

G. H. Pember

A Short Biography

George Hawkins Pember matriculated at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, in 1856; took the B.A. in 1860, being placed in the Second Class Classical Tripos; and his M.A. in 1863. He died July 5, 1910, in his seventy-third year. He studied the classics in his unconverted days for his own glory, but since his conversion he sought to use the knowledge so gained for the good of God's church. How extensive and accurate was his classical knowledge, and how very widely he had read, may be seen in The Great Prophecies and in Earth's Earliest Ages.

"He was preeminently a teacher of teachers, and one of the best exponents of prophetic Scripture during his period, so rich in great teachers of the Word of God".

~ G. H. Lang

"This is a book of distinct and conspicuous mark on the exhaustless theme of Scripture Prophecy. It is evident that the conscientious labour and thought of years are embodied in the volume. While the author shows that he has studied with care the literature of his subject, he has at the same time wrought out an independent scheme of interpretation marked by great comprehensiveness and self-consistency."

~ United Presbyterian Magazine

"Pember was one name (among two or three) that dominated prophetic study in the Victorian age, a writer foremost in scholarship, in expository insight, in literary clarity, who had the added gift of interpreting facts in the light of Scripture; and Earth's Earliest Ages was to many of us a key book in our earlier years."

"One of the deplorable facts of today is the disappearance of these giants, and even of their works, with few if any to take their place; and the value of this present volume becomes correspondingly greater as it gives to the present generation a summary of one who knew his Bible, and fearlessly stated a drama of all-comprehensive gravity now obviously at the doors."

~ D. M. Panton

"One of the most valuable expositions of prophecy ever published. It is written in a popular and interesting style, and handles with masterly discriminating, scholarly research, and eloquent description the principal prophecies of the Bible."

~ Prophetic News

The Days of Noah

By G.H. Pember

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Footnote numbering adjusted from the original.

The sixth chapter of Genesis contains an account of the days of Noah, a description of momentous interest to us: for our Lord has declared that a similar epoch of worldliness will at length exhaust the forbearance of God towards the present dwellers upon earth, and cause Him to come with fire, and with His chariots like a whirlwind, to render His anger with fury, and His rebuke with flames of fire; to plead with all flesh by fire and by His sword (Isa. lxvi. 15, 16).

It becomes, therefore, an obvious duty to consider the progress of wickedness and corruption among the antediluvians, so far as it has pleased God to inform us of it: to acquaint ourselves not merely with the sowing but also with the watering, the growth, and the ripening, of that hideous crop against which the gleaming sickle of the Almighty at length flashed forth from heaven; to note the various incentives to evil as they successively appeared, and to observe the particular influence of each upon the rapidly decomposing masses of society. For by so doing we shall arm ourselves against the errors and temptations which are daily multiplying around us, and be enabled to discern the threatening signs of our own times.

Now the first-mentioned characteristic of those former days of wickedness and peril is the rapid increase of population (Gen. vi. 1); a circumstance which in itself has ever tended not merely to diffuse but at the same time to intensify sin. For every form of evil which exists in thinly populated countries will also be found where men have multiplied; where there are countless vices peculiar to crowded districts. And, if they are numerous, men support each other in rebellion, and are prone to become far more daring and defiant of God. Among ourselves, the strongholds of rationalism and atheism are always to be found in large cities.

But while the families of the earth were thus increasing in number, they were at the same time making vast progress in civilization and knowledge. Cain had taught them to settle in communities and build cities (Gen. iv. 17); and the sons of Lamech—speedily followed, no doubt, by many others—

had introduced the mechanical and fine arts, and had devised unlawful means of evading the labour imposed by the curse (Gen. iv. 20-22). And in that age, when, instead of being cut off at three score and ten or four score, men lived on for nearly a thousand years, their immense accumulation of knowledge, experience, and skill must have advanced science, art, and the invention and manufacture of all the appliances of a luxurious civilization, with a rapidity to us almost inconceivable.¹

The one recorded specimen of antediluvian industry, the ark, was built by a Sethite; and yet it equalled in size the Great Eastern, the ship which but a few years ago afforded such marvel to ourselves.

And doubtless many of the mighty labours accomplished by the earlier descendants of Noah may be considered to have sprung from reminiscences of pristine grandeur, and fragments of lore, handed down by forefathers who had passed a portion of their existence in the previous age of human glory and depravity. Such may have been the daring conception of a literally cloud-capped tower; the stupendous and splendidly decorated edifices of Babylon and Nineveh; and the wondrous structure of the first pyramid, involving, as it apparently does, an accurate knowledge of astronomical truth which would seem to have been at least on a level with the vaunted advances of modern science. For all these great efforts, be it remembered, were in progress during the lifetime of Shem, and probably in that of his brothers also.

Nor must we forget recent discoveries in regard to the primeval civilization of the Accadians, "the stunted and oblique-eyed people of ancient Babylonia," whose very existence was unknown to us fifty years ago. Their language was dying out, and had become a learned dialect, like the Latin of the Middle Ages, in the twenty-seventh century before Christ. And yet so great had been their intellectual power that the famous library of Agadé, founded by Sargon I [2650 B.c.] was stocked with books "which were either translated from Accadian originals or else based on Accadian texts, and filled with technical words which belonged to the old language." A catalogue of the astronomical department, which has been preserved, contains a direction to the reader to write down the number of the tablet or book which he requires, and apply for it to the librarian. "The arrangement," says Sayce, "adopted by Sargon's librarians

¹ (This suggestion as to life before the Flood has been confirmed by knowledge since gained from the lower strata of Mesopotamia. I have substituted "twenty seventh" for Pember's "seventeenth century").

must have been the product of generations of former experience.”

