent idea of creation, and so we hear God saying, "Let there be light: and there was light" (Genesis 1: 3).

In the second plague (Exodus 8: 1-15), Aaron again stretched forth the rod over the rivers and streams, and swarms of frogs came up from the rivers and penetrated every house, and were even found in the beds, in the ovens, and in the kneading troughs. Now frogs were worshipped in Egypt as the symbol of fecundity and sex, and to the Hebrews they were considered unclean, and therefore the opposite of the purity of thought demanded by the firmament of the second day of creation. The "Moses" in us uses the firmament to "divide the waters from the waters" (Genesis 1: 6), and it shows us how impure thoughts have penetrated even to the innermost sanctuaries of our "houses," our thinking. But when we see these impure thoughts as something as revolting as frogs in our beds and in our cooking utensils, we are glad enough to take steps to get rid of them!

The third plague (Exodus 8: 16-32) has two versions,—swarms of lice, and swarms of flies covering the land. It is interesting that the word "Beelzebub," the name Jesus used for the "prince of the devils," means "Lord of the Flies." Flies, then, to the Hebrews, were symbols of sin, little sinful thoughts that buzz around us and cause so much trouble and annoyance to ourselves and to other people. Are they not in sharp contrast to the "grass" of the third day of creation,—the simple, straightforward good thoughts that spring up all through our thinking from the "dry land" of definite ideas of God?

The fourth plague (Exodus 9: 1-12) was of a murrain on all animals, or, alternatively, of boils and blains upon man and beast. When we remember how many false gods were represented by images of animals, and how even the Israelites themselves later made a golden calf to worship, it appears that Moses was showing the people the painful effects of such false worship both upon man and beast. To-day we may not worship a golden image of a calf, but do not most of us have many gods that rule us with rods of iron? With some it is the house, or the garden; our business or the family; money, or health, or the weather; even cigarettes, or a thousand and one other things. Anything to which we are a slave is a false god, and causes us mentally to suffer "boils and blains." In the

fourth day of creation, the sun, representing God, ruled over the "day," clear thoughts, and the moon, His reflection, or Christ, ruled over the "night," troubled, darkened thoughts. We can escape this slavery to false gods only as we give our whole allegiance to God, good, and ourselves become a "star" reflecting God's light.

The fifth plague (Exodus 9: 22-35) was of thunder and hail, with all the destruction that a prolonged and abnormally severe storm can cause. The great theme of the fifth day of creation was, "Be fruitful, and multiply" (Genesis 1: 22), and when our ideas of life are based on the living God and lifted into the realm of the spiritual, then they multiply and give a sense of abundant life. But when our only sense of life is life in the body and in material things, then it is dominated by a sense of death and destruction, and is at the mercy of a "hail" of atomic bombs, or any other form of destruction.

The sixth plague (Exodus 10: 1-29) again has two versions. It is first given as a plague of locusts darkening the whole land, and devouring every green thing, and then alternatively as "darkness which may be felt" so that the Egyptians "saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days." In the sixth day of creation, man was made in God's image and likeness, and given dominion over every living creature, and was given the herb and the tree for food. What gives a greater sense of helplessness, the opposite of dominion, than "darkness that may be felt"? And the Egyptians certainly had no dominion over the locusts, which devoured all that the sixth day mentions as man's food. But "all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings." They were beginning to realize something of true manhood, and so they had dominion over this plague. From the third plague onwards the children of Israel themselves had been free from the plagues. From the moment that the "dry land" appears to us, and our ideas of God become definite, we see the troubles that come to us as not really belonging to our true selves, but only touching the "Egyptians" in us, and so we are singularly untroubled by them.

Between the threat of the seventh plague (Exodus 11: 4-10) and its actual fulfilment in the death of the firstborn of the

Egyptians (Exodus 12: 29-30), comes the feast of the Passover. The death of the firstborn of the Egyptians means to us that blessed experience when at last something of the "Adam" in us dies and returns to dust, freeing us to go forward in our spiritual development, to reach some understanding of the seventh day of creation, when we see that God's creation is, and always has been, perfect and complete. We see that God rests in that perfection, and we rest in God.

But before we can have that experience, we must have the Passover (Exodus 12: 1-28),—we must deliberately take the Christ-idea to ourselves and determine to put it into practice in our lives. We have to see that this must be "the beginning of months" to us, the beginning of a new and better life. Then we have to take a lamb "every man according to his eating," and that "lamb shall be without blemish." That lamb is our own pure idea of the Christ, and it has to be according to our own eating. It must not be what somebody else has accepted as the Christ, but what we can accept for ourselves; and, so far as it goes, it must be pure. We must mark the door posts of our "houses" with its blood,—we must keep the sign of the Christ at the door of our thoughts to see that no unwanted, impure thought comes in to the feast, and then we must "eat" the whole Christ as we have taken it. We must have none left over,—we must have no mental reservations, but take the whole Christ to ourselves, and we do this with "unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs." Jesus warned his disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which he explained was hypocrisy. So we must "eat" (accept) the Christ without hypocrisy, but with absolute sincerity, even if in this mortal existence it seems to come with "bitter herbs" and to be, perhaps, a bitter experience in some ways. We must eat it with "loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand," ready always to go forward to use what we have accepted. The feast of unleavened bread is to last seven days. We are to bring our absolute sincerity to bear upon all seven stages of our spiritual development, and "ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and thy sons for ever." We must hold the position we have won, and stick to the truth we have seen for ever.

Then at last the seventh plague will be fulfilled for us, and all the firstborn of the Egyptians will die, and the "Pharaoh" in us will say, "Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the Lord, as ye have said." So the "Moses" in us is eventually able to lead us out of Egypt into the wilderness where our spiritual development can go forward, and where "angels," God's thoughts, can continually bring us fresh inspiration.

But when we take our stand for the Christ, and come out of Egypt, Pharaoh does not let us go without another effort to bring us back into captivity. So we read that Pharaoh "pursued after the children of Israel" (Exodus 14: 8) with his horses and his chariots until he overtook them as they were approaching the Red Sea, and they seemed to be absolutely trapped between the Egyptian army and the sea. Don't we often find ourselves in similar circumstances, when, whichever way we look, we seem up against insurmountable difficulties? Then we need to remember Moses' words to the children of Israel, "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will shew to you to day" (Exodus 14: 13). We don't have to fight. We have to stand still and lift our thought to God and to what we know of the perfection of God's creation. Then comes the command, "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward" (Exodus 14: 15), and "Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, . . . And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground" (Exodus 14: 21-22), whilst the Egyptians were swallowed up by the returning flood. If we really turn to God in an emergency, or when there is a big decision to be made, determined to do what is right, and to go forward, whatever the difficulties, we too shall find that the waters will part, and we can go through on "dry land," while all the host of difficulties is swallowed up.

Then followed the forty years in the wilderness, brought about because the children of Israel had not the faith and the courage to go straight ahead into the Promised Land. During this time Moses fed them on manna, which Jesus referred to as "bread from heaven" (John 6: 31), the inspiration of thoughts and ideas which came direct from God. It is interesting that

the people had to gather this inspiration fresh every day for six days, and that "he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating" (Exodus 16: 18). No one could gather either more or less inspiration than he was ready for. But if they tried to keep the inspiration for the next day, it went bad on them. We must look to God afresh for our inspiration every day. Yesterday's inspiration will not do for to-day. We have to look, not back, but forward. However, on the sixth day when they saw that "God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Genesis 1: 31), this inspiration was a double portion that carried them on into the seventh day, the day of rest, when the perfection and completeness of God's creation is recognized so clearly that there is no "work" to do to put things right.

During the time in the wilderness it is recorded that Moses "went up unto God" to Mount Sinai seven times, and each time came back to the people with further instructions for their spiritual development. It was on the fourth ascent that Moses was supposed first to have received the ten commandments, but whether these commandments were really given to the children of Israel by Moses is not certain. The Babylonians had had a very similar code of moral laws, which had been engraved on a stone hundreds of years earlier in the reign of Hammurabi. Whether these Babylonian commandments influenced the Hebrew commandments, or whether the latter arose quite independently, we cannot tell; but how they originated is of little importance compared with the tremendous effect they have had as the basis for the laws of most democratic countries in the world.

The commandments were supposed to have been written on two stones, and are clearly divided into two parts. The first part, consisting of the introduction and the first four commandments, has been summarized as "Our Duty to God," and the second part, consisting of the last six commandments, as "Our Duty to Man." It is not surprising to find that "Our Duty to God" has seven statements, which really bring home the need for us to use the days of creation.

First comes, "And God spake all these words, saying, I am

the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Exodus 20: 1-2). When we remember that Egypt stands for the darkness of ignorance, that statement might be rendered, I am the God who, when darkness was upon the face of the deep, said to you, "Let there be light: and there was light" (Genesis 1: 3).

The second statement is, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20: 3). This might be rendered, Thou shalt use the firmament of the second day to divide between what is good and what is not, and thou shalt utterly reject all that is unlike God, good.

The third statement reads, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me" (Exodus 20: 4-5). Here the parallel is perhaps not so clear, but we might express it as, You must make your ideas of God certain and definite, like the dry land, and not build up for yourself false ideas, for God exacts exclusive devotion (which is the meaning of "jealous"). False ideas, instead of bringing forth the grass, the herb, and the tree, will bring all kinds of troubles. It needs also to be emphasized that we are each one of us father to our own thoughts, and it seems certain that the writer of the commandments did not mean that evils were hereditary (a theory entirely contrary to the nature of God, good), but was referring to the effect on our own thoughts of false beliefs about the third and fourth days of creation. Such false beliefs just bring us chaos and misery.

The fourth statement of the commandments, "And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments" (Exodus 20: 6) might be given as, And ruling over, and giving light to, *all* those thousands to whom it is "day," whose thoughts are clear because they keep God's commandments.

The fifth statement is, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless

that taketh his name in vain" (Exodus 20: 7). In other words, You must be fruitful and multiply the proofs of God's goodness in your daily life, or you do not really know God.

The sixth statement is, "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work" (Exodus 20: 8-9). Or, Through six days you must learn to have dominion over all thoughts and ideas, and so prepare for the seventh day by coming to realize that "God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Genesis 1: 31).

The seventh statement says, "But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it" (Exodus 20: 10-11). This can easily be rendered, The seventh day comes when you recognize the perfection of God's creation, and so neither you nor your thoughts and ideas have any "work" to do to improve upon it, but can rest, as God rests, in His own completeness and perfection.

When we come to the second stone, and "Our Duty to Man," there is a distinct change of tone.

The fifth commandment, which is the first of the second stone, reads, "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Exodus 20: 12). In other words, Honour God as your Father and your Mother, the creative Principle of all that is good, and you will live in peace with all mankind.

The sixth commandment is, "Thou shalt not kill" (Exodus 20: 13). Killing would seem to involve much more than committing murder, but would include all murderous thoughts, such as hate and anger, and all thoughts which would separate man from God who is his Life. St. John says, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer" (1 John 3: 15).

Again, the seventh commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Exodus 20: 14), means much more than just sexual purity. "Adultery" has the same original meaning as "to

adulterate," which means to corrupt, or make impure. Any thought, or word, or deed, that spoils the purity of our character breaks the seventh commandment, and not one of us can accuse someone else of committing adultery without its being a case of the pot calling the kettle black! Jesus brought this home to the accusers of the woman taken in adultery when he said to them, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."

The eighth commandment is, "Thou shalt not steal" (Exodus 20: 15). Many who would not dream of stealing anything material from their neighbours, think nothing of dwelling on and discussing all their faults and failings, thereby stealing from them their good character, which is of infinitely more value than any treasures of gold or silver.

The ninth commandment says, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour" (Exodus 20: 16), which really just carries the eighth commandment one step further. From God's point of view, our neighbours are all, like ourselves, man made in God's image and likeness, and therefore we are bearing false witness before God every time we see our neighbour as anything less than perfect!

Finally the tenth commandment says, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbour's" (Exodus 20: 17). This again applies to more than our neighbour's material possessions, for his "house" is his state of thought, his consciousness; his "wife" is the ideal to which he has wedded himself; his servants and animals are his thoughts and characteristics. There is no monopoly for these, and we do not need to envy our neighbour's possession of them, for we only have to cultivate them ourselves to make them our own. But how much easier most of us find it to wish we were more like someone else, than to make ourselves like him by overcoming bad characteristics, and cultivating good ones!

Though the commandments were given to Moses on his fourth ascent into the mountain, it was not until his sixth ascent, in which he was given all the details for making the tabernacle and its contents, that he received the command-

ments on "two tables of stone, written with the finger of God" (Exodus 31: 18). When he came down from the mountain that time, he found that the people had made themselves a golden calf and were worshipping it, and Moses "cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount" (Exodus 32: 19). Many of us when we first glimpse the meaning of the commandments as "written with the finger of God" in their spiritual meaning realize that we are worshipping the modern equivalent of the golden calf! We feel, like Moses, that it is hopeless to try to keep the commandments in this human life, and we are apt to break the stones beneath the mount. But breaking, when applied to teaching, has another meaning. It means explaining, bringing the teaching down to a level and into language which the pupils can understand. Moses saw that the children of Israel were nowhere near being ready to receive the commandments as they had come to him, and so he "cast the tables out of his hands," and set about destroying the golden calf,—destroying the most blatant of their false religious beliefs. Then the Levites were told to take their swords and go in and out among the people slaying all who were not "on the Lord's side," and it records that "there fell of the people that day about three thousand men" (Exodus 32: 28). Now the Levites were the priests of those days, and were a mere handful of men compared to the three thousand they were supposed to have slain, and these would hardly have submitted to being slaughtered without an attempt at self-defence. This story makes sense, however, if we realize that the Levites were armed with the sword of the Word of God (see Hebrews 4: 12), and that they went in and out among the people teaching them, and that what fell that day were three thousand wrong beliefs,—all the wrong beliefs that were the opposite of the first three days of creation.