Could we have a stronger proof “of the development of literature and education, *and of the existence of a considerable number of reading people in this remote antiquity?*”

According to Berosus there was an antediluvian “Town of Books” in Babylonia; and Sisuthrus, the Chaldean Noah, “is made to bury his books at Sippara before the Deluge, and to disentomb them after the descent from the Ark.” But, apart from tradition, we have evidence that in very early times there were well-known libraries at Erech, Ur, Cutha, and Larsa, to which observatories and universities were attached (see Sayce’s *Babylonian Literature*).

If, then, we give but fair weight to these considerations, we seem compelled to admit that the antediluvians may have attained to a perfection in civilization and high culture which has scarcely yet been recovered, much as we pride ourselves upon our own times.

Since we have no further mention of the Cainites as a separate tribe, and since of the Sethites—who must also have increased in numbers—but one person was translated to God from the evil to come, and only eight were saved through that evil, it is clear that the two families had at length mingled and intermarried. Seduced, probably, by the intellectual pursuits, the gay society, and the easy life, of the wicked, the Sethites first found a pleasure in their company, their luxuries, and their many skillful and ingenious inventions; were then enticed to yoke themselves unequally with unbelievers; and so, being drawn into the vortex of sin, disappeared as a separate people.

Sad and instructive was the result of this amalgamation: for when the time of dividing came, no true worshippers of Jehovah were to be found save in the single family of Noah. Men seem to have so prized their own wisdom, to have thought so little of God, that their religion had dwindled to a mere hero-worship of their own famous leaders (Gen. vi. 4), those who, Prometheus-like, brought to them by their inventions the necessaries and comforts of life, and so enabled them for the time to foil the purposes of the Supreme Power.

Then a new and startling event burst upon the world, and fearfully accelerated the already rapid progress of evil. “The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose” (Gen. vi. 2). These words are often explained to signify nothing more than the intermarriage of the descendants of Cain and

Seth; but a careful examination of the passage will elicit a far deeper meaning.

When *men*, we are told, began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, the sons of God saw the daughters of *men* (Gen. vi. i, 2). Now by “men in each case the whole human race is evidently signified, the descendants of Cain and Seth alike. Hence the “sons of God” are plainly distinguished from the generation of Adam.

Again, the expression “sons of God (Elohim)” occurs but four times in other parts of the Old Testament, and is in each of these cases indisputably used for angelic beings.

Twice in the beginning of the Book of Job we read of the sons of God presenting themselves before Him at stated times, and Satan also comes with them as being himself a son of God, though a fallen and rebellious one (Job. i. 6; ii. 1).

For the term sons of Elohim, the mighty Creator, seems to be confined to those who were directly created by the Divine hand, and not born of other beings of their own order. Hence, in Luke’s genealogy of our Lord, Adam is called a son of God (Luke iii. 38). And so also Christ is said to give to them that receive Him power to become the sons of God (John i. 12). For these are born again of the Spirit of God as to their inner man even in the present life. And at the resurrection they will be clothed with a spiritual body, a building of God (2 Cor. v. 1); so that they will then be in every respect equal to the angels, being altogether a new creation (Luke xx. 36).

The third repetition of the phrase occurs in a later chapter of Job, where the morning stars are represented as singing together, and the sons of God as shouting for joy, over the creation of our earth (Job. xxxviii. 7).

And, lastly, the same expression is found in the Book of Daniel (Dan. iii. 25) ; but in the singular number, and with the necessary difference that *bar* is the word used for son instead of *ben*, the singular of the latter being unknown in Chaldee. Nebuchadnezzar (correct spelling is Nebuchadrezzar) exclaims that he sees four men walking in the midst of the fire, and that the form of the fourth is like a son of God,² by which he evidently means a supernatural or angelic being, distinct as such from the others.

It appears, therefore, that in the Old Testament the title “sons of God” is restricted to angels.³ Several, passages are

² There is no definite article in the original.

³ This is the view taken by Josephus, Philo Judæus, and the authors of “The Book of Enoch” and “The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs”; indeed, it was generally accepted by learned Jews in the early centuries of the Christian era. In regard to the Septuagint, all MSS. render the Hebrew

indeed adduced to prove its application to men: but upon examination they will all be found wide of the mark, the words of the original being in every case different, and sometimes signifying sons of Jehovah

This last, as we have already seen, is a very different expression, and would probably have been used by the inspired historian in the verse under our consideration if he had wished to distinguish the godly descendants of Seth from the Cainites. For, while it forms a true description of all saints upon earth, it would have been in this place peculiarly appropriate to the Sethites just after the mention of the fact that they had been wont from the birth of Enos to call upon the name of Jehovah.

It thus appears that the sons of God are angelic beings: and the mysterious statement respecting them in the sixth chapter of Genesis seems to refer to a second and deeper apostasy on the part of some of the High Ones on high. But these more daring rebels are not found among the spirits of darkness which now haunt the air. They no longer retain their position as principalities and powers of the world, or even their liberty; but may be identified with the imprisoned criminals of whom Peter tells us that, after they had sinned, God spared them not, "but cast them down to Hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment."⁴ Jude also mentions their present condition in similar terms (Jude 6), and the context of either passage indicates with sufficient clearness the nature of their sin. They chose to leave their own world and, having broken

"sons of God "by" angels of God "in Job i. 6, and ii. 1, and by "My angels" in Job xxxviii. 7 — passages in which there was no dogmatic reason for tampering with the text. In Gen. vi. 2, 4, the Codex Alexandrinus and three later MSS. exhibit the same rendering, while others have " sons of God." Augustine, however, admits that in 'his time the greater number of copies read "angels of God " in the latter passage also (De Civit. Dei, xv. 23). It seems, therefore, extremely probable that this was the original reading; and certainly the interpretation which it involves was adopted by the majority of the earlier christian writers. Those who would pursue this subject further can do so in a recent and exhaustive treatise by the Rev. John Fleming, entitled, *The Fallen Angels and the Heroes of Mythology*. [See also our Appendix.]

⁴ 2 Peter ii. 4. We have given the words of the Authorized Version, but the following would be a more literal rendering of the original. "For if God spared not angels when they had sinned, but cast them down to Tartarus, and committed them to pits of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." Tartarus appears to be a place of imprisonment more terrible than Hades, but it cannot be the Lake of Fire and Brimstone, the flames of which are to be kindled specially for the Beast and False Prophet, the first who will be cast into it. Compare Isa. xxx. 33 with Rev. xix. 20. In the Greek mythology, Tartarus was a dark abode of woe, as far beneath Hades as Earth is below Heaven (Hom. II. viii. 16) — a description which fairly corresponds to Peter's "pits of darkness." very significant, too, is the fact that it was thought to be the prison of Cronos and the rebel Titans.

through God's limits into another, to go after strange flesh; therefore He dashed them down at once to His lowest dungeons as an instant punishment of their impious outrage, and to deprive them for ever of the power of producing further confusion.

The verse following the announcement of the angels' sin is a parenthesis of solemn import (Gen. vi. 3): the scene is for a moment shifted from the fearfully increasing wickedness of earth and transferred to the Heaven of heavens. There the invisible God sits enthroned and, looking down upon the rebellion and sin beneath Him, pronounces sentence of doom upon the unconscious world. The end must come: His spirit shall not always strive with men, seeing that they are irrecoverably overpowered by the desires of the flesh: yet they shall have a further respite of one hundred and twenty years.

Then the history is resumed with a brief hint at the cause which led to intermarriages between the sons of God and the daughters of men, both before and after the flood (Gen. vi. 4). Our translators have again omitted a definite article in the beginning of this verse, which should be rendered, "The Nephilim—or fallen ones—were on the earth in those days, and also afterwards, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men."

Through a misapprehension of the Septuagint, which we will presently explain, the English version renders *Nephilim* by "giants." But the form of the Hebrew word indicates a verbal adjective or noun, of passive or neuter signification, from *Naphal*, to fall: hence it must mean "the fallen ones," that is, probably, the fallen angels. Afterwards, however, the term seems to have been transferred to their offspring, as we may gather from the only other passage in which it occurs. In the evil report which the ten spies give of the land of Canaan, we find them saying: "All the people which we saw in it were men of great stature. And there we saw the Nephilim, the sons of Anak, descended from the Nephilim: and we seemed to ourselves as grasshoppers, and so we did to them" (Numb. xiii. 32, 33).

It was doubtless the mention of the great stature of these men, together with the Septuagint rendering "gigantes," that suggested our translation "giants." The roots of the Greek "*gigas*" have, however, no reference to great stature, but point to something very different. The word is merely another form of "*geenees*": it signifies "earth-born," and was used of the Titans, or sons of Heaven and Earth—Coelus and Terra—because, though

superior to the human race, they were, nevertheless, of partly terrestrial origin. The meaning of “giants” in our sense of the term, is altogether secondary, and arose from the fact that these beings of mixed birth were said to have displayed a monstrous growth and strength of body. It will, therefore, be apparent that the rendering of the Septuagint correctly expresses the idea which was in the mind of the translator, since he appears to have taken *Nephilim* in each case to signify the offspring of the sons of God and the daughters of men. We, however, as we have explained above, prefer understanding the word primarily of the fallen angels themselves.

Now, in speaking of the sin of some of these, Jude (Jude 6) tells us that, despising the position of dignity and responsibility in which God had placed them, they voluntarily left their own home⁵ in the Kingdom of the Air, prompted it would seem by earthward desires, and began to exercise an unlawful influence over the human race. And, perhaps, as a punishment, their return was prohibited; they were banished altogether from heaven and confined to the limits of earth; just as Satan and the remainder of his angels will be hereafter, a short time before the appearing of Christ to cast them into the still lower abyss.

But, however this may be, they were from some cause dwelling upon earth at the time, and the fact is apparently mentioned to account for their inter-marriages with the daughters of men. If, then, their continued residence below was voluntary, they soon passed on to a far more frightful sin: if, on the contrary, it was penal, instead of humbling themselves under the mighty hand of God, and patiently enduring until He remitted His just punishment, they did not hesitate to defy Him still more daringly, and to violate the law of their being.⁶

The assertion of a similar occurrence after the Deluge agrees with the passage in Numbers where the sons of Anak are said to have been Nephilim, or of the Nephilim (Numb. xiii. 33); and seems also to account for God’s command that the whole race of the Canaanites should be extirpated. For immediately after the commission of the antediluvian sin, the

⁵ [Or, disrobed themselves of the spiritual body proper to them as beings of heaven, and materialized for themselves an earth-body; for the word used, *oikeeteerion*, in the only other place in NT. (2 Cor. v. 2) means the heavenly body with which the believer longs to be clothed.]

⁶ This they did, not merely by consorting with beings of a different order, but also by the very act of marriage itself; since our Lord tells us that, in their normal condition, angels “neither marry,” nor are given in marriage (Matt. xxii. 30).

doom of the world was pronounced: and prophecy intimates that the future confinement of the angels of darkness to earth will be the proximate cause of the great rebellion which will call forth the Lord Jesus in flaming fire to take vengeance (Rev. xii; xiii).