This incident prepared the way for Moses' seventh ascent, when he took with him two tables of stone on which he himself now wrote the commandments after he had seen the glory of the Lord. But when he came down, and gave them to the people, "he put a vail on his face" (Exodus 34: 33), because it shone more than the people could bear. He had learnt that he could not give the people all the inspiration he had received,

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but only as much as their thought was ready to accept at that time.

The remaining chapters of Exodus are taken up with the gifts from the people which made the construction of the tabernacle and all its contents possible, and then follow detailed descriptions of the work itself. But enough has been said to show how these stories and teachings are all based on the seven days of creation, and that the experiences of the children of Israel were not peculiar to them, but are the experiences of all people throughout all ages, and can therefore be of real practical use to us in helping us to deal with the problems of to-day.

Chapter 11



JOSHUA

MOSES brought the children of Israel to the borders of the Promised Land of Canaan, and it is recorded in the last chapter of Deuteronomy that "the Lord shewed him all the land" from the top of the mountain of Nebo, but Moses himself never entered the land of Canaan. He died in Moab, and the Lord is supposed to have buried him, for "no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day" (Deuteronomy 34: 6). Was it, do you think, that to Moses the Promised Land which he surveyed from the "mountain" was entirely a mental realm, a state of spiritual thought, the Promised Land which can and should belong to us all; and that, having seen this vision, he had no real interest in the material land of Canaan? "Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated" (Deuteronomy 34: 7). But before he left the children of Israel, he appointed Joshua as his successor.

"Now after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord it came to pass, that the Lord spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying, Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel . . . Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest" (Joshua 1: 1, 2, 7).

That is a command that comes to all of us when we have received the law of God, the Ten Commandments, and seen something of what they mean. Then we must arise and go over "Jordan," the waters that form the boundary of materiality, into the land of the spiritual. We need to be "strong and very courageous" to take our stand for what we know is right, and

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to "turn not from it to the right hand or to the left." If we do this, we shall find, as Joshua did, that the waters part, and we can go through on "dry land," and that the walls of Jericho will collapse before us.

It was "after three days" that Joshua commanded the children of Israel to be ready to cross Jordan, but the day before, they prepared by sanctifying themselves. Is it not always on the third day that the "dry land" appears, but before this can happen, do we not have to use the "firmament" of the second day to purify our thought?

The people were told to be ready to follow the priests who would take up the ark of the Lord and carry it to Jordan. "And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the Lord . . . shall rest in the waters of Jordan, that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above" (Joshua 3: 13). This came to pass, and the priests bearing the ark stood in the middle of the river bed while all the people passed over on dry land. One man from each of the twelve tribes was told to take a stone from the middle of the river bed and set it up as a memorial upon the further bank. These stones suggest the stone of which Jesus spoke, quoting from the Psalms, "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes" (Matthew 21: 42). When we come through a difficult experience on "dry land," it is well if we take a stone, a symbol of the Christ, and let it be a memorial, the head of the corner to us. We need to recognize with gratitude that the Christ (our understanding of God) helped us on that occasion, and will always help us when we turn to it for guidance.

When all the people had passed over, the priests with the ark came up from the river bed, and the river returned to its course. Whether or not this incident really occurred, no one can tell. It has been suggested that a landslide higher up may have dammed the river temporarily and allowed the people to cross, and the story probably originated with some such happening. But of what help would that be to us to-day? The prophet's teaching, however, that the understanding of the first three days of creation, with all that they imply, will

enable us to overcome a difficulty without wetting our feet (without suffering from it), is most helpful and encouraging. Only we have to be "strong and very courageous," and to turn neither to the right hand nor to the left.

After crossing the Jordan, the first city to which the Israelites came was Jericho. Jericho, in the New Testament, was looked upon as the storehouse of Jerusalem, and seems to have been regarded from earliest times as a symbol of reliance on material wealth and material substance. So the Lord said to Joshua, "See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour. And ye shall compass the city . . . once. Thus shalt thou do six days. And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams' horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets" (Joshua 6: 2-4). On that seventh day, after encircling the city seven times, when the priests blew the trumpets, all the people "shouted with a great shout" and the walls of Jericho "fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city" (Joshua 6: 20).

What emphasis is laid upon the seven in that passage! It is as though the prophetic writer were saying, "When in your journey towards a higher spiritual understanding you encounter resistance from any material obstacle, look at it all round while encircling it from the standpoint of each of the first six days of creation. Then you see that 'God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.' That brings you to the seventh day which fulfils all the others, and you see that God rests in His own perfection, and that you do not have to fight the evil, but that it just flattens out and disappears before the understanding of God's perfection, so that you can just go straight ahead, resting in God."

The people were told to destroy all that was in Jericho except that which belonged to Rahab, the harlot, who had earlier helped Joshua's spies, and the silver and gold which was consecrated unto the Lord. In any human experience there is nearly always something good which is "consecrated unto the Lord" and so is saved; and there is frequently a "Rahab"—an idea which the world condemns as impure because it is not

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understood, but which belongs to a spiritual vision far in advance of the material beliefs with which it is surrounded. These are always saved out of the wreckage, but everything else,—everything based on materiality—we have to let go.

There follows a little story about one man, named Achan, who “took of the accursed thing” and hid it in his tent, and so brought disaster on the armies of Israel. If from a “Jericho” experience, we try to save some of “the accursed thing” and hide it in our tent, our consciousness, we soon find ourselves facing defeat and disaster to a greater or lesser extent, and nothing will put this right until we take the “Achan” in us with all that he possesses, and do to him as the Israelites did, for they “stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire” (Joshua 7: 25) until there was nothing left of him or his family.

The remainder of the book of Joshua tells how the Israelites conquered the whole land of Canaan, and how Joshua divided it amongst the twelve tribes by lot. This is partly contradicted by the following book of Judges, in which we get a very different account of the conquest, but it just goes to emphasize the fact that the writers were not concerned with historical accuracy, but only with using past history in such a way as to bring out spiritual development.

After Joshua's death, the Israelites were ruled by a series of judges. The people were continually departing from the teachings of Moses and the recognition of the one God, and each time their unfaithfulness was followed by a period of bondage to other nations, from which they were rescued by one of the God-inspired judges. Writing of the book of Judges, Scofield says, “The book records seven apostasies, seven servitudes to seven heathen nations, seven deliverances.” It is not intended to discuss the book of Judges here, but that extract shows that it also was based by the prophets on the development of the seven days of creation which we have seen reappearing time after time in the other stories.

Chapter 12



SAMUEL

THE last and greatest of the judges was Samuel, whose story is told in the first book of that name. In the light of what we have already considered, it is not surprising to find that the story of Samuel falls into seven distinct phases which correspond to the days of creation, and in some cases also to the negative parallel of the Adam story.

The story begins when a man named Elkanah brought his two wives, Peninnah and Hannah, to "sacrifice unto the Lord of hosts in Shiloh" (1 Samuel 1: 3) where Eli and his two sons were the priests. Hannah had no children—no spiritual ideas—and this troubled her very much. "Darkness was upon the face of the deep" (Genesis 1: 2). She went into the temple "in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore" (1 Samuel 1: 10). Eli thought at first that she was drunken, and reproved her, but when he found that she was really crying out for the light, praying "Let there be light," he replied, "Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him." (1 Samuel 1: 17). Eli knew in some measure that the real seeker will eventually always hear God saying, "Let there be light," and there will be light.

Hannah vowed that if she had a son, she would dedicate him to the Lord, and that he should be brought up in absolute purity. In other words, if the light of a spiritual idea came to her, she would use the understanding of the "firmament" of the second day of creation to divide the waters from the waters, and keep the idea which had come from God absolutely pure. So when Samuel was born, she cherished him carefully until he was weaned, and then took him and left him with Eli, saying, "I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord" (1 Samuel 1: 28). How wise are we, if, when we give birth to a spiritual idea, we give it back to

the Lord, lend it to the Lord, that it may be kept pure "as long as he liveth!"

Then Hannah prayed, and sang a song of rejoicing and thanksgiving, for to her the "dry land" of the third day had appeared,—she had become certain of the definiteness of God's ideas, and she saw that the "earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit" (Genesis 1: 12), for "the child did minister unto the Lord before Eli the priest" (1 Samuel 2: 11).

In contrast to this follows the description of the wickedness of Eli's two sons, who committed many sins, and also stole the best of the meat brought by the people to sacrifice before the Lord. Does not this suggest the animal qualities and birds of prey that were made from the "dust of the ground" in the third stage of the Adam story?

There follows the story of how the Lord called to the child Samuel. It begins, "And the word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision" (1 Samuel 3: 1). There was little inspiration among the people. They did not understand the "two great lights" which ruled over the "day" and the "night," and so they did not become stars reflecting the light. Even of Eli, the chief priest, it says, "his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see" (1 Samuel 3: 2). He was losing what inspiration he had had, for he knew about his sons' wickedness, yet he took no steps to deal with it. But with Samuel it was different. His thought was pure, and he had been dedicated to the Lord, and he "ministered unto the Lord." He put into practice what he knew and understood. So when the Lord called to him, his ready answer came, "Here am I." He reflected the light. He became a star.

At first he thought it was Eli who called him. How often when the call to reflect God first comes to us, we respond by thinking we are needed to serve under someone else who, to us, seems to know more about God than we do! But at the third call, Eli pointed out to Samuel that the call came to him direct from God, not through Eli, and so the fourth time Samuel answered, "Speak; for thy servant heareth" (1 Samuel 3: 10).

Then the Lord told Samuel that He would utterly destroy

the house of Eli because of its wickedness. In other words, the inspiration which Samuel received when he became a "star," reflecting directly the light of the "greater light" of the fourth day, showed him that no wickedness, no darkness, could stand against that light.

Shortly after this, the Philistines invaded the land and defeated the degenerate Israelites, capturing the ark of the covenant, and killing Eli's two sons who were in charge of it. When Eli heard this news, he fell backwards off the seat on which he was sitting, and was killed.

At last, Samuel, now a grown man, persuaded the Israelites to get rid of their false gods, and return to the worship of the one God, saying, "If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines" (1 Samuel 7: 3). He persuaded them to stop listening to the serpent who dragged down the thought of Adam and Eve in the fifth stage of the Adam story, and instead, to accept the "fowl" of the air of the fifth day,—ideas which lifted their thought into "the open firmament of heaven" (Genesis 1: 20). And "So the Philistines were subdued" (1 Samuel 7: 13),

But the people began to clamour for a king to rule over them. Unconsciously they were beginning to long for the coming of the Christ-idea, the sense of man made in God's image and likeness, the true man of the sixth day of creation. However, just as Adam and Eve, when they first discovered that they were naked, tried to clothe themselves with five-fingered fig leaves, with the fruit of the five physical senses, so the people thought that an ordinary king would satisfy their craving for the Christ-idea, of whom it was later prophesied that he would "rule all nations with a rod of iron" (Revelation 12: 5).

Samuel tried to convince them that the king they wanted was God, and pointed out to them how a human king oppressed the people, and he foretold the disappointment and frustration which they would experience if they tried to satisfy this craving humanly. But (and we often feel just the same) the people felt sure that their need could be met by human means, and

Samuel realized that they would only learn by bitter experience. So he anointed Saul as their first king. How much suffering they would have saved themselves if they had heeded Samuel's advice, and how much can we save ourselves if we listen to the "Samuel" in ourselves or others who tells us plainly that our allegiance must always be to God, good, to what is right; and that it is never expedient to serve a lower ideal!

Saul was humanly a perfect specimen of man, and at first the people were satisfied. They thought they could "rest" in their new-found king, instead of in God in the seventh day. But Saul very soon began to trust in himself instead of resting in the Lord, and things began to go very wrong, and instead of the peace and rest the people expected, they experienced war and defeat.

Samuel tried hard to make Saul into a good king, but it was a hopeless task, and at last "the Lord said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel?" (1 Samuel 16: 1). Then he was told to go to Bethlehem and anoint David, the shepherd boy, as king over Israel.

Now David was a very different character from Saul. Everything he did, he did through reliance upon God, and so manifested not only strength, but also wonderful tenderness and compassion,—qualities little understood and appreciated in those days. He was, in fact, the man who embodied more of the Christ, and put more of the Christ into practice, than anyone else in that age. Hence it was to his descendants that Jesus was finally born, and when the people wished to show that they acknowledged Jesus as the Christ, they addressed him as the "son of David."

It was many years before David actually became king of Israel, and Samuel died before this happened, but undoubtedly Samuel himself already acknowledged the Christ-idea as king, and so foresaw something of the fulfilment and rest of the seventh day of creation.

Chapter 13



DAVID

IT has been reckoned that it was in 1063 B.C. that Samuel anointed David as king of Israel, but it was not until 1048 B.C. that he actually became king.

Though David lived and died before 1000 B.C., his story seems to belong definitely to the thousand-year period preceding the birth of Jesus, the period which illustrates the fourth day of creation, when "God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also" (Genesis 1: 16).

Nearly everybody is familiar with the story of David and Goliath,—the story of how the Philistines had invaded Israel, and how the armies of Israel had been petrified by fear of the Philistine giant, Goliath, but how David, the shepherd lad, went against him fearlessly with his sling, and slew him with a stone from the brook. It is a wonderful story, but is it of practical value to us? Is there a Goliath menacing each one of us, and can we be a David, and free ourselves and others from this menace? The answer to these questions is undoubtedly "Yes!"

Israel stands for all those who have accepted monotheism,—the teaching that there is but one God, infinite good. The Philistines stand for reliance on material things. How often the belief that strength, riches, health, and even life itself, depend upon material conditions and material possessions, invades our understanding that all strength, and abundance, and life, come from the one infinite God, good! How often we depart from reliance on Jesus' teaching, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you!" (Matthew 6: 33). Every time we depart from that reliance, the Philistines are invading Israel!

Then there comes out a giant champion from the army of the Philistines, armed from head to foot, and he challenges us

to single combat, saying, "Choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me. If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants: but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us" (1 Samuel 17: 8-9).