The children of these unlawful connections before the flood were the renowned heroes of old: the subsequent repetition of the crime doubtless gave rise to the countless legends of the loves of the gods, and explains the numerous passages in the Classics, as well as in the ancient literature of other languages, in which human families are traced to a half Divine origin.

Before passing on, we should, perhaps, notice the most common objection to our interpretation, which is, that angels, as spiritual beings, *could* not take wives of the daughters of men. We are, however, unable to recognize the cogency of such an argument, because those who advance it lay claim to a more intimate acquaintance with angelic nature than we can concede as possible. On this point, therefore, we will merely quote a passage from Augustine—an opponent of the angel-theory—containing an admission which has been made by many other writers of various ages and climes, and which, absurd as it may have seemed to ourselves some years ago, is now rendered more probable by the disclosures of modern Spiritualism.

After citing the hundred and fourteenth Psalm to prove that angels are spirits, the great theologian proceeds as follows (*De Civit. Dei*, xv. 23)

“However, that angels have appeared to men in bodies of such a nature that they could not only be seen but even touched, the same most true Scripture declares. Moreover, there is a very general rumour that Silvans and Fauns, who are commonly termed incubi, *improbos sæpe exstitisse mulieribus, et earum appetisse ac peregissee concubitum*. Many trustworthy persons assert that they have had personal experience of this, or that they have been informed by those who have experienced it. And that certain demons, whom the Gauls call *Dusii*, are continually attempting and effecting the crime is so generally affirmed that it would seem impudent to deny it.”⁷

So Augustine. And that Paul had some such thought in

⁷ To the prevalence of this idea we have no slight testimony in the fact that the name of the demons is one of the Celtic words which have survived in our language. It is the origin of the English *Deuse*, or *Deuce*, which is still used in exclamatory or interjectional phrases.

his mind when he bade the woman to worship with covered head “on account of the angels” (I Cor. xi. 10) is, to say the least, within the limits of possibility.

The foundations of established order being thus destroyed by the irruption of the fallen angels, the whole world became corrupt, and its morals were inverted. Men no longer recognized a God to Whom personally all obedience and worship is first due, and Whose equal relation to all men as their Creator imperatively demands from each a love for his neighbour as great as that which he bears to himself. But they judged that whatsoever was pleasant to any man was also right for him; and after thus bursting the bands of God asunder and casting His cords from them, it was not long before they went on to believe that the attainment of a desired end justified every means, that the coveted possession must be secured even if it were necessary to use deceit or violence. Blinded by the selfishness of the flesh, which can see nothing beyond itself, they pursued their several objects without consideration or even thought of their fellows, except when any either stood in the way or might be made subservient. And hence there sprang up a thick crop of frauds and assassinations, of open quarrels and violence, till the whole earth was filled with corruption and bloodshed.

And yet all this seems to have existed side by side with luxury, a refined culture, and a love of art and music. Such minglings of things apparently incongruous have not been infrequent in postdiluvial times. The profligacy, immorality, and sensuous intellectuality of Athens is an example.

A parallel might also be sought in the descriptions given by Tacitus, Juvenal, and others, of the times of the Cæsars. For then the whole body of society was corrupted, and even the streets of Rome were accustomed to violence. And yet the worst of vices, the most absolute immorality, the most profligate gluttony, the most wanton cruelty, prevailed in company with a splendid magnificence, a high appreciation of music, sculpture, and art generally, and a taste for literature, and especially for poetry, so great that recitations and readings were a common amusement. A very characteristic production of this age was the philosopher Seneca, who has been lately termed a seeker after God, on account of his books on morals, but who did not find the writing of beautiful sentiments any hindrance to a life of shocking depravity, and who presented to the world, as the fruit of his combined teaching and example, the proverbial monster Nero.

Nor were the times of Leo the Tenth [Pope 1513-1521] without resemblance to the days of Noah; when that famous Pontiff, seated amid every possible sensuous and intellectual refinement, and surrounded by the most brilliant cluster of stars that has ever adorned the firmament of art, exclaimed: "This Christianity! how profitable a farce it has proved to us!" When, in a time which produced paintings, sculpture, and architecture, still marvels to the world, the sun as it rose day by day would expose the floating corpses of the assassinated in the Tiber; and infidelity and lawlessness kept such rapid pace with the culture of the beautiful that even Machiavelli [d. 1527], who will not be accused of too tender a conscience, declared that Italy had lost all principles of piety and all religious feeling; that the Italians had become a nation of impious cut-throats.

Such, though on a far greater scale, was the wickedness of the antediluvian world. But the end was approaching. God looked down a second time upon the spreading demoralization beneath Him (Gen. vi. 5-7), and saw that it would be necessary, at the close of the years of respite, to sweep man and beast, creeping thing and fowl, from the face of the earth.

Yet a third time the Creator beheld, and lo! evil had made such fearful progress that all flesh had corrupted its way upon earth (Gen. vi. 12-21). Then He foretold the impending ruin to Noah, who alone found grace in His sight, and instructed him how he might avoid the universal doom. The commands laid upon the patriarch were a strong trial of his faith. He was to proclaim the speedy coming of a catastrophe which to unbelievers would appear simply irrational, of an overwhelming flood which should sweep away all life from the face of the whole earth.

It may be that men felt a momentary uneasiness at the first utterance of this prophecy of woe. Discussion may have taken place similar to those among ourselves, when the conjectured possibility of a collision between the earth and Donati's comet caused a brief anxiety to those who believed in it. But, this qualm over, we can readily picture to ourselves the contempt and derision which must have been poured upon the prophet. Our own times will teach us how the men of science soon proved that such a thing as a universal flood was an absolute impossibility, contrary to all the known laws of nature. And since Noah persisted, the world doubtless settled down into a belief that he was a weak-minded fanatic, void of intellect, and altogether unworthy of notice.

But Noah was not only directed to foretell the approaching

doom: he was also bidden to make open preparations for avoiding it, preparations, too, of vast magnitude, and such as must have attracted general attention. And a grievous burden it undoubtedly was to endure the scoffs and deridings with which he must have been continually assailed while building his immense ship on the dry land, far, it may be, from any water; but by faith he persevered, and at last the days of his trial drew on to their close.

None had listened to his warnings: not one beyond the inner circle of his own family was accounted worthy to be saved. But the ark was now completed, and he was instructed to enter it with his wife, his sons and their wives, and all the creatures which were impelled by God to go with him. He was at no loss to understand the significance of the command; he knew well that the wrath of God was being restrained only till those who should be saved had been taken out of the way; and we can imagine his feelings as he watched the long procession slowly filing into the ark, and at length followed in its rear, leaving the unconscious world, friends and foes alike, in the inexorable grasp of destruction.

And yet, as our Lord Himself tells us, the doomed multitudes knew it not. They had often heard, but had refused to listen: the voice of the prophet had seemed to them as the voice of one that mocked. Even on the morning of the fatal day, earth resounded with the noise of revelry and merriment: men were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage: they were absorbed in the pleasures of the moment and discerned not the slowly rising spectre of Death amid the gathering clouds, the destroyer, with uplifted scythe, about to mow down all flesh at one fell stroke.

But their dream of security was at length rudely dispelled. On the day in which Noah entered into the ark the windows of heaven were opened, and the waters that were above the firmament began to descend. The world wondered; and then, remembering the words of Noah, trembled at the fast falling raindrops, the first they had ever beheld.⁸

Nor was this all. A fearful roaring from the sea announced that some mighty convulsion, equally beyond the calculation

⁸ In Gen. ii. 5, 6, we are told that the LORD God had not caused it to rain, but that a mist went up from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground. Probably this state of things continued until the flood, when the windows of heaven were for the first time opened. The rainbow must have been a new phenomenon when it was given as a token to Noah the words of God imply as much. Besides which, had the bow been seen before the flood, its subsequent reappearance could never have suggested security. But if there was no rainbow, there could scarcely have been rain.

of the scientific men of the day, had commenced in the great deep. All its sealed fountains were bursting up: God had removed the bounds of ocean: its proud waves were no longer stayed, but were rising with prodigious tumult, and beginning to advance again upon the dry land.

What scenes of horror must have been presented beneath the dismal rainfall at this awful time! What affrighted groups! What countenances of dismay! What shrieks of terror! What faintings for fear! What headlong flights to any place which appeared to offer safety for the moment!

Yet the mercy of God seems even then to have been mingled with His judgment His mercy devised a doom which, though inexorable and complete, was, nevertheless, not instantaneous, but gave time for repentance before death, that by the destruction of the flesh the spirits of many might be saved.

The waters continued to increase: the ark was upborne upon them and earth was again almost as it had been before the six days of restoration, covered above its highest mountain tops with a shoreless ocean

Woeful was the proof that man, if unrestrained, if left to his own devices, is not merely incapable of recovering his innocence, but will rush madly down the steep of sensuousness and impious self-will until he finds himself engulfed in the abyss of perdition. The trial of freedom had failed: the second of the ages was ended.

"As it was in the days of Noah"

We have just endeavoured to trace the flow of history from its source to the great catastrophe which swept corruption and violence from the earth. We have seen its clear spring proceeding from the throne of the Everlasting God, and have then lost sight of it as it wound its way through vast regions that may not be trodden by mortal foot. Once or twice we have climbed an accessible height, and from the distance gazed with strained eyes upon something which sparkled in the rays of God's Word, and which we supposed to be the waters of the river we were seeking; but we could obtain no certain knowledge of the mysterious stream, until we saw its turbid and foaming torrent emerging in fearful cataract from between the dark mountains which concealed its previous course.

We have followed it into a land of delight, in which it gradually calmed and brightened again, while its banks teemed with all that is beautiful and lovely: we have traced it as it passed the limits of that joyous realm, and hurried through dry and barren tracts, with ever increasing volume and rapidity, till at length its agitated waters were violently engulfed in the great ocean of the flood.

We must not, however, dismiss the story of doom which we have just been considering without some reflections on the solemn warning drawn from it by the Saviour. "But as the days of Noah were," is His awful declaration, "so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matt. xxiv. 37-39). Thus the closing scenes of this present age will be a reproduction of the days of Noah: the same intense worldliness, and at last positive inability to care for the things of God, which was displayed by the antediluvians, will also be characteristic of our world when Christ begins the judgments that will quickly culminate in the glory of His appearing.

It seems fair, then, to infer that this second manifestation of

the spirit that worked in them who were disobedient before the flood will be effected by a conjunction of causes similar to that which formerly produced it. And hence, as we have already remarked, it becomes a matter of the greatest practical importance to comprehend those causes: for whenever they are again found to be simultaneously affecting the masses of the world's population, the fact will afford a strong presumption that we are drifting rapidly to the great consummation of wickedness; that the avenging glory of the Lord is about to be revealed, so that all flesh shall see it together.

For us, therefore, the great question is, Are these fatal influences now in operation? Are they more universally characteristic of this epoch than of any other? Mature consideration has impelled many to return an affirmative answer: let us see whether facts warrant us in holding the same view. It is impossible to exaggerate our interest in the investigation. If the present times are only beginning to take the complexion of those of Noah, they send forth a piercing cry of warning, admonishing us to stand with our loins girded about and our lamps burning, waiting for the summons of the Lord. For He will remove His Church, as He removed Enoch, before the wickedness of man has come to its worst. He will take away that which He Himself has called the salt of the earth, and then the corruption of all flesh will go on unchecked, and the world speedily ripen for its doom.