Now it says that Goliath's height was six cubits and a span—approximately nine and a half feet in our measurements—but do you think that really means a specific height? Goliath undoubtedly stands for our lower natures, the sensual, mortal man in us, and can we measure that in feet? But when we remember that it was in the sixth day of creation that man made in God's image and likeness appeared, it seems more than likely that the prophets said *six* cubits to show that Goliath was the opposite of God's man.

The claim that man is a sinner, that he is sick and dies, looms up before us, and assumes gigantic proportions and terrifies us because it seems so impregnable. This Goliath defies us to choose a man to fight against him, because he does not believe that our understanding of the true man is strong enough to face him. He thinks he can kill our sense of the true man, and then we shall be the servants of materiality, of sin, disease, and death. But if we can kill Goliath, then the Philistines will have to bow before the Christ-idea.

When we hear Goliath's challenge, like the Israelites, we are usually "dismayed, and greatly afraid," unless we have been developing our "David,"—our conception of the true man made in God's image and likeness.

David was a shepherd lad, and do you remember that a shepherd is a thinker who looks after his thoughts? David's three eldest brothers had gone with King Saul to fight against the Philistines, and after a time, their father, Jesse, sent David with some corn and loaves to see how his brothers were getting on. As he talked with his brothers, Goliath came out from the Philistine army and challenged the Israelites as he had done day after day. David heard him, and he also heard the men talking of the rewards the king was offering to anyone who could slay Goliath. Then David answered, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" (1 Samuel 17: 26).

His eldest brother was angry with David, and accused him of having run away and left the sheep, to come and watch the battle. But David had "left the sheep with a keeper"—he knew his thoughts were safe with God—and he knew he could tackle this false sense of man with his understanding of the true man.

Some of the men told King Saul what David had said, and Saul sent for him. "And David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine.

"And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth.

"And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: . . . Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. . . . The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine" (1 Samuel 17: 32-37).

The lion and the bear which had tried to carry off one of David's lambs, one of his cherished thoughts, were the animal qualities of human nature, and David had met and mastered these in his thinking, and so he was well qualified to meet and overcome all the claims of mortality which Goliath represented.

So Saul gave David permission to go and fight Goliath, and he provided him with a sword and armour. He thought that David would fight Goliath with his own weapons, using material means to destroy mortality.

But David rejected them saying, "I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them" (1 Samuel 17: 39).

Then David took his staff (the understanding of God upon which he could lean), and he chose five smooth stones from the brook, and with his sling in his hand, he approached the Philistine.

Why did he take five stones? Surely because it is in the fifth day of creation that "the fowl of the air" lift thought out

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of a mortal sense of life, such as Goliath presented, into the immortal sense which leads to the sixth day and the appearing of God's man.

When Goliath saw David, he disdained him, and boasted that he would give his flesh to the beasts and the birds of prey. He thought the animal qualities would easily overcome David. But David replied, "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied" (1 Samuel 17: 45). David knew that all material weapons were powerless against the ideas of God, good.

And David took a stone and slung it, and it pierced the Philistine's forehead, and he fell to the ground. Then David ran and drew Goliath's *own* sword, and with it he cut off the giant's head, thus emphasizing the fact that eventually evil always destroys itself.

No sooner did the Philistines see that Goliath was dead, than they fled, pursued by the Israelites, who slew many of them and spoiled their tents. They gained something from the experience. When the "David" (the understanding of man made in God's image and likeness) in any one of us meets and overcomes the "Goliath" (the sensual mortal side of us) and puts the "armies of the Philistines" (reliance on material things) to flight, then we certainly are spiritually enriched by the experience.

After slaying Goliath, Saul made David captain of his armed men, who went on to rout the Philistines. But when the people greeted David on his return with "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (1 Samuel 18: 7), Saul became very jealous, and from that time on was continually trying to slay David by treachery.

At last David had to flee to the mountains (which, you may remember, symbolize the lifting of thought to God). He lived in caves, and was soon joined by a band of young men who recognized him as their leader. "And Saul sought him every day, but God delivered him not into his hand" (1 Samuel 23: 14). However, on two occasions Saul himself was completely at David's mercy. On the first, while he was hunting David, Saul actually lay down to sleep in the very cave in the

recesses of which David and his young men were hiding. The young men would have killed Saul as he slept, but David, with Christ-like compassion, restrained them. "Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily" (1 Samuel 24: 4). After Saul awoke, and had left the cave, David called after him, and showed him the piece he had cut off his skirt, thus proving that he was not Saul's enemy. Saul was ashamed and wept, and acknowledged David's righteousness, but nevertheless it was not long before he was again seeking David's life.

On the second occasion, Saul followed David into the wilderness (the quiet lonely place where God's thoughts come and minister to us), and at night, as Saul lay asleep, surrounded by his army, David and one of his men entered the camp, and took Saul's spear and bottle of water from beside him. Again David's companion would have killed Saul, but David forbade him, saying, "Destroy him not. . . . As the Lord liveth, the Lord shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle, and perish. The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the Lord's anointed" (1 Samuel 26: 9-11). Again, before this second proof of David's integrity, Saul admitted his sin, but he soon returned to his old ways, and David eventually had to leave the country until after Saul's death.

This characteristic of gentleness and mercy is perhaps one of the most striking things in the story of David. In those days it was usual for kings to put to death any who opposed them, and particularly the enemies who had fought against them. Yet here we have this story of how David really lived and practised what Jesus later taught,—“Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Matthew 5: 44). Was it any wonder that David was the forerunner of Jesus the Christ?

But what is this story of David to us? Can it help us to deal with the difficult world conditions of to-day, or with our own particular private feuds and jealousies? First of all David was a shepherd. He tended his flocks of thoughts, the God-given thoughts which came when God said, “Let there be light.” Then he met and mastered Goliath, and put the Philistines to

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flight. He used the firmament of the second day to separate himself from his sensual side, just as Abram separated from Lot. These must always be the first two steps in dealing with any difficult situation.

In turn these brought the "dry land." David's character developed in an understanding of God until it brought forth "grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind" (Genesis 1: 11). It developed in him the Christ-idea with its accompanying sense of Christianity, which made him "do good to them that hate you."

What was the result? Saul, who had never dealt with "the Philistines" in his own character, was at last defeated by them. His sons were slain, and he committed suicide. David, always loving his enemies, mourned for him, but the tribe of Judah immediately invited him to become their king. They recognized that David was a "star" reflecting the "greater light" that ruled over the day, and they saw that this would make him a good king.

But Abner, captain of Saul's army, made Ish-bosheth, one of Saul's remaining sons, king of the other tribes of Israel, and there followed a period of war between Judah and Israel. At last, however, Abner recognized David as the better king, and after a quarrel with Ish-bosheth, he joined David, who was always ready to forgive his enemies. But when two men, thinking to please David, murdered Ish-bosheth, that was a different matter, and David punished the murderers with death.

Then "all the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron; and king David made a league with them in Hebron before the Lord: and they anointed David king over Israel" (2 Samuel 5: 3). Thus David began to "Be fruitful and multiply." Combining, as he did, the "woman" qualities of gentleness and compassion with the "man" qualities of strength and courage, he was able to unite Judah and Israel into one kingdom for the only time in their history. Gentleness, combined with righteousness, accomplished that which nothing else could.

Then the thought came to David that he should build a "house for the Lord." But the word of the Lord came to him through Nathan the prophet, saying, that he should not build

it, but that his son, who would succeed him, should do so. David received the promise that his house and kingdom—the rule of the “greater light” through the Christ-idea, which he had established—should be established for ever.

“Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I took thee from the sheeppcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel: And I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thine enemies out of thy sight, and have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth. Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more. . . . Also the Lord telleth thee that he will make thee an house. . . . And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever” (2 Samuel 7: 8–10, 11, 16).

Was not this a great sense of the everlasting and abundant life of the fifth day, “Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven” (Genesis 1: 20)?

But David’s troubles were not over, for his beloved son Absalom led a revolt against his father, and through lies and treachery gained so much support from the men of Israel, that David was forced temporarily to flee from Jerusalem, which he had made his capital. Then David gathered his armies, and sent them against Absalom under Joab and two other leaders, giving these leaders strict orders not to hurt Absalom. The king’s men won the battle, but Joab, realizing that Absalom, if he lived, would always be a source of trouble and danger, slew him.

In spite of the grievous wrong Absalom had done him, David mourned for him, again proving how he loved his enemies. But David was now putting into practice his understanding of man made in God’s image and likeness, man that is both male and female, and has dominion over everything. Though mortal man, typified by Absalom, may revolt against God’s man, and may seem to gain an initial advantage, he has no chance of ultimate success, and sooner or later, he is always destroyed.

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Though the Bible story of David seems to be one of struggle and fighting to the very end, it is not mainly as a man of war that we think of him, but much more as a man of gentleness, and as the Psalmist, the author of some of the most beautiful hymns of praise the world has ever known.

Here is part of David's psalm of thanksgiving as recorded in 2 Samuel, chapter 22, when "the Lord had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies."

The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer;
The God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield,
and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge,
my saviour; thou savest me from violence. . . .

In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried to my
God: and he did hear my voice out of his temple, and my
cry did enter into his ears. . . .

He sent from above, he took me; he drew me out of many
waters;

He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them
that hated me: for they were too strong for me.

They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the
Lord was my stay.

He brought me forth also into a large place: he delivered
me, because he delighted in me.

The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness:
according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed
me. . . .

As for God, his way is perfect; the word of the Lord is
tried: He is a buckler to all them that trust in him. . . . God
is my strength and power: and he maketh my way perfect. . . .

Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and
thy gentleness hath made me great. . . .

Therefore I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among
the heathen, and I will sing praises unto thy name.

He is the tower of salvation for his king: and sheweth
mercy to his anointed, unto David, and to his seed for
evermore.

Did not David see the perfection and completeness of the

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seventh day, in which God rested, and where he could rest in God?

Much detail has been omitted in this short account of David's life, but enough has been said to show how we may well take David as our example in dealing with difficult relationships, whether personal or national, combining the compassion and gentleness of a really impersonal sense with the tremendous strength and courage gained from complete adherence to Principle and to what is right, and absolute reliance upon God in all circumstances.

Chapter 14



FROM DAVID TO ELIJAH

DAVID was succeeded by his son Solomon, who inherited the peace and prosperity which his father's spiritual understanding had established. At the beginning of his reign, it is recorded that he asked God to give him wisdom rather than riches: "O Lord my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in. . . . Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad" (1 Kings 3: 7, 9). It states that "the speech pleased the Lord," and so He not only blessed Solomon with unprecedented wisdom, but also multiplied his riches.

Certainly in his reign the Israelites reached the peak of their material prosperity. The temple was built in Jerusalem, and adorned with the costliest of gold and jewels, and Solomon's court was renowned in many lands for its luxuriance and riches.

But for all this, Solomon lacked the spirituality of David his father, and the material riches and glory,—to say nothing of his three hundred wives and seven hundred concubines!—turned him away from God, and at the end of his reign he was indulging in idolatry, and setting his people the example of worshipping other gods. Also the tremendous wealth of the court was achieved at the expense of the poor of the land.

So after his death, when his son Rehoboam was made king, the people came to him and asked him to lighten their load, but Rehoboam answered, "My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins. And now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke" (1 Kings 12: 10-11). As a result, the ten northern tribes of Israel revolted, and formed the separate kingdom of Israel, leaving only Judah and Benjamin as the kingdom of Judah under Rehoboam.

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Then came a period when king succeeded king, often in quick succession, on both thrones. Very few had any spiritual vision, and most of them led the people after other gods. War followed war, and corruption was the order of the day. Though the rulers of the land were often rich and prosperous, the poor were terribly oppressed. It was not a time of political glory, but it had a greatness of its own, for it was during this time that the Jahweh Document (see page 13) was written in Judah round about 850 B.C., followed about a hundred years later by the Elohist Document in Israel.

It was also the beginning of the great prophetic period, starting with Elijah in Israel about 925 B.C. Neither Elijah, nor his successor, Elisha, left a written record of their teachings, but their exploits were recorded in the First and Second Books of Kings. The teachings of the later prophets were many of them written in the books which now bear their names. These prophetic books provide a vast field for study, and would require at least another volume to themselves. They are not, therefore, being touched upon in this little book, but any reader, who has become well acquainted with the seven days of creation, would find the same theme of seven developing stages of thought reappearing time after time throughout the prophetic writings. Sometimes they appear quite shortly in a sevenfold statement, occupying one or two verses. Sometimes they may fill one or more chapters, and sometimes the whole book consists of the sevenfold order, once over, or repeated in different forms several times.

Chapter 15



ELIJAH

ELIJAH appeared on the scene, without any introduction, in the reign of Ahab, king of Israel. Ahab was a weak man, and completely dominated by his wife Jezebel, who was the daughter of the king of Zidon, and an ardent worshipper of Baal. She introduced the worship of Baal into Israel, persecuting all who followed the one God, and, apparently, seducing nearly all Israel to forsake God for Baal.

Then, suddenly, Elijah appeared before Ahab, and declared, "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word" (1 Kings 17: 1). With that he departed, and went to hide himself by the brook Cherith, while Israel began to suffer from a disastrous drought which lasted three-and-a-half years. What was that drought? Undoubtedly it was a drought of God's ideas, a drought of inspiration. If we desert the living God for the modern equivalent of Baal,—if we substitute material values for spiritual,—a drought—a sense of barrenness and frustration—soon makes itself felt in our lives. Three-and-a-half is half of seven, and this term is often used in the Bible to represent that type of thought which accepts a certain amount of spiritual teaching,—which will go half way,—but is not prepared to make the serious and sustained effort necessary to follow Christ all the way. It reaches a stage where it says, "This is enough for me at present. I will stay here." But the trouble is, that, with spiritual things, if we refuse to go forward, we do not stay where we are, but invariably slip back, losing what we have already gained. As Jesus put it, "From him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath" (Matthew 25: 29). The result is a mental drought or famine.