The seven great causes of the antediluvian apostasy have been already noticed, and may be summed up as follows.

- I A tendency to worship God as Elohim, that is, merely as the Creator and Benefactor, and not as Jehovah the covenant God of mercy, dealing with transgressors who are appointed to destruction, and finding a ransom for them.

- II An undue prominence of the female sex, and a disregard of the primal law of marriage.

- III A rapid progress in the mechanical arts, and the consequent invention of many devices whereby the hardships of the curse were mitigated, and life was rendered more easy and indulgent. Also a proficiency in the fine arts, which captivated the minds of men, and helped to induce an entire oblivion of God.

- IV An alliance between the nominal Church and the World, which speedily resulted in a complete amalgamation.

- V A vast increase of population.

VI The rejection of the preaching of Enoch [and Noah], whose warnings thus became a savour of death unto the world, and hardened men beyond recovery.

VII The appearance upon earth of beings from the Principality of the Air, and their unlawful intercourse with the human race.

These causes concurred to envelop the world in a sensuous mist which no ray of truth could penetrate. They brought about a total forgetfulness of God and disregard of His will; and thus, by removing the great Centre Who alone is able to attract men from themselves, rendered the dwellers upon earth so selfish and unscrupulous that the world was presently filled with lewdness, injustice, oppression, and bloodshed. It remains, therefore, for us to consider whether similar influences are now acting upon society.

And certainly we cannot but confess that the first-mentioned cause is eminently characteristic of our times. For in all the professing Churches of Christendom, as well as among Jews, Mahometans, and Pagans, there are countless and ever-increasing multitudes who go in the way of Cain (Jude II), acknowledging the Supreme Being, but not recognizing His holiness and their own depravity, and so denying all necessity of a Mediator between God and man. Many of these are willing to look upon Christ as some great one, and will talk of His wise philosophy and exemplary life: but they neither confess Him to be the Only Begotten Son of the Father, nor feel the need of His atonement. Consequently, they reject His revelation, as an absolute authority at least, trusting rather to the darkness within them which they call light; and thus, closing their eyes to the true relations of man with his Creator, form their own conceptions both of the Deity and of themselves. This involves nothing less than a claim on their part to supreme wisdom and authority: it is moulding an idol out of their own imagination before which to fall down and worship. Nor need we wonder that it leads to a virtual deification of men of transcendent intellect or great renown. Who has not detected the working of this leaven in his own circle? Who has not observed this "pure Theism," as it is called, rising to the surface in all the sects of Christendom?

If the second cause be rightly inferred from the scanty hints given to us, it is also in operation at the present time: for the female sex has certainly commenced a migration into a new sphere and more prominent position. And the looseness in regard to the marriage tie, which has long obtained on the

Continent, is now spreading in England also, as we may see from the records of our recently established divorce courts. Nay, there are not wanting those who, instead of fearing to put asunder that which God has joined, openly affirm that wedlock should be a contract, not for life, but only for so long a time as may be agreeable to the contracting parties.

At the close of the previous dispensation the same sin was frequent among the Pharisees, who held that divorce is permissible for any reason; even, as Rabbi Akibah shamelessly says, "if a man sees a woman handsomer than his own wife." Hence the Lord's continual mention of adultery in His denunciations of the Pharisees: for the marriage after divorce which they legalized, He declared to be criminal. In the wonderful sermon contained in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth chapters of Luke, He brings it forward with a startling abruptness, as a most open and undeniable sin, which would at once convict His hearers of having proved as disobedient to the Law and the Prophets as they were to the Gospel (Luke xvi. i8). We know the punishment which quickly overtook them for this and their many other transgressions. In a few short years their lusts were extinguished in their blood: the fair walls and streets of their city were levelled with the ground: their beautiful temple in which they trusted perished in the flames, and the idolatrous shrine of Jupiter rose insultingly upon its ruins.

Of the third cause, the spread of science, art, and luxury, it is unnecessary to speak: for none will deny that this is a great characteristic of our days: nay, the fact is a common subject of boasting. And alas! how many instances have we of the self-deifying arrogance which frequently arises from a little knowledge of the laws of nature, or a marked success in those arts, sciences, and philosophies which are the delight of cultivated and refined intellects!⁹ With what confidence, too, and carelessness do men settle themselves amid the comforts and indulgences of this luxurious age! Seeing good only in the present life, how little thought do they give to God, how deaf are they to any mention of the World to Come! How incredulous, even if their mouths be not filled with mocking, when they hear but a whisper of that tempest of God's fury which will shortly burst upon the apathetic world, and hurry multitudes away from all that they love into the dungeons of His wrath! (Isa. ii. 12-17; Isa. xxxii. II; Ezek. xxxix. 6)

⁹ For let it not be supposed that these remarks are directed absolutely against the pursuit of science and art. They are only intended to refer to the insubordinate and atheistical spirit which seems too commonly to arise from it.

To reproduce the fourth cause the Prince of this World has long been striving, and certainly now seems near to his victory. It is the natural result of the first error, the denial of our position as sinners before God, as doomed to destruction unless a ransom be found. Let the Church surrender that truth, and what hinders her from living in perfect accord with the World? If the practical teaching of religion be that God is fairly satisfied with our conduct, troubles but little about our sins, highly appreciates our works of virtue, even though pride be their mainspring, and looks with pleasure upon bold deeds and intellectual displays, why should such a theology clash with the cravings of fallen men? How could they hate a deity so like to themselves?

And have we not been describing the creed of vast numbers in the professing Church? Are not the walls of the city of God thus continually broken down before our eyes, so that the stranger may enter at will? Men do indeed frequent their churches and chapels in crowds: they excite a feeling, which they term religious, by grand buildings, by painted windows, by splendid vestments, by gorgeous ceremonies, by beautiful music, by sentimental or intellectual discourses, and by strong sectarian or political convictions. But if they clothe themselves with the semblance of devotion in their worship, they altogether lose this outward distinction in the world, and bewilder those are honestly asking what they shall do to be saved by plunging into all the gaieties, frivolities, Pursuits, and business, of this life, as if they were to remain among them for ever. They act as though God had promised that they at least should not be hurried out of the world as so many of their fellows are, but should have due warning and ample space and *inclination* for repentance (John vi. 44). They seem to be assured that they will never be unexpectedly startled by the dread sentence, "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee" (Luke xii. 20); nor suddenly appalled by the blast of the archangel's trumpet, and the thunder of the voice of God. They have conceded that it is rational to seek contentment and pleasure in an existence of awful brevity, which was only granted to them for the decision of one stupendous question, whether it shall be followed by everlasting life, or by shame and everlasting contempt. The powers of the World to Come have lost their hold upon them, they are even as other men: so many points have been yielded, amusements permitted, and vices condoned, that it is almost impossible to distinguish them from non-professors unless they recite their creed. Nay, some would appear to be holding a doctrine of the ancient Gnostics who,

denying the resurrection, affirmed that, their spirits being saved, they were at liberty to do what they would with the body, inasmuch as after death they would have no further concern either with it or its deeds. And although many are ready to confess that the Christian must take up his cross, yet being thoroughly satisfied that in these modern times the unwearied zeal of Christ and His apostles would be quite out of place, they can by no means find a cross to bear. If, however, God in His anger smite them with sickness, bereavement, disappointment, or loss, they talk of their trials, and comfort themselves with the thought that they are imitating the Lord by enduring troubles which they cannot in any way avoid.

Oh that those who are thus blinded by Satan would consider while there is yet time; would earnestly and prayerfully meditate upon the words of the Lord Jesus, and interpret them by His most holy life! Then would they see the inconsistency of their position, and keenly feel that they have been fulfilling to the letter the prophecy of the last times, that men should have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof (2 Tim. iii. 5). For the world will allow the mere statement of any doctrine, provided no attempt be made to put it into practice. It is only when faith begins to produce works that the Christian is confronted with bitter antagonism; when he feels that he must redeem the time because the days are evil; when, being conscious of a dispensation committed to him, he is impelled to preach the Word in season and out of season, to speak as a dying man to dying men; when he can no longer take part in frivolous gaieties or time-killing pleasures, knowing that such things are but as a painted curtain used by the foul fiend to hide from men the brink of death on which they are walking, until the time comes to tear it away and thrust them over the precipice.

If any be thus earnestly minded, they will have no difficulty in regard to the line of separation: they will quickly find the cross they have to bear: they will feel that, like their Master, they are not of this world, and will indeed have tribulation in it. But let them be of good cheer: for He is at hand, and great will be their joy at His coming.

Nor are the concessions of the nominal Church in point of doctrine less deplorable than those which concern conduct. We have before seen that men were ever prone to soften and corrupt those parts of God's Word which oppose their own thoughts and aspirations. But a strange and impious idea now prevalent is destroying the last vestiges of Biblical authority, and sweeping away every remaining barrier to peace between the professing Church and the World, This is a rapidly growing objection to

what is called dogma. Now did the objection apply only to the too positive assertion by men of their own opinions, the sentiment would be wholesome: but upon inquiry we discover that “dogma “is practically a conventional term for the revelations and commandments of the Most High God. And many who profess a belief in the Bible, instead of strengthening “the things which remain, that are ready to die” (Rev. iii. 2), are never weary of admonishing us to be charitable in regard to those who reject every vital doctrine of Scripture, and even deny the Lord Who bought them. We are told that, provided men be “honest,” all will be well with them at last: that we must not be narrow-minded: that there are other entrances into the fold besides the door (John x. 7): that those are not necessarily thieves and robbers who climb over the wall; but, it may be, bolder and more manly spirits than their fellows.

It is easy to see that by such a line of reasoning all power is extracted from the Scriptures. Instead of being recognized as the living Word of Him Who shall hereafter judge the living and the dead by the things which are written in them, they are regarded merely as an ordinary volume of advice to man, who, in assuming the right to accept or reject them at will, arrogantly places the crown of Deity upon his own head. And thus the great means which God has appointed for the separation of His Church from the World is destroyed: the light which reveals the continual peril and the fearful termination of the broad road is put out, and men go heedlessly on, amused with the trifles of the moment, until they fall headlong into the jaws of the pit.

Upon the fifth cause there is no need to enlarge. For, without troubling the census papers, almost every Englishman could speak of the rapid growth of his own neighbourhood. Nor has the world ever previously beheld so vast an aggregation of human life as that which our metropolis now exhibits. Yet at the same time crowds of emigrants are leaving the country, and filling the solitary places of the earth. And statistics show that the population of almost every part of the world is also increasing.

But, in addition to this, there is a phenomenon of gloomy portent. For, while they multiply, men are also beginning to exhibit impatience of restraint: and, since they are learning to act together, and seem to be growing inflated with reliance on their fancied power, they will probably soon go on to deeds of impious daring. Large organizations, which are no longer confined to the frontiers of one people, forebode a second rebellion of Babel. The time of the shaking of all nations is approaching, and the hearts of many are already failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth.