Israel, at the time of Elijah, had seen the coming of the light of the first day of creation; they had to some extent used the "firmament" of the second day to separate the good

from the evil in their thinking; they had seen the "dry land" of definite ideas of God appearing, and this had led them into some acceptance of the Promised Land. Now they were entering on the fourth thousand-year period, and had seen a little of government by the Christ, as symbolized by David. They had reached the "three-and-a-half" stage, but instead of going on to the fulfilment of the last three days of creation, they said, "This is enough for us. We have inherited the land which God promised us, and we are now going to have a good time in it." They mistook the material land in which they were living for the Promised Land, which was really a spiritual inheritance. They deserted the spiritual for the material. They worshipped Baal.

Elijah saw just what was happening, and so what he really said to Ahab and the Israelites was, "If you will not go beyond this three-and-a-half, but persist in thinking that God's promises simply refer to material prosperity, you will find that life is barren, and that nothing satisfies you."

Elijah himself, however, was determined to go on until he reaped the fruits of the full seven, and so he went away by himself to work out his own salvation.

First he went to dwell by the brook Cherith, "And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook" (1 Kings 17: 6). You may remember that it was a raven that Noah first sent out from the ark, and that it was an unclean bird or thought, and it went to and fro over the earth without returning to Noah or helping him in any way. But Elijah was starting from a higher understanding, and he made even the ravens—his lowest thoughts—aid in his spiritual development. They corresponded to "darkness . . . upon the face of the deep" (Genesis 1: 2), and this state of thought made Elijah reach out for, and accept, the light of the first day of creation. They brought him "bread and flesh," some sense of the Christ-idea, some sense of "light," and that "light" also came to him as the water of inspiration. "He drank of the brook."

But after a time the brook dried up. Elijah was ready to go forward to the next stage, and so the inspiration, which had sustained him so far, dried up. It no longer satisfied him,

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and he knew he must move on. How often do we try to remain in positions and beliefs we have outgrown, when all the inspiration has dried up out of them!

The Lord then told him to go to Zarephath, saying, "behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee" (1 Kings 17: 9). The word "Zarephath" means "place of refining." To Elijah it was the "firmament" of the second day of creation, which would enable him to refine, or purify, his thought. Widows appear frequently in Bible stories, and it seems that the term stands for those of us who have been wedded to a material way of life, but who have been forced through sorrow and suffering to see how fruitless it all is, and therefore have begun to use our "firmament" to separate ourselves from the material, and to turn to the spiritual. We begin to see what purity of thought is demanded by the second statement of the commandments, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20: 3).

When Elijah reached the gate of Zarephath,—when he was ready to use his "firmament,"—the widow woman was there gathering sticks, and he said to her, "Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink"—Bring me a little inspiration to help me to use the "firmament." Then, as she turned to fetch it, he added, "Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand" (1 Kings 17: 10, 11),—Bring me also something of the Christ-idea. First the ravens had taught him, and now it was the turn of the widow woman.

But she replied that she had only a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse, and that she was gathering "two sticks" to go to make it into a little cake for herself and her son, and when that was finished, they would die of famine. Remember, she was widowed. She had lost all on which she had relied for support, and so far her understanding of God was so small that it seemed like only a handful of meal, which would soon be exhausted. But she had also "a little oil in a cruse," and "oil," you may remember, represented consecration. Now she was gathering "two sticks"—what she knew of the first two days of creation—so that she might use the little understanding she had, with the consecration, to sustain herself and her son—the spiritual idea which had come to her. She feared,

however, that the understanding was insufficient to meet the situation, and that it would soon fail them.

Elijah told her to go and do as she had said, but first of all to make him a little cake. Then he finished with the promise, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth" (1 Kings 17: 14). However little understanding we seem to have, however little of the Christ there seems to be in us, the sure way of making it multiply and increase is to share it with others. Elijah knew this, and "she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah" (1 Kings 17: 15-16).

Some time later calamity seemed to fall upon the woman, for her son fell sick, and "there was no breath left in him" (1 Kings 17: 17). Just as Elijah had been forced to move from the first day of creation to the second by the drying up of the brook of inspiration, so now they were all forced to move on from the second day to the third by the seeming death of the widow's son,—the idea to which she had given birth. She said, "Art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?" (1 Kings 17: 18)—Are you going to remind me of the days when I was wedded to materiality, and let the remembrance of that kill my spiritual idea? How often, after we have made some progress, and seem to have brought forth a spiritual idea in our lives, do we look back at past mistakes, and allow those memories to take from us our joy, and to kill our present inspiration! But the answer is always to stop looking back and to go forward instead. We must progress from the second day of creation to the third, and then we shall find that our idea is safe, and that the inspiration comes back renewed and strengthened.

Elijah took the child, and "carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed. . . . And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the Lord, and said, O Lord my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again. And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again,

and he revived" (1 Kings 17: 19, 21-22). Elijah took the idea, and lifted it into the "loft" of the third day, into the higher realms of thought "where he abode," and he laid it upon his own "bed," upon the spiritual understanding on which he rested. There he "stretched himself upon the child three times,"—he brought the fullest possible (the stretched) understanding of the first three days of creation to bear upon the idea, and it revived,—"the soul of the child came into him again."

When Elijah returned this revived and uplifted idea to the woman, she exclaimed, "Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth" (1 Kings 17: 24)—Now you have made my ideas of God definite and certain, the "dry land" has appeared, and I know that you have a real understanding of God.

The next stage of Elijah's progress came when the drought had lasted "three-and-a-half years." Elijah had made good use of those years, and he was ready to go forward to prove the spiritual power of divine government, as symbolized by the rule of the greater light and the lesser light of the fourth day of creation.

The word of the Lord then came to him, sending him to Ahab. "And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel? And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim. Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto Mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred" (1 Kings 18: 17-19).

Here the four is well emphasized. The prophets of Baal claimed to be four hundred and fifty,—four-and-a-half hundred,—and other false prophets, four hundred. You may remember that the hundred, 10×10 , comes from the ten fingers, and means using what we know in our everyday life. The prophets of Baal claimed to have surpassed God's government of the fourth day,—to have reached four-and-a-half,—and to be practising and using the doctrine of Baal and other false gods to rule the people. Elijah now felt confident that he

could prove the supremacy of God, and he decided to put it to the test at Mount Carmel, which means "fruitful place." (The story is told in 1 Kings 18: 20-46.)

When Israel and the false prophets were gathered together at Mount Carmel, Elijah made a last appeal to the people to choose between God and Baal, but "the people answered him not a word." So Elijah called upon them to produce two bullocks, and let the prophets of Baal take one and prepare it for sacrifice to Baal, but put no fire under it, and he would prepare the other as a sacrifice to God, and also would put no fire under it. The God who answered by fire should then be acknowledged as God. The people agreed to this, and the prophets of Baal prepared their sacrifice first. Elijah allowed them to "call on the name of Baal from morning until noon," and then again until the time of the evening sacrifice. But, in spite of frenzied appeals on the part of the prophets, nothing happened, and Elijah mocked them.

Then, when evening had come, Elijah took twelve stones, one for every tribe of Israel, like the stones which Joshua commanded to be taken from the bed of Jordan. With them he built an altar in the name of the Lord, and dug a trench round it, and laid the wood and the cut-up bullock in order upon it. He also commanded the people to fill four barrels with water, and pour it all over the sacrifice, and to do this three times until the water filled the trench. When this was done, he called upon the name of the Lord, and "the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The Lord, he is God; the Lord, he is God."

It is a most dramatic story, but what does it mean in our lives? We cannot tell how much or how little of it is historically true. Some commentaries think that it is not one incident, but a symbolic summary of the whole of Elijah's life work. Be that as it may, the fact remains that there is much in the story that is of practical use to us to-day. Elijah had complete faith in the supremacy of the spiritual over the material. He took the twelve stones, which, as in the book of Joshua, symbolized a working understanding of the Christ-idea, the stone which the

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builders (Israel) had rejected, but which Elijah himself had taken as the "head of the corner." Twelve was also used by the Hebrews to indicate true government and authority,—the rule of the great lights of the fourth day of creation. On this altar of government by God and His Christ, Elijah placed the bullock which corresponded to the false gods of the fourth plague (see page 64). He cut it up,—he dissected or analysed it. He showed up the tyranny and misery of the false government to the people. How wise are we if we take the false beliefs that tyrannize over us, and treat them in the same way! Then Elijah said, "Fill four barrels with water." This water was not the water of inspiration of which he had drunk by the brook Cherith, but the water of materiality similar to that which had caused Noah's flood. It was to be taken in the four barrels of the fourth day, and multiplied three times to give the twelve again, and so to show the supremacy of God's government. As this became abundantly clear to Elijah, and he explained it to the people, "the fire of the Lord fell," and this new practical understanding of the fourth day consumed all the false beliefs (the bullock) which had become gods to them; it consumed the false sense of the "stones" which made the people reject the Christ-idea; it consumed the "dust," the nothingness out of which Adam was made; and it "licked up the water," it destroyed the flood of materiality.

"And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape." The slaughter that followed was not a slaughter of men, but of all the false teachings which had led the people astray, and we, too, should have the wisdom to let our newly developed understanding of the oneness and supremacy of God destroy for us all "the prophets of Baal."

"And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain." Does this not immediately suggest the waters that brought forth abundantly after their kind in the fifth day of creation? Also in that day came the fowl that "fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven" (Genesis 1: 20), and here Elijah also exalted his thought. He "went up to the top of Carmel." He had now reached the fifth stage of developing thought, when it was, lifted up to the top of the mountain of Carmel, which, you

will remember, means "fruitful place." His thought was beginning to "be fruitful and multiply."

But though Elijah was certain that "the drought" had been broken, and that the "rain" of inspiration was at hand, there seemed no outward and visible sign that this was so. He sent his servant up to look towards the sea. He sent the thoughts that worked for him up to look out from the standpoint of the days of creation, but they had to go seven times before there was any result. Then they reported that "Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea. . . . And it came to pass in the meanwhile, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain." Elijah's thought did become really fruitful, and began to multiply abundantly.

However, when Jezebel heard of Elijah's victory over the prophets of Baal, she sent a messenger to him saying that she would destroy him as surely as he had destroyed her prophets of Baal. Then Elijah fled into the wilderness, and he sat down under a juniper tree, and gave way to discouragement, saying, "O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers" (1 Kings 19: 4). He had brought the people to the point where they exclaimed, "The Lord, he is God; the Lord, he is God," and he had brought them "rain," but still he seemed to be alone in his understanding of God, having to fly for his life, and with apparently nothing to show for what he had done. He felt he had made no progress. How often do we put all we have into something, only to find that there is no result, and it seems as though we have lost all. But it has been truly said that the margin between failure and success is very narrow, and it only requires a little extra faithfulness, persistence, and staying power to turn apparent failure into success.

Elijah fled into the wilderness of loneliness, doubt and disappointment. But he was not one to give in, and certainly did not lack persistence and perseverance, and here, alone in the wilderness, he had peace and quiet to think things out. And so, true to the usual Bible presentation of wilderness, an angel, one of God's thoughts, came to him, and "touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat. And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at

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his head . . . and he did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God" (1 Kings 19: 5-8).

First the ravens fed him, then the widow of Zarephath, and now it was the turn of angels, God's thoughts. They fed him on the bread of Truth, the truth about God, and the truth about man, and he drank the water of Life, and each time it lifted his thought higher and higher in the scale of understanding. Now, as with Moses, when he took his flock of thoughts into the wilderness, and they led him "to the mountain of God, even to Horeb" (Exodus 3: 1), so these angel thoughts carried Elijah "unto Horeb the mount of God. And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there" (1 Kings 19: 8-9). He came actually to live on the mount of God. He determined to live with his thought exalted, keeping it always at the highest level he knew.

When we do that, it soon shows up to us what wrong thoughts we are harbouring, and what there is that we have to deal with. So "behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah? And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away" (1 Kings 19: 9-10).

Then he was told to go forth, and stand upon the mount, and, "Behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, . . . but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice" (1 Kings 19: 11-12).

Living on "the mount of God," Elijah began to realize that the destructive forces at work in the world were nothing to do with God, and that "the Lord was not in [them]." They were not created by God, and therefore had no real power, and he need not flee from them. He must face up to them, and then they would lose their power to terrify him. Once we really understand that the forces of evil have nothing to do with God, they lose their power over us, and not only does this help

us individually, but we are also helping the whole world, for we are fighting aggressive evil in the most effective way there is! We begin to have dominion over all the earth. We are entering the sixth day of creation.

The "still small voice" repeated the question, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" And Elijah again answered in the same terms of discouragement. But he was told to return to Israel, where he must anoint a new king over Syria, and a new king of Israel in place of Ahab, whose death would occur shortly. He was also told to call Elisha who would be his disciple, and who would carry on the prophetic work after him. Above all, he was told that, far from being the only one in Israel faithful to the Lord, "Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him" (1 Kings 19: 18). In other words, Elijah began to understand that, whatever the evidence of the material senses, the only real man was the perfect man made in God's image and likeness, and the true Israel was that perfect man, and had never worshipped Baal. Seven thousand means the seven of perfection used and multiplied over and over again in human experience.

With that understanding, Elijah returned to Israel, and found Elisha, who "went after Elijah, and ministered unto him" (1 Kings 19: 21).

After several more incidents, including the denouncing of Ahab's wickedness, which was soon followed by his death, the time came when Elijah began to understand the full meaning of the seventh day of rest and perfection. He saw more and more clearly the completeness and perfection of God's creation, and that this creation consisted of ideas, and not of matter. As this happens to us, the things of the spirit become more and more real, and the things of the flesh less and less real. If this is followed to its logical conclusion, eventually even the material body disappears, and this is what we are told happened to Elijah. But lest there be any misunderstanding on this subject, it should be added that, although translation or ascension must be the ultimate result of spiritual perfection, the Bible records only three occasions when this has actually been achieved. The first of these is in Genesis, where it is

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written, "And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him" (Genesis 5: 24). But it is now generally conceded that Enoch was a mythical character, not a real man, and that he simply comes into the story as a symbol of immortality and perfection. The second instance is that of Elijah, whose story we are considering at present. The third is that of Christ Jesus, whose understanding of perfection enabled him first to raise his material body from the grave, and finally to cause it to disappear altogether in what we know as the ascension. But before we can follow his example in this, and approximate to his final triumph over the flesh, we must first each rise individually to the standard of perfection he demonstrated in his life, doing the works that he did, and we have much ground still to cover!