Let believers consider their ways: for the Lord will shortly descend to see what the children of men are doing.

Whenever the Word of God is faithfully preached it cannot return unto Him void: it will accomplish that which He pleases, and prosper in the thing whereto He sent it (Isa. lv. II): some effect it must produce upon all who hear. It separates the wheat from the chaff: it either draws men nearer to God, or renders them more callous than before, and prepares them for speedy judgment. "For we are unto God," says Paul, "a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are being saved, and in them that are perishing. To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life (2 Cor. ii. 15, 16).

And so the powerful appeals of Enoch, his loud calls to repentance and threatenings of judgment to come, since they were slighted by the world, must have mightily hardened the hearts of men, and caused the Spirit of God to cease striving with them. Very probably many were at first impressed and alarmed: but after a while, when they saw day following day without any sign of the predicted vengeance, they lost their fear: they went back to their favourite sins, as the dog to his vomit: they could no longer be roused as before: they began to be scoffers, and mocked at the most solemn warnings: the demon, who had been for a brief space expelled, returned with seven others more wicked than himself: so that their last state was worse than the first (Luke xi. 24-26).

In this case also history appears to be repeating itself. For some fifty years God has supplied an unbroken stream of evangelical testimony which has been gradually increasing in power; and there is now sounding forth such a proclamation of the Gospel as the world has never, perhaps, heard since the days of the apostles. The Spirit has fallen upon the Church with Pentecostal vigour: revivals, missions at home and abroad, and the efforts of many individuals, have caused the conversion of thousands. Those who are really Christ's seem to be strenuously urged by a sense of their responsibilities: they are going out into the streets and lanes, into the highways and hedges, constraining men to come in: the wedding-hall is rapidly filling with guests.

And amid the calls to repentance and offers of grace, amid the mutual exhortations to walk as children of the light, there peals forth, waxing ever louder and louder, the solemn cry, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet Him"¹⁰

¹⁰ [Probably the *strict* application of this passage is to an hour still future, quite immediately before the Lord shall come.]

(Matt. xxv. 6); while the testimony of the faithful to the world is assuming its last form: "Fear God, and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment is come" (Rev. xiv. 7).

Indications of this new epoch have been growing more and more apparent for some years, and many papers and periodicals have been devoted to the resuscitation of the long-neglected truth so prominently set forth by our Lord and His apostles. Hundreds of books and pamphlets have been written on the same subject; while the majority of the later-revival preachers, and a daily increasing number of other witnesses, have promulgated it to such an extent that it would now be difficult to find a moderately intelligent Christian who is ignorant of the great hope, even if he does not accept it as his own.

There is also a significant change passing over this testimony, and rendering it far more consistent and powerful. For although but a short time has elapsed since the disagreement of prophetic writers was almost proverbial, the great body of them are now beginning to exhibit a wonderful harmony on all main points, and to proclaim that the solemn event which all should be awaiting is the command that will summon the Church into the presence of her Lord. We may, therefore, in several particulars find a remarkable analogy between the preaching of God's people in the present time and the prophesying of Enoch before the days of Noah.

But the masses of the world are again rejecting God's more urgent appeals, and, as a natural consequence, His Spirit is ceasing to strive with them: infidelity and superstition are beginning to overshadow even the most favoured countries of Christendom. In our own land, how great an excitement was caused some twenty years ago by the publication of *Essays and Reviews*: but that book, though hailed with such delight by those who were unwilling to submit to the Divine revelation, has now been swept out of memory by the flood of more daring infidel literature which has since been continually issuing from the press. How few of our newspapers, reviews, and periodicals, have escaped the contagion! How great a multitude of propagating secularists does our country contain, from the bold blasphemer coarsely inveighing against the Word of God, and either denying His existence or charging Him with injustice, to the refined and subtle reasoner who would fain make the ineffable light of his Creator pale before the flickering lamp of human intellect! It is, however, needless to enlarge on so obvious a matter, or to waste time in proving the simultaneous spread of Ritualism and Popery, which is now sufficiently evident even to the most careless observer; while in regard to

the prevalence of sorcery we shall have more to say anon.

Have we not, then, reason to infer both from these apostasies, and from the general resemblance of our days to the perilous times of the end as described by Paul (2 Tim. iii. 1-9), that Christendom, as the inevitable punishment of a general rejection of the Gospel, is being judicially blinded and irremediably hardened?

The seventh and most fearful characteristic of the days of Noah was the unlawful appearance among men of beings from another sphere. This, many would quickly reply, is certainly an event which has not yet startled our age, strange as our experiences may be: we have still something at least to await before the completion of that fatal circle of influences which ruined the old world. But a diligent comparison of Scripture with the things that are now taking place among us will give a very different impression, and induce a strong conviction that the advanced posts of this last terrible foe have already crossed our borders. For it is no longer possible to deny the supernatural character of the apostasy called Spiritualism, which is spreading through the world with unexampled rapidity, and which attracts its votaries, and retains them within its grasp, solely by continual exhibitions of the miraculous. It is vain to speak of that power as mere jugglery which has convinced some of the *élite* of the literary world, which has caught in its meshes many scientific men, who at first only troubled to investigate for the purpose of refutation. Nor indeed can anything be more dangerous than utter incredulity: for the wholly incredulous, if suddenly brought face to face with the supernatural, is of all men the most likely to yield entire submission to the priests of the new wonder. Better far is it to inquire prayerfully whether these things are possible, and if so, in what light the Bible teaches us to regard them. We shall thus be armed against all the wiles of the Devil.

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