When Elijah felt he was nearing this final proof of spirituality, he said to Elisha, "Tarry here, I pray thee; for the Lord hath sent me to Beth-el. And Elisha said unto him, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee" (2 Kings 2: 2). Three times this happened, and three times Elisha refused to turn back and leave Elijah. The last time was at Jordan, the river that formed the boundary of the Promised Land, and so is frequently used to represent the dividing line between matter with all its limitations, and the boundless freedom of spiritual understanding.

Here Elijah smote the waters with his mantle,—with the understanding with which he had clothed himself,—and, as in the case of Joshua leading the children of Israel into the Promised Land, the waters divided, and the two prophets went over on dry ground.

When they reached the further side, the side of Spirit, Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so" (2 Kings 2: 9-10).

What was the "double portion" that Elisha wanted? At the beginning of his career, Elijah had brought home to the Israelites through the three-and-a-half years of famine the

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barrenness of thought that would accept only the "three-and-a-half," only half the seven. He tried to rouse them to see that they must be willing to go forward and prove what they had understood of the first half of the days of creation, by putting it into practice in the second half. They must really live in the abundance of exalted thought belonging to the fifth day; they must recognize man made in God's image and likeness as the only real man; and finally they must acknowledge so fully the perfection of God's creation that they could rest in God, seeing and experiencing only perfection. Elijah himself had done this, and Elisha recognized it, and longed to do likewise. He voiced his earnest longing in his request for the "double portion" of Elijah's spirit, or, as Smith and Goodspeed's translation puts it, "a twofold share." Elijah answered that he had asked a hard thing, because he had asked for something that nobody could give him. He could only get it through his own work and understanding. But Elijah assured him that if he had understanding enough to appreciate his (Elijah's) own overcoming of the "last enemy," death, then he would indeed have passed the half-way house, and be able to use and prove the whole seven.

"And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it" (2 Kings 2: 11-12). "They still went on," until the fires of Elijah's spiritual thinking finally caused the disappearance of his mortal body, and Elisha understood what had happened.

Chapter 16



ELISHA

ELISHA had asked for a "double portion" of Elijah's spirit, and had been promised that if he saw and understood Elijah's final victory over death, he would be able to prove the second three-and-a-half, and really practise the last three days of creation. He *had* seen Elijah's demonstration, and "He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him" (2 Kings 2: 13) —he took up the understanding with which Elijah had clothed himself, but he did not put it on straight away, for it seems that at first he still felt that the works he was able to do were the result of Elijah's inspiration, rather than of his own understanding.

This was shown when he returned to Jordan, and smote it with Elijah's mantle, saying, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" (2 Kings 2: 14). The waters parted, and he went through on dry land, but he evidently felt it was Elijah's mantle that enabled him to do it.

When he came to Jericho, he was told that "the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth: but the water is naught, and the ground barren. . . . And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land. So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha" (2 Kings 2: 19, 21-22). Was not this a proof that he understood and could use the fifth day of creation, where God said, "Let the waters bring forth abundantly" (Genesis 1: 20)?

But Elisha still did not believe he had attained to the demonstration of the second three-and-a-half, for the story continues, "And he went up from thence unto Beth-el: and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head" (2 Kings 2: 23). He was

going *up* to Beth-el, the house of God,—he still felt he must climb to reach the second three-and-a-half where he would feel himself to be one with God, living in God, with God working through him. Apparently one part of him doubted whether he would ever achieve this, for as he toiled upward, “little children” (little nagging thoughts) came out of the “city” (out of his consciousness), and mocked him, saying, “Go up, thou bald head.”

The Hebrews regarded hair as a symbol of having identified oneself fully with God. As a sign of mourning, they would tear out their hair, but natural baldness seems to have been regarded with suspicion and derision, a sign that one was out of favour with God. Just before Elijah’s final victory, he was described as a “hairy man,” while the traditional dress of prophets was a hairy garment, and it is evident that Elisha was feeling keenly that he was not a “hairy man,” that he had no right to call himself a prophet. His doubts and fears kept mocking him by telling him that he was bald,—that he had not identified himself properly with God, and that he would probably never reach the second three-and-a-half, however much he struggled to “go up.”

Elisha, however, was wise. He did not go on listening to those little nagging doubts and fears. “He turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord” (2 Kings 2: 24). So often we let those little troubling thoughts remain in the back of our minds to poison our whole outlook with their mocking. Instead we should turn on them, as did Elisha, and look them fully in the face, and see that they are not God’s thoughts, and are not the truth about God or man. If we turn on them, and tell them straightly that they are not from God, and therefore that we have no intention of putting up with them, it will be as though “two she bears” come “out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them” (2 Kings 2: 24).

Why forty-two? Forty-two is three-and-a-half times twelve. You will remember that twelve often stands for true government and authority. These nagging thoughts of Elisha’s kept telling him that he had only the power to prove God’s government up to three-and-a-half days, and so the prophets

used the convenient Hebrew shorthand to express that as forty-two children,—three-and-a-half times twelve nagging thoughts! The bears seem to represent an understanding of the Christ, which destroys all evil thoughts, and here there are two of them to correspond to Elisha's "double portion." The incident ends by recording that Elisha went up to mount Carmel, the "fruitful place," and from that time on there were no more doubts and fears as to whether he could receive and use the "double portion," but his work bore abundant fruit.

The first proof he had was by providing water in the wilderness for the armies of Israel and Judah, and delivering the Moabites into their hands. Then a widow woman came and cried to him that her husband was dead, and the creditor had come to take her two sons as bondmen. Like the woman of Zarephath, she was a widow,—she had found that material things could not sustain her. She had two sons,—she had brought forth two distinct spiritual ideas,—and just as the sense of famine and the remembrance of past sorrows had nearly robbed the widow of Zarephath of her "son," so the "creditor"—old false beliefs to which we have subscribed in the past,—threatened to carry off this widow's two sons.

Elisha asked her, "What hast thou in the house? And she said, Thine handmaid hath not anything in the house, save a pot of oil." A pot of oil! Again here is a similarity to the other story. All she had in her house (in her consciousness) was a little consecration. "Then he said, Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, even empty vessels; borrow not a few. And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and shalt pour out into all those vessels" (2 Kings 4: 2-4).

She was to borrow empty vessels, to find every receptive thought that she could collect from anywhere, and take it into her house (her consciousness), and shut the door of thought against everything that would try to intrude. Then she was to pour the oil of consecration, with the inspiration it brings, into every thought that was ready to receive it. Jesus gave rather similar instructions when he said, "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in

secret shall reward thee openly" (Matthew 6: 6). The widow poured out the oil, and filled every empty vessel, and then "the oil stayed." We never need hesitate to pour out the consecration and inspiration we have, so long as there are receptive thoughts to receive it, for it belongs to the fifth day of creation, and will multiply abundantly if we use it. As soon as every vessel is full, the flow ceases, but if we find more empty vessels, we shall soon find that the flow begins again! If we lack inspiration, and the "creditor" comes to take our "sons," all we have to do is to find an "empty vessel," and pour out from the little we have, and we shall find that the inspiration will multiply and supply all our needs, and save our "sons."

Next follows the story of the Shunammite woman. She is described as "a great woman," and she certainly was great in her appreciation of Elisha as a "man of God." (The story comes in 2 Kings 4: 8-37.) She persuaded her husband to make a little room for the prophet on the roof of their house (in the highest part of their consciousness), and to furnish it with a bed, a table, a stool, and a candlestick, so that it would be ready for him whenever he came that way. Have we a room ready in our consciousness for the "man of God," or man made in God's image and likeness, whenever he comes our way?

Once when Elisha was staying there, he asked what he could do for the woman, and his servant, Gehazi, told him that "Verily she hath no child, and her husband is old." If, as Isaiah says, we realize that "thy Maker is thine husband," and we allow our conception of God to grow old and stale, and it does not advance with advancing thought, then it gives us no child. We do not multiply and bring forth spiritual ideas. But Elisha knew much of the fatherhood of God, and this knowledge passed on, enabled the Shunammite to give birth to a spiritual idea. But "When the child was grown, it fell on a day, that he went out to his father to the reapers. And he said unto his father, My head, my head. And he said to a lad, Carry him to his mother. And when he had taken him, and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died." If our thought of God has advanced to a certain

understanding of the fatherhood of God, sufficient to bring forth a spiritual idea, but we have not yet identified it fully as the Son of God,—man made in God's image and likeness,—nor seen that this Son is for ever safe and complete and perfect, embosomed in the motherhood of God as revealed in the seventh day of creation, then our "son" may go out into the "field" to the reapers, and there he is beset by all sorts of dangers. Do you remember that Abel was in the "field" when Cain slew him, and that Joseph was "wandering in the field" before his brothers stripped him of his coat of many colours and sold him as a slave into Egypt? The father realized that it was a true sense of motherhood that was needed, when he said, "Carry him to his mother," but the Shunammite's understanding of the motherhood of God was insufficient to save him.

However, "she went up, and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut the door upon him, and went out." Then, riding on an ass, she went straight to Mount Carmel in search of the "man of God," whom Elisha understood and demonstrated better than anyone else at that time. Elisha said to her, "Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child? And she answered, It is well." What faith that woman showed! Though her own understanding seemed insufficient to save her child, yet she never faltered for a moment in her faith that all was really well, and that the man of the sixth day of creation was for ever complete and perfect and fulfilled in the motherhood of the seventh day. When Elisha discovered what had happened, he sent his servant, Gehazi, on in advance to lay his (Elisha's) staff upon the child, but the understanding sent through another was not potent enough to raise the child. Meanwhile the mother declared, "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee." She refused to leave the highest understanding of God and man that she knew.

"When Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed. He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the Lord. And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands

upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child waxed warm." What do the mouth, eyes, and hands stand for? Is it not with the mouth that the Word of God is spoken, that the understanding of God is passed from one to another? When that understanding really becomes clear to us, do we not say, "I see," which might be symbolized by eyes? And do not hands symbolize the power to use what is given us? So Elisha was in effect declaring, while he stretched his understanding upon the child, "I have spoken the Word of God to you. See it and accept it for yourself, and then use it." Thereupon "the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes," and he returned him to his mother.

After this Elisha went to Gilgal where there was a colony of prophets, but these prophets had apparently not passed the three-and-a-half stage, and so were suffering from a sense of famine. They gathered "herbs" from the "field" to make pottage, but one, ignorantly, put in poisonous "wild gourds." Do you remember that it was in the third day of creation that the earth brought forth "herbs," which were given to man for food in the sixth day? If, however, we try to gather these "herbs" in the "field" of mixed thinking, we are likely in our ignorance to get some "poisonous" thoughts mixed with the wholesome ideas, and they poison the whole pottage (the whole teaching), and, like the prophets, we cry out, "O thou man of God, there is death in the pot" (2 Kings 4: 40). Elisha, with his understanding of the "man of God," commanded them to bring meal (the truth) which he cast into the pot. The truth destroyed the poisonous thoughts, and made the whole teaching wholesome. Here also Elisha took bread enough for twenty men and multiplied it to feed a hundred,—another proof that he understood and was using the fifth and sixth days of creation.

We now come to the story of Naaman, the proud Syrian commander, who was a leper. Through a little Israelite slave girl, he heard of Elisha, and taking with him much riches with which to reward the prophet, Naaman set out for Israel to get his healing. Elisha did not go out to speak to him, but sent him a message saying, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean"

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(2 Kings 5: 10). You may remember that Jordan is the dividing line between the spiritual and the material. Here, for Naaman, who was just seeking the light, it was to be his "firmament," which would wash away the impurities of material belief and spiritualize his thought. He was to wash seven times,—to spiritualize his conception of each of the seven days of creation.

However, "Naaman was wroth." His pride was hurt. He had expected Elisha to come out to him and make a fuss of him, and heal him in a spectacular way. Moreover, if all he had to do was to wash, could he not have done that in one of the rivers at home? How often do we long for something spectacular which will impress everybody around, rather than working out our own salvation quietly and humbly in the way that God commands. Fortunately Naaman's servants were able to point out to him the folly of the pride which would have made him go away unhealed, and, humbling himself, he "dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean" (2 Kings 5: 14).

He then returned to Elisha with gratitude, and offered him the riches he had brought with him, but Elisha steadfastly refused to take anything. The leprosy from which Naaman had been suffering was love of, and reliance on, materiality, the pride and love of riches. Had Elisha been interested in those material riches, and accepted them as payment, the healing would not have been complete. But his servant, Gehazi, had not his master's spiritual outlook. He thought it was a pity to refuse such wealth, and so he ran after Naaman and said that Elisha had sent him to ask for some silver and garments to give to two young men who had just come in. So Naaman "bound *two* talents of silver in *two* bags, with *two* changes of garments, and laid them upon *two* of his servants" (2 Kings 5: 23). Just notice how the "two" is emphasized there! Naaman had just been healed of reliance on the "two" of mingled Spirit and matter, of good and evil. He was learning to have but one God. But Gehazi was asking for that "two," and he got it in more ways than he expected, for the leprosy of Naaman attacked him, and when Elisha took him to task for

what he had done, and he denied it, "he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow" (2 Kings 5: 27).

After this the sons of the prophets came to Elisha and told him that the place where they dwelt was too small for them, and they proposed going to Jordan and making a bigger place there. They were finding the three-and-a-half unsatisfactory, and were going to Jordan for wider spiritual values. Elisha gave them his blessing. But as they were cutting timber by the river, one man dropped a borrowed axe, and it fell in the river. Elisha cut down a stick, and threw it into the river at the same place, and "the iron did swim" (2 Kings 6: 6), and the man recovered it. If we try to work with "borrowed" tools, with "borrowed" understanding, and think that somebody else's understanding will enable us to build for ourselves a wider place, a wider consciousness, we are wrong. But Elisha's understanding of the sixth day, where man has dominion over everything, enabled him to restore the lost understanding.

Later the king of Syria made war against Israel, and time after time Elisha warned the king of Israel of Syria's next move, and so saved him. Here the Syrian armies seem to represent the forces of evil, of aggression, and when we reach Elisha's understanding of the sixth day, it gives us the foresight which enables us to prove that "prevention is better than a cure." Realizing that it was Elisha's spiritual understanding that was preventing him from winning a victory over Israel, the king of Syria determined to capture Elisha. So he sent a great army by night with horses and chariots to surround the city of Dothan where Elisha was living. In the morning, when the prophet's servant got up, he was horrified to see the city encompassed by the hostile army. But Elisha was undaunted. He knew that as the "man of God" he had dominion, and he answered, "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them" (2 Kings 6: 16). As a more modern writer has expressed it, "One on God's side is a majority."

Then he prayed, "Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha" (2 Kings 6: 17). The young man's spiritual understanding was opened so that the

mountain, his exalted thought, was full of spiritual ideas, which, like the horses and chariots of fire which appeared at Elijah's ascension, would burn up, or utterly destroy, all material beliefs, as surely as light destroys darkness. "And when they came down to him, Elisha prayed unto the Lord, and said, Smite this people, I pray thee, with blindness. And he smote them with blindness according to the word of Elisha" (2 Kings 6: 18). Those spiritual ideas had to *come down* to Elisha. It is no use if our spiritual ideas are all up in the air. They must be practical for use in everyday life. Then we can use them to "smite the Syrians with blindness," to prove that the forces of evil are blind, and do not know what they are doing; to give us complete mastery over them. The story then records how Elisha went down to the army of Syrians, and told them they had come to the wrong city, and he led them right into the heart of Samaria, where they were at the mercy of the king of Israel. He proved again that the "man of God" has complete dominion. The king of Israel asked if he should destroy the Syrians, but Elisha forbade this, and told him to set bread and water before them. In the story of Cain and Abel we saw that we could not kill Cain. We cannot use evil to destroy evil. But if we deal with evil through our understanding of good, loving our enemies, and setting before them the bread of Truth and the water of Life, then Cain goes out into the land of Nod, or the Syrians return to their master, and "So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel" (2 Kings 6: 23).

But as if to contradict that statement, the next verse says that "Ben-hadad king of Syria gathered all his host, and went up, and besieged Samaria." Historically the commentaries think this incident probably belonged to an earlier period of Elisha's career, but from our point of view, do these two statements really contradict each other? When we deal with a "band of Syrians" successfully so that we really see through that particular problem, then that difficulty "comes no more into the land." But other kings may rise in Syria,—and continually seem to do so!—and as fast as we deal with one evil, others seem to come up, until at last we reach that state of perfection which enabled Jesus to say at the end of his ministry,

"The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me" (John 14: 30).

Elisha was rapidly approaching that state of consciousness. He had not had to fight the "bands of Syria," but had overcome them by resting in God in the perfection of the seventh day of creation. Now this experience seems to be about the last of "the prince of this world's" attempts to overthrow him, and again Elisha gains a complete victory without fighting. Owing to the siege, there was a terrible famine in Samaria, and there follows the ghastly story of how two women killed and ate one of their sons, and how the king of Israel blamed Elisha, and tried to kill him. What does it mean? There was a famine of spiritual things in Samaria, for they were besieged by "the prince of this world," and, instead of listening to Elisha, they had allowed that "prince" to get a real hold on their thinking,—so complete a hold, that, instead of cherishing and developing such infant spiritual ideas as they had, they were actually preying upon them and devouring them. But Elisha had a true sense of motherhood, and understood how the divine motherhood of God sustains and blesses the whole family of man in the peace and rest of the seventh day of creation. "The prince of this world" found nothing in him, for he knew that the completeness and fulfilment of the seventh day utterly destroy all sense of spiritual famine, and he prophesied that by the same time the following day there would be incredible plenty in Samaria. There was no more warfare. The Israelites never had to fight to drive away the Syrians. The enemy just vanished, leaving behind all that they possessed to enrich the Israelites and to fulfil Elisha's prophecy. "For the Lord had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host: . . . Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, even the camp as it was, and fled for their life" (2 Kings 7: 6, 7).

When Elisha died and was buried,—when to the Israelites his teaching was dead and practically forgotten,—the Moabites invaded the land. "And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band of men; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha: and when the man was

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let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet" (2 Kings 13: 21). Even though Elisha's teaching had been reduced to dry bones by the lack of understanding and inspiration, when it was really touched, it was potent enough to bring to life one who was spiritually dead.

Chapter 17



THE CAPTIVITY

IN the hundred years following Elisha's death there were many kings of Israel, and the chief thing recorded about most of them was that they "did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord." The last of them was Hoshea, and "Against him came up Shalmaneser king of Assyria; and Hoshea became his servant, and gave him presents. And the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea: . . . therefore the king of Assyria shut him up, and bound him in prison. Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria" (2 Kings 17: 3-6). Thus in the year 721 B.C. the kingdom of Israel was utterly destroyed. There follows a list of all the sins which had brought about her downfall.

Meanwhile Judah also had many kings, some good and some bad. At the time of the fall of Israel, Hezekiah was king of Judah, "And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord" (2 Kings 18: 3). This was the time of Isaiah the prophet, and when some years later Assyria followed up the conquest of Israel by invading Judah, Hezekiah appealed to Isaiah for guidance. "And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: . . . So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh" (2 Kings 19: 35, 36).

Hezekiah was succeeded by his son Manasseh and then his grandson Amon, and they both "did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord." It is thought that it was during the reign of Manasseh that the book of Deuteronomy was written, and hidden in the temple for safety. Amon was murdered after only two years reign, and was in turn succeeded by his eight-year-old son Josiah, who "did that which was right in the

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sight of the Lord, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left" (2 Kings 22 : 2).

When Josiah was grown up, he commanded that the temple should be repaired, and it was while this work was in progress that Hilkiah the priest found the book of Deuteronomy, and showed it to Shaphan the scribe, who in turn took it to the king and read it to him.

As soon as Josiah had satisfied himself that it was indeed the Word of God, he collected all the people together to hear it read. "And the king went up into the house of the Lord, and all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the people, both small and great: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the Lord. And the king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all their heart and all their soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people stood to the covenant" (2 Kings 23 : 2-3).

There followed a great purge in the land of Judah, and all the high places and altars erected to other gods were destroyed, and all idolatry removed from the land, and the Mosaic law was put into operation. But it did not last for long, for Josiah was killed in battle, and his son and his grandson "did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord."

These were the days of Jeremiah the prophet, of whom Goodspeed writes in *The Story of the Bible*, "The sin and failure of his people stir Jeremiah to the bitterest outcries; no wonder he has been called the 'Weeping Prophet.' . . . Jeremiah's bold prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple had offended the religious and political feelings of both court and priesthood and involved him in the gravest danger. For a hundred years the inviolability of the Temple had been a cherished Jewish conviction. . . . It was his hard task to distinguish Jewish religion from Jewish national fortunes, and show that they did not stand or fall together; that the Jewish faith did not perish with the Temple, and above all that

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religion is an individual and inner, not a national and outward, possession and experience."

But neither king nor priests nor people would listen to Jeremiah's warnings. They held stubbornly to the belief that Jerusalem was a sacred city, and that neither it, nor the temple within it, could be taken, and that because they held these sacred places, the Jewish nation was safe, however far they departed from the spirit of true worship.

So "Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against Jerusalem, and the city was besieged. . . . And he carried out thence all the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king's house. . . . And he carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour" (2 Kings 24: 10, 13, 14). He also set up a puppet government with Zedekiah as king. This was in 597 B.C.

However Zedekiah rebelled against Babylon, in spite of the advice and admonition of Jeremiah, with the result that some years later Nebuchadnezzar returned with his army, and captured Jerusalem again in 586 B.C. This time his commander-in-chief "burnt the house of the Lord, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house burnt he with fire. And all the army of the Chaldees, that were with the captain of the guard, brake down the walls of Jerusalem round about" (2 Kings 25: 9-10).

So Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed, and all the people of any importance were carried away captive to Babylon, "But the captain of the guard left of the poor of the land to be vinedressers and husbandmen" (2 Kings 25: 12).

But what is this to us to-day? Do we have similar experiences? Certainly in these days we need to learn the lesson that it is never expedient "to do that which is evil in the sight of the Lord." As Tennyson expressed it:

"Because right is right, to follow right
Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence."

We also need to heed Jeremiah's warning. He saw that Jerusalem and the temple would have to be destroyed because to the Jews religion and worship had come to mean the possession of the "holy places," and the carrying out in them

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of various rites and ceremonies; the observance of fasts and feasts; and all the outward signs and symbols, rather than living in accord with God. They believed in mass salvation, and that just because they were descendants of Jacob, they were God's chosen people, favoured above all mankind. Do we not need to remember Jeremiah's warnings about these things to-day? Are we not inclined to think that our particular nation is better than all others? Do we not almost worship the civilization that we have built up with its customs, and traditions, and organizations? Do not many members of all churches and creeds, of trade unions and political parties, etc., believe that theirs is the only road to salvation, and that salvation comes through membership of their organization? Does not the whole trend of life to-day foster mass-thinking, and tend to swallow up individuality? Then our outlook on life is not very different from that of the Jews before the fall of Jerusalem, and unless we take ourselves in hand, and realize that salvation is individual, and that each individual must think for himself or herself, and work out his or her own salvation; that salvation is an individual matter between ourselves and God, and that nobody can tell us what we must believe,—unless we begin to see these things, and live according to them, we shall find that eventually most of our lovely material organizations will come crashing about our heads; that our "Jerusalem" and our "temple" will be destroyed; and we shall find ourselves captives in "Babylon."

As with the Jews, that captivity may prove to be a blessing in disguise, but it is a painful way of learning, and if we listen to, and act upon, Jeremiah's warnings, and work out our own salvation through our own spiritual understanding, then we can do it with joy, instead of being forced into it through suffering and misery.

But what happened to the Jews in Babylon? We have no historical record of that time in the Bible, for the book of Daniel, though supposed to be the story of that period, was written about four hundred years later for the express purpose of encouraging the Jews of the day to resist the terrible persecutions they were undergoing at the time. The lions' den and the burning fiery furnace were symbols of conditions in Judaea

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about 165 B.C. rather than of those in Babylon four hundred years earlier.

However we know from other sources that it was in Babylon as captives, without their temple or any material aids to worship, that the spiritual understanding of the Jewish prophets reached its highest level in any period prior to the time of Jesus. It was to Babylon that Ezekiel was carried as a young captive, and there that he lived and worked. Not only did he write the prophetic book there that now bears his name, but under his leadership the three original Hebrew Documents,—the Jahweh, the Elohist, and the Deuteronomic,—were edited and combined, and the fourth Document,—the Priestly,—was written and interwoven with the others. It was this Document, you may remember, which first introduced the days of creation in the crystallized form in which they now appear at the beginning of the Bible, where the prophets put them as the key to the rest of their writings.

It was also during the captivity that the more historical books of Samuel and Kings were completed, and edited to bring them into line with the whole picture. In fact, we may truly say that had not Jerusalem been captured, and the temple destroyed, we might not to-day possess the Old Testament as we know it with its highly developed spiritual sense; and without the background of the Old Testament, Jesus' work and teaching would not have been possible. And so, what to the Jews appeared to be a national disaster, was transformed by the prophets into one of the greatest blessings the world at large has ever received.

Chapter 18



EZRA

WE NOW come to the return of a remnant of the Jews from the captivity in Babylon, and the story is told in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. But like the stories already considered, the commentaries agree that historically these books are so mixed that they give a very inaccurate account of what really happened, and none of them seems really certain as to whether Ezra returned to Jerusalem before Nehemiah, or Nehemiah before Ezra. Obviously it is another case in which the writers were more concerned with the spiritual significance of the stories than with their historical accuracy. So let us see how they apply to our own lives.

The book of Ezra is in two distinct parts. Chapters 1 to 6 deal with the return of a party of Jews under Zerubbabel,¹ and with the rebuilding of the temple. The second part, chapters 7 to 10, deals with the return of a second party under Ezra, and with how he persuaded those Jews who had returned to put away their foreign wives.

The story opens in the first year of the reign of Cyrus, king of Persia, when "the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? His God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel" (Ezra 1: 1-3). Those who preferred to remain in Babylon were free to do so, but were invited to contribute gold and silver, goods and beasts, to aid the work, while Cyrus himself gave back all "the vessels of the house of the Lord, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem" (Ezra 1: 7). Cyrus heard God saying, "Let there be light,"

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and he encouraged the Jews to be like Abraham and set out to seek for the light as "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11: 10).

There follows a long list of those who returned, and we are told that when they came to Jerusalem, many of them "gave after their ability unto the treasure of the work" (Ezra 2: 69).

"And when the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem. . . . And they set the altar upon his bases; . . . and they offered burnt offerings thereon unto the Lord, even burnt offerings morning and evening. . . . But the foundation of the temple of the Lord was not yet laid" (Ezra 3: 1, 3, 6).

What does it mean to us? Through our lack of spirituality and our blind acceptance of the creeds and traditions handed down to us, we get carried away captive into "Babylon," and the very painfulness of the process wakes us up and makes us turn to the light, to the spiritual, in a way we have never done before. For many of us the captivity lasts for "seventy years,"—until we have learnt to apply something of the sevenfold understanding of God to our human problem. We are then ready to return to "Jerusalem," which is not another place, but a happier and more spiritual state of mind, our spiritual home. There we begin by building an altar on which we offer burnt offerings daily,—on which we daily mentally burn up, or get rid of, those material thoughts and beliefs which we find in our thinking. This takes us "two years,"—it is the using of our "firmament" of the second day.

So we read, "Now in the second year of their coming unto the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, began Zerubbabel . . . to set forward the work of the house of the Lord. . . . And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, . . . they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord; because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever towards Israel" (Ezra 3: 8, 10, 11). Having used our firmament, we are ready to lay the foundations of our "temple," for the "dry land" appears on which we can build it.

But what is the "temple" we have to rebuild? In the last

chapter we saw that the old "temple" had to be destroyed. Why do we now have to build one again? We cannot leave a vacuum, but the new concept has to be something very different from the old. The "temple" that was destroyed was the concept of ritualistic organized religion, with its mass-thinking. Jesus said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. . . . But he spake of the temple of his body" (John 2 : 19, 21). We are now concerned with building up our spiritual body, or "temple," which is an entirely individual concept, built of God's thoughts about us, which we have individually understood and accepted, and which form our consciousness of God. Paul writes of this "temple" or body, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked" (2 Corinthians 5 : 1-3). When the foundations of this house are laid, what a joyous occasion it is! No wonder the writer says that "Many shouted aloud for joy" (Ezra 3 : 12).

However, the "prince of this world" does not allow us to proceed with our building unmolested. "The adversaries of Judah and Benjamin" came and asked to be allowed to help with the building, saying, "we seek your God, as ye do" (Ezra 4 : 2). But Zerubbabel was not deceived, for he knew that the ideas of these people were those of the old temple that had had to be destroyed. Had they helped, the new temple would have been no advance on the old. Besides which, nobody can help us to build our spiritual temple or body. They may bring us materials (ideas) to use in the building, but the actual building has to be done by ourselves individually.

When "the prince of this world" found that his first efforts to spoil the temple failed, then the "adversaries" wrote to Artaxerxes, who is referred to as the king of Persia at the time, but this seems to be historically inaccurate. They told him that the Jews had always been rebellious, and that they were now building up Jerusalem so that they could rebel again. Artaxerxes ordered the building to stop, and "Then ceased the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem.

So it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia" (Ezra 4: 24). Do you remember how, in the story of Elijah, the remembrance of her past sins claimed to slay the son of the widow of Zarephath? It is that same habit of remembering past failings, remembering that we have been a rebellious people, that stops the building of our "temple," and yet how often we indulge in it!

This time the building stopped until the prophets Haggai and Zechariah came and prophesied to the people. They were prophets belonging to the fourth thousand-year period, and acknowledged only the rule of the greater light and lesser light of the fourth day of creation. They recognized God's government as supreme, and urged the people to get on with the building of the "house of God." Tatnai, the governor of the province, asked by what authority they built, and they told him of Cyrus' original decree that the house should be built. So Tatnai wrote to Babylon to confirm this, and Cyrus' decree was found among the records. Then Darius wrote back to Tatnai, saying, "Let the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in his place. Moreover I make a decree what ye shall do to the elders of these Jews for the building of this house of God: that of the king's goods, even of the tribute beyond the river, forthwith expenses be given unto these men, that they be not hindered" (Ezra 6: 7-8).

When we realize that the supreme ruler in our "Jerusalem" is God, and that "the prince of this world" has no authority to stop us building up our understanding of God, and we defy his orders to stop building, we soon find that those orders are rendered null and void, and that circumstances combine, not only to enable us to resume building, but also to provide all the necessary materials in the form of ideas and experiences. For us the waters of the fifth day of creation begin to bring forth abundantly.

"And this house was finished . . . in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king. And the children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy" (Ezra 6: 15-16). So in the sixth day our "house of God," our "temple,"

or "body," "made without hands, eternal in the heavens," is finished. It is our consciousness of man made in God's image and likeness, man reflecting all the God-qualities, as perfect as God Himself. When this spiritual building is complete, we know that "God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Genesis 1: 31).

Then the children of Israel kept the feast of the passover, which was instituted by Moses (see pages 65-66) by which each individual took for himself and his family a lamb typifying the whole Christ, and kept the feast of unleavened bread (absolute sincerity) for seven days. This resulted in the death of the firstborn of Egypt (the Adam man in us) and the end of the bondage in Egypt, and ushers all who really partake of it into the seventh day of peace and rest. Here "The children of the captivity kept the passover upon the fourteenth day of the first month. . . . And kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy: for the Lord had made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel" (Ezra 6: 19, 22).

We now come to the second part of the book of Ezra, and to Ezra himself. This story may belong to the reign of Artaxerxes I about sixty years after the building of the temple, or to the reign of Artaxerxes II about a hundred and twenty years later. It is one of the things on which opinion is very divided, but it makes no difference to the spiritual meaning of the story.

Artaxerxes made a decree, and gave Ezra a letter embodying it, allowing him to return to Jerusalem from Babylon with as many of the Jewish people as wished to go with him, and giving him much treasure to take with him. There follows a list of all those who made up his party. The journey took them four months, "and the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way. And we came to Jerusalem" (Ezra 8: 31-32).

When all the treasure had been handed over in the temple, and Ezra's commission from Artaxerxes examined, "the princes came to me, saying, The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from

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the people of the lands, doing according to their abominations, . . . For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands" (Ezra 9: 1, 2).

Then Ezra rent his garments, and plucked out his hair as a sign of mourning, and prayed to God. "Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children: for the people wept very sore. And Shechaniah . . . answered and said unto Ezra, We have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land: yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my Lord" (Ezra 10: 1-3). So the people gathered together and agreed to put away their strange wives with their offspring, and the book ends with the list of those who did so.

Taken literally this would seem to be a return to the narrowest sense of nationalistic Judaism with its temple organization which had had to be destroyed by the captivity in Babylon. But doubtless you remember that our wives are the ideals to which we have wedded ourselves. Having built for themselves some consciousness of the temple or body "made without hands," the people had slipped back and wedded themselves again to the old beliefs of materiality. Ezra awoke in them a realization of what had happened, and the people were ready to put away again these wrong ideals, with the "children" that had resulted from them, and to return to the purest ideal of which they could conceive. When we have built ourselves a spiritual temple, do not we also constantly need an "Ezra" to remind us to keep our ideal pure, and to prevent us from slipping back into our old habits of mixed thinking?

Chapter 19



NEHEMIAH

NEHEMIAH was cupbearer to Artaxerxes king of Persia, and the story opens when a Jew named Hanani returned to Babylon from Jerusalem, and told Nehemiah of the desolate state of the city, with its walls still broken down, and its gates burnt.

Nehemiah writes, "And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven. . . . Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations: But if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence" (Nehemiah 1: 4, 8-9).

When Nehemiah heard the news, it certainly seemed to him as if "darkness was upon the face of the deep." But immediately, "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (Genesis 1: 2), and he turned to God in prayer, praying for the coming of the light. As it always does, the light came in the form of an idea,—the idea that he would ask the king's permission to go to Jerusalem to build up the walls; and he determined to act upon this idea at once.

"I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king. Now I had not been beforetime sad in his presence. Wherefore the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? this is nothing else but sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid, And said unto the king, Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?" (Nehemiah 2: 1-3). Then he asked the king for leave of absence to go and build up Jerusalem, and for letters to the various governors of the provinces, so that they would let him pass, and also supply

him with the necessary building materials. These were granted, and Nehemiah arrived safely at Jerusalem.

You remember, of course, that Jerusalem in its higher meaning stands for our spiritual home, our consciousness of God, and God's ideas. The wall that encompasses it is our understanding of the seven days of creation. When really understood they furnish an impregnable defence. The gates are the channels through which thoughts and ideas enter and leave the city, and it is here that we need to keep constant watch, and use our "firmament," so that "there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie" (Revelation 21: 27).

There are always, however, some mortal thoughts that are grieved by anything that seeks the welfare of the spiritual idea, and so we read, "When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel" (Nehemiah 2: 10). These thoughts always try to make trouble.

Soon after Nehemiah arrived at Jerusalem, he went out by "night" to view "the walls of Jerusalem, which were broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire" (Nehemiah 2: 13). When we view the broken-down walls (the shattered ideas) and burnt gates of our "Jerusalem," it is nearly always "night." Our thought is troubled and full of doubt and fear.

At that time Nehemiah had told no one what he had in mind, and when a spiritual idea or purpose comes to us, but it is still "night" and we do not see the way clearly, if we are wise, we too shall keep quiet about it until the "day" dawns. But at last Nehemiah was clear enough in his own mind to speak to the people. He used his "firmament" to turn the "night" into the second "day" where he saw God's ideas as good and pure, real and strong, and where he was ready to clear away all the rubble and rubbish of the broken-down walls, and rebuild with God's good thoughts and ideas.

"Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that

we be no more a reproach. Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work" (Nehemiah 2: 17-18).

A whole chapter is then taken up with the names of the various men who worked on the wall, and the particular piece of wall, or the special gate, that each built. In building up our wall, it cannot be done just in a general way with general ideas. Each section of it needs a specific idea to build it if it is to be complete, and ordered, and properly integrated. To take a mathematical example, our wall might be our multiplication tables, but it would be no use to us if we just had a general idea of those tables. They have to be built up of definite idea upon definite idea in an ordered and complete way. They would be useless to us if there were gaps in them, or if some of the numbers were indefinite or out of order.

"But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews" (Nehemiah 4: 1). In the story of Ezra, as soon as the foundations of the temple were laid,—as soon as the "dry land" of the third day appeared,—the "adversaries" did everything they could to hinder the work, and finally stopped it for a time. Here similar attempts are made, the chief enemies being Sanballat and Tobiah. First they tried mockery to discourage the builders, but the work went on uninterrupted. "So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof; for the people had a mind to work" (Nehemiah 4: 6). Half the wall was built. Half the seven days of creation were understood, and the people had reached that critical stage which was symbolized in the stories of Elijah and Elisha by three-and-a-half. "Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall" (Nehemiah 4: 10). This was the danger point, and Sanballat and Tobiah exploited it to the best of their ability, for could they make the Jews stop work now, their objective would be gained.

So they gathered all their allies together, and planned a secret attack upon Jerusalem. But Nehemiah was alert, and

Jews living in the surrounding country warned him of the coming attack, and he armed all the men of Jerusalem, and placed them all round the city, and said to them, "Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord which is great and terrible. . . . And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known to us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work" (Nehemiah 4: 14, 15). The devil is always out to hinder the work of God, but if we take to ourselves "the whole armour of God" (Ephesians 6: 13), and are on the alert, the threatened attack does not come, and we can go back to our work. We should, however, follow Nehemiah's example, for "They which builded on the wall, and they that bear burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon." While building up our positive understanding of God, we should still keep a strong negative in our other hand to use against every wrong thought! Also "neither I, nor my brethren, nor my servants, nor the men of the guard which followed me, none of us put off our clothes, saving that every one put them off for washing" (Nehemiah 4: 17, 23). They were ready night and day for any move by "the prince of this world," being always clothed with their garments of understanding, but not neglecting the need for "washing," for keeping themselves, and their understanding, pure.

It is no use, however, being alert to danger from without if we neglect sins which are within. At this point Nehemiah became aware of the fact that certain Jews were exploiting the difficult conditions, and charging exorbitant prices for food and other necessities, becoming rich at the expense of their brethren, many of whom had to sell their all to pay for the food they needed, and some even having to sell their sons and daughters into slavery.

Nehemiah called the offending Jews together, and "I rebuked the nobles, and the rulers, and said unto them, Ye exact usury, every one of his brother. . . . We after our ability have redeemed our brethren the Jews, which were sold unto the heathen; and will ye even sell your brethren? or shall they be sold unto us? . . . It is not good that ye do: ought ye not

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to walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies? . . . Restore, I pray you, to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their oliveyards, and their houses, also the hundredth part of the money, and of the corn, the wine, and the oil, that ye exact of them. Then said they, We will restore them, and will require nothing of them: so will we do as thou sayest" (Nehemiah 5: 7, 8, 9, 11, 12).

Do we think that that is nothing to do with us, and that we do not exact usury from our neighbours? But what about those critical thoughts about our neighbour? What about the eagle eye we have for his or her faults? Do we not often mentally condemn others, and talk over their failings with our friends, almost gloating over their shortcomings? When we do that we are making them pay heavily for their weaknesses, we are exacting usury, and robbing them of their inheritance as the children of God, and putting them in bondage. Jesus said, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," and "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6: 12, 15). If we find that "Sanballat" and "Tobiah" are persecuting us from without, and trying to hinder our progress, then it behoves us also to look within, and see that we are not exacting usury from others, but are forgiving our debtors. Nehemiah himself did this, and it is recorded of him that he would not even take "the bread of the governor," nor charge his expenses to the people, though this was well within his human rights, "because the bondage was heavy upon this people" (Nehemiah 5: 18).

So far "the prince of this world" had failed to stop Nehemiah's progress, but he was not yet prepared to leave him in peace. Sometimes we get discouraged because we think that we have more than our fair share of troubles, and no sooner do we deal with one difficulty than another pops up. We think that having dealt with the devil in one way, that should be enough. But he seems to have so many aspects, and we really have to deal with each one of them before he "cometh and hath nothing in me" (John 14: 30). When we feel that the struggle is unending, it is encouraging to think that the prophets who wrote these stories knew just what it was like, and showed us through these old Bible characters how, though one difficulty

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arose after another, yet through their faithful alertness and perseverance, they met and mastered each in turn, and eventually won through to the peace and rest of the seventh day of creation.

Now "Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief. And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you? Yet they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same manner" (Nehemiah 6: 2-4). Next they sent him an open letter saying that a report had been sent to the king of Persia that the Jews were thinking of rebelling, and had set a king in Jerusalem, to which Nehemiah replied, "There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart" (Nehemiah 6: 8). Finally Nehemiah went to visit a Jew within Jerusalem, and found him full of stories of fear, and he tried to persuade Nehemiah to take sanctuary in the temple because his enemies were seeking to slay him. But Nehemiah saw that his warning was not from God, but that Sanballat and Tobiah had hired him to try to stop the work. He also realized that there were many nobles in Jerusalem who were in league with Tobiah. Truly he needed unceasing watchfulness!

Nevertheless the walls were eventually finished, and the gates set up, and Nehemiah ordered that they should not be opened in the morning until the sun was hot, and that unceasing watch be kept all through the day until they were closed again in the evening. How necessary it is for us to keep that unceasing watch at the gates of our thought, and to shut them firmly at "night" against darkness, doubt and fear!

Nehemiah then made a register of all those who returned from Babylon. Every idea that has come out of the captivity of Babylon into the freedom of the holy city should be registered in our consciousness, for they are the ideas on which we can rely for help.

Though the walls and the gates were set up, the work was not finished. We build our walls in the first three days of creation; in the fourth day we see how they operate and how

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we can use them; in the last three days we really have to put them into practice.

Nehemiah was now working in the fourth day of creation, and here Ezra also comes into the picture. "And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel" (Nehemiah 8: 1). This "book of the law" was the Priestly Document, first written in Babylon, with which the prophets had combined the three earlier Documents to form the Pentateuch, or first five books of the Bible. It was the first time this had been presented to the people, and though they were familiar with many of the stories, and much of the teaching, never before had it been presented to them in this ordered and systematic way from the standpoint of the days of creation.

The first reaction was that the people wept, but Nehemiah and the priests and Levites pointed out to them that it was an occasion for great joy. "Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto the Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength" (Nehemiah 8: 10). That day they had begun to appreciate something of God's government as set out in the Priestly Document, and as symbolized in the fourth day of creation as the two great lights,—God and His Christ,—which were to rule over the day and over the night. They were indeed eating the fat, and drinking the sweet, but to become "stars" themselves in that fourth day, they must "send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared." They must use what they were receiving by sharing it with others.

This brings us to the last three days of creation where we have to prove what we have already learnt. How are we to do it? Nehemiah shows us that very clearly.

First of all "the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackclothes, and earth upon them. And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins" (Nehemiah 9: 1-2). To enable the waters to multiply and bring forth abundantly for us in

the fifth day, we first have to "fast" from all wickedness, and separate ourselves from all "strangers,"—from all those thoughts and actions which are strangers to God,—which are so unlike God's nature that he knows them not.

There follows a summary of Jewish history from the time of Abraham to the return from captivity, culminating in a solemn covenant which was signed by the princes, priests and Levites. By this covenant the Jews undertook "to walk in God's law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord our Lord, and his judgments and his statutes" (Nehemiah 10: 29). They undertook to keep the fifth statement of the commandments, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain" (Exodus 20: 7).

Then were chosen the men who were to live in Jerusalem, "And the people blessed all the men, that willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem" (Nehemiah 11: 2), for those who live in the spiritual "Jerusalem" are those who know man made in God's image and likeness, and those who chose to live there were those of us who make a real effort to live up to that standard of the sixth day of creation. There follows the dedication of the walls, which means to us the recognition that "God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Genesis 1: 31),—the recognition that the walls of our spiritual consciousness encompass all that is made of God, good, and that nothing can enter that "defileth, or maketh a lie."

Finally the last chapter of Nehemiah shows us how to deal with various sins which are the opposite of the seventh day of creation. They had crept in while Nehemiah was on a visit to the king in Babylon. How often we leave our "Jerusalem" unguarded while we go to visit the "king of Babylon!" And, like Nehemiah, we find that there is a great deal of cleansing necessary when we get back! He found that one of the priests had made an alliance with Tobiah, and "prepared for him a great chamber" actually within the temple. "And it grieved me sore: therefore I cast forth all the household stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber. Then I commanded, and they cleansed the chambers: and thither brought I again the vessels of the

house of God" (Nehemiah 13: 8-9). Nehemiah had thought that he had understood the seventh day when "the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them" (Genesis 2: 1), and that he could rest, but the resting in the Lord is very different from absenting ourselves from "Jerusalem," and leaving our "holy city" open to invasion by any wrong thoughts that may come along.

Nehemiah also found that much work of treading the wine-presses, bringing in the sheaves, and buying and selling was being done on the sabbath, and this also had to be stopped. The rest of the sabbath day, or seventh day, means the recognition that God's creation is perfect and complete, and that we are not personal creators, and have no "work" to do to put God's creation right. Our only "work" is to let God use us. Jesus knew this, and he said, "I can of mine own self do nothing" (John 5: 30), and, "the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works" (John 14: 10). When we forget ourselves, and are inspired of God in all that we do, then our work is no longer labour, but rest, resting in the Lord, and we are keeping the sabbath in its true meaning.

Lastly Nehemiah found, as did Ezra, that the people had taken "strange wives,"—had wedded themselves to impure ideals,—and this sin, too, must be cleansed, and our ideals rendered absolutely pure before we can enjoy the perfection and rest of the seventh day of creation.

"Thus cleansed I them from all strangers,"—from all impure thoughts. "Remember me, O my God, for good" (Nehemiah 13: 30, 31), or, as we should probably say, Help me to remember You, O God, that I may be wholly good.

Chapter 20



CONCLUSION

THUS we come to the end of what might be called the "historical" books of the Old Testament, which give the story of the Hebrew people, though, as we have seen, they are far from being historically accurate. The prophetic books are a study in themselves, and demand a more advanced understanding of Hebrew symbolism than has been attempted in this book.

The New Testament would also demand at least another volume. It is a continuation and expansion of the same story, and the basis of all Jesus' teaching will be found to be the sevenfold nature of God as symbolized by the prophets in the seven days of creation.

To many readers this book must have presented the Bible story from an entirely new viewpoint. Many of the books which have helped the writer in her study have been mentioned from time to time in the text. But those to which she is particularly indebted, and from which she gained this line of approach, are *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy, and *Weekly Talks on the Science of the Bible* by John W. Doorly.

It was Mrs. Eddy who first saw in this age the significance of the days of creation as the "Key to the Scriptures." After a life-time given to the study of the Bible, she gave the world an answer to the question, "What is God?" in the following words: "God is incorporeal, divine, supreme, infinite Mind, Spirit, Soul, Principle, Life, Truth, Love" (*Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, p. 465). Here, in these seven names for God, which she found through her Bible study, she summed up wonderfully the seven aspects of God's nature as presented by the prophets in the days of creation, and elaborated throughout the Bible. This is the definition of God which has come to mean so much to the writer, expanding and filling out her

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original definition of God as good, for these seven names include an infinite range of ideas.

Let us conclude by taking these seven names for God, and seeing how they apply to the days of creation, following each with a summary of the way in which that idea of God was developed in some of the stories we have considered. Readers who are interested will find that they can summarize many more of these and other Bible stories under the same seven headings

I. MIND

In the first day of creation, God said, "Let there be light." The light was God's thoughts, coming to us as ideas, and as they unfolded to us, "creation" seemed to be taking place. We saw that light as ideas of intelligence, wisdom, knowledge, dispelling the darkness of ignorance. Could there be a better name for this aspect of God's character than the divine, infinite Mind? In the Adam story this same Mind operated to dispel the mist of wrong thinking, and drive the "Adam" (which Paul describes as the carnal mind) out of each one of us.

The Commandments. In the first statement of the commandments, it was the divine Mind which brought the children of Israël out of the darkness and bondage of ignorance, typified by Egypt.

Abraham. The infinite intelligence of God as Mind made Abram leave the darkness of ignorant heathenism, typified by Ur of the Chaldees, to look for the light of an intelligent understanding of God.

Samuel. Hannah prayed to God, who is the Parent Mind, for the light of a spiritual idea, which came to her as the infant Samuel.

David. To David, the shepherd, looking after his flock of thoughts, God as the divine Mind was very near and real.

Elijah. By the brook Cherith, the ravens (his lowest thoughts and beliefs) fed Elijah until they led him to some knowledge of God as Mind. Then the brook dried up, and the ravens left him.

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II. SPIRIT

In the second day of creation, God said, "Let there be a firmament . . . and let it divide the waters from the waters." This firmament is the recognition that God is absolute good,—a sense of purity which enables us to separate between good and evil. From many Biblical passages, such as "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing" (John 6: 63), Mrs. Eddy adopted the name "Spirit" for this aspect of God. Does not this quotation from John sum up exactly the lesson of Noah and his ark? Noah used the firmament of Spirit to destroy the beliefs of the flesh.

The Commandments. The second statement of the commandments is "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20: 3). The one God who is to be All-in-all to us must be spiritual, Spirit, and not mixed up with matter or the flesh.

Abraham. Lot represented the material side of Abram, and Abram himself his spiritual side. It was the firmament of Spirit which enabled Abram to separate himself from Lot,—from the beliefs of the flesh.

Samuel was dedicated from birth to serve Spirit, not matter.

David destroyed Goliath (materiality) through his understanding of the supremacy of God as Spirit.

Elijah was fed and housed at Zarephath by a widow,—by one who had been forced to turn to God as Spirit, and to spiritual things, through losing her husband of materiality.

III. SOUL

In the third day of creation, God said, "Let the waters . . . be gathered together . . . and let the dry land appear." Let the ideas of good become definite and identified to us. Does not this reveal to us the Soul of God? When Moses saw God as I AM THAT I AM he found the identity of the Soul of God through his own soul (spiritual sense).

The Commandments. In the third statement of the commandments, as we identify ourselves with the sinless Soul of God, we dispense with all graven images, and no longer suffer from a sense of penalty.

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Abraham. As Abram's spiritual understanding became definite, he was renamed Abraham. He identified God as Soul, and found his own soul (spiritual sense).

Samuel. Hannah sang a song of rejoicing when she found her soul through identifying Samuel to minister to the God who is Soul.

David. When Saul persecuted him, it was David's Soul-sense that kept him safe, as can be seen by reference to many of his Psalms.

Elijah. When the widow's son died, Elijah was able to resurrect him through his understanding of God as Soul, so that "the soul of the child came into him again."

IV. PRINCIPLE

In the fourth day of creation, God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven . . . the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night." The whole Bible passage for this day gives a wonderful picture of the government of God and His Christ. We talk about the principle of music, or the principle of mathematics, meaning the fundamental laws and rules which operate to make music, or to demonstrate mathematics. What better name than the divine Principle could Mrs. Eddy have adopted for God as the fundamental basis of government, for ever operating and demonstrating Itself in the universe of ideas?

The Commandments. In the fourth statement of the commandments, those who "keep my commandments" are those who have understood the Principle which underlies those commandments, and so can obtain the "mercy" of a correct solution to all their problems.

Abraham caught a glimpse of God as the divine Principle which governs the universe as one universal family. He saw God as Father, Son, and Mother.

Samuel, when the Lord called him, was beginning to understand something of God as the underlying Principle governing all things.

David's understanding of God as Principle and His governing rules, made him the best king in the whole history of the Israelites.

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Elijah. Had Elijah not understood the Principle of God's government, he would not have been able to meet and overcome the prophets of Baal.

V. LIFE

In the fifth day of creation, God said, "Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven." Fish, the most prolific form of life, are used here and elsewhere in the Bible to give the sense of abundant life. Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10: 10). He also said, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17: 3). To Jesus the only source of life was God; and so this aspect of God which gives abundant life, and exalts thought to rise above the mortal into eternity, where there is neither time nor age, and where God's ideas are without beginning or end, may well be described as eternal Life.

The Commandments. In the fifth statement of the commandments, when we relinquish a material sense of life for the Life divine, we no longer "take the name of the Lord [our] God in vain." We are fruitful and multiply, and we get results.

Abraham's sense of God as Life brought multiplication, and Isaac, the promised son, was born.

Samuel. When Samuel was able to lift the thought of the people to some understanding of God as Life, the Philistines (the belief of life in matter and reliance on material things) were subdued.

David saw something of eternal Life with its continuity and abundance when he received the promise that his house and his kingdom (the kingdom of the Christ) should be established for ever. He refers to God as "the living God," or God as Life.

Elijah's understanding of God as Life, giving abundant life to everything, brought the rain of inspiration which ended the drought, and brought fresh life to the people of Israel.

CONCLUSION

VI. TRUTH

In the sixth day of creation, God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion" over everything. This is where the truth about God and the truth about man really become apparent, so what better name could there be for this aspect of God than Truth? Moses speaks of God as "a God of truth and without iniquity" (Deuteronomy 32: 4), and Pilate asked, "What is truth?" Had he understood God as Truth, he would have understood the perfect man when Jesus was brought before him.

The Commandments. In the "six days" of the sixth statement of the commandments, we "labour and do all [our] work." We learn to know God as Truth, which shows us the truth about everything.

Abraham's understanding of God as Truth, expressed as the truth about man, made him part with Ishmael, the mortal sense of man, and concentrate upon Isaac, his concept of the true man.

Samuel. The people demanded a king. They were really looking for Truth, the truth about God, and the truth about man, but they mistook this longing for a desire for a material king.

David. Combining, as he did, both male and female qualities, David demonstrated man made in God's image and likeness more than anyone else in that age. He reflected God as Truth.

Elijah. It was the "still small voice" of God as Truth, telling him the truth about everything, which showed Elijah the powerlessness of the destructive forces of the wind, the earthquake, and the fire. It showed him the truth about man as the seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed to Baal.

VII. LOVE

In the seventh day of creation we read, "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. . . . And [God] rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made." God's creation is seen to be complete and perfect, and a sense of peace and rest and security encompasses thought,

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such as a small child feels when it rests in the comfort and safety of its mother's arms. What word could describe this aspect of God better than Love? John says, "God is Love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. . . . There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear" (1 John 4: 16, 18). Isaiah, writing of this aspect of God, says, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee" (Isaiah 49: 15). Also, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you" (Isaiah 66: 13).

The Commandments. In the seventh statement of the commandments, when we realize that the Creator of all things real is the God who is Love, the infinite Mother of the universe who does all things well, then we rest in the sabbath day, realizing that Love could create nothing unlike itself, nothing discordant; and this realization removes all conflict from our thought.

Abraham's understanding of God as Love saved him from sacrificing Isaac.

Samuel. David, whom Samuel anointed as king, showed by his love and gentleness that he understood God as Love.

David's sense of God as Love is clearly brought out in many of his Psalms.

Elijah. The understanding of the perfection of the God who is Love eventually enabled Elijah to rise above all materiality, and to ascend.

Thus we see the development of the light of the sevenfold understanding of God shining through the stories of the Old Testament, and we may conclude with the words of St. John, "These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another" (1 John 1: 4-7).