

MSS fragments written in the Old Hebrew script are of the same date as the others ; that the Old script continued up to the time of Christ and that its use on Maccabean coins is not mere archaizing. These MSS strikingly confirm the Massoretic text though of course there are peculiarities of orthography (as already noticed in SCRIPTURE, 1949, p. 43). There are even some technical words not found in the Bible, e.g. in the Scroll of the Combat between the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness.

It is noted in the *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, January 1950, p. 95, that a leather scroll consigned to American scholars for study proves to be the lost Book of Lamech, mentioned in medieval Greek lists of apocryphal books of the Old Testament. The language of the scroll is Aramaic and though very blurred must once have been beautiful, having been executed by a skilful scribe.

If the cave-store was indeed a Genizah as suggested by Dr Sukenik, it remains to be explained why so remote a spot was chosen for it. Indeed the isolation of the cave would seem to point to the theory that it was a hiding-place. However, if the manuscripts belonged to the sect of the Essenes, who are known to have lived in this neighbourhood the difficulty against its being a Genizah might be satisfactorily disposed of. In this connexion, the Sectarian Document must be considered although it does not seem to be noticeably Essenian.

MAN AND HIS CALL

MAN'S dealings with God which we call history are before all else dealings between man who is called and God who calls him. The word first comes forth from God and gives man his life's purpose : to be a hearer of that word and not only to hear it, but also to work it out, to be one in whom the Call is now an Answer. History becomes a conversation between God and man with all the joys, but also with all the difficulties and misunderstandings, of conversation. Thus arises an obscurity which becomes even that stupidity and blindness so often spoken of in Holy Scripture. These readings from Holy Scripture will allow us to take part in the dialogue between God and those whom He calls, until such time as it is fulfilled in the song of the hundred and forty-four thousand who follow the Lamb wherever It goes.

Man, created in grace, was called to work and obedience.

(Gen. ii, 15-17.)

The Lord God took man, and put him into the paradise of pleasure, to dress it, and to keep it. And he commanded him, saying : Of every

tree of paradise thou shalt eat: but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat. For in what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death.

Man sinned and through sin death came into the world. Ever since then each call had been accompanied by the double problem of man's own position and of his relation to his fellow men.

(Gen. iii, 8-10 and iv, 9.)

They heard the voice of the Lord God walking in paradise in the afternoon air, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the face of the Lord, amidst the trees of the paradise. And the Lord God called Adam and said to him: Where art thou? And he said: I heard thy voice in paradise; and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself. . . . Then the Lord said to Cain: Where is thy brother? And he answered: I know not.

From now on each of God's calls will awaken fear in men. And so, in his calling, God must always first utter the words 'Fear not'. This 'Fear not' is the prelude to all God's converse, from the call of Abraham to the 'Have no fear' which was spoken to St John on Patmos by Him who is the First and the Last. Mary alone feels no fear at her call, she feels it only at the salutation 'full of grace', for even she did not understand that.

Everyone who is called must be prepared to leave his home. This forsaking of men for God followed upon the call of Abraham, the father of a great people.

(Gen. xii, 1.)

The Lord said to Abraham: Go forth out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and out of thy fathers house, and come into the land which I shall shew thee. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and magnify thy name: and thou shalt be blessed. And Abraham went out as the Lord had commanded him.

Later Abraham goes on another journey in response to a second call. This time he is accompanied by his son Isaac, who also is involved in the call. On the way Isaac asks about the victims.

(Gen. xxii, 7.)

Isaac said to his father: My father. And he answered: What wilt thou, son? Behold, saith he, fire and wood; where is the victim for an holocaust? And Abraham said: God will provide himself a victim for an holocaust, my son. So they went on together.

This separation and the journey to the sacrifice is the lot of each one who is called ; but the tasks of each of those who are called and his answer to the call are very widely different.

Ezekiel almost cowers in God's presence.

(Ez. i, 4-5 and 13.)

I saw , and behold a whirlwind came out of the north, and a great cloud, and a fire infolding it. And brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof, that is, out of the midst of the fire, as it were the resemblance of amber. And in the midst thereof the likeness of four living creatures ; their appearance was like that of burning coals and fire. I saw the appearance of a rainbow when it is in a cloud on a rainy day : this was the appearance of the brightness round about.

(Ez. 2.)

This was the vision of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw him I fell upon my face, and I heard the voice of one that spoke. And he said to me : Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak to thee. And the spirit entered into me after that he spoke to me : and he set me upon my feet.

Jeremias feels that he is too young for the call, but the call is independent of age.

(Jer. i, 4-8.)

And the word of the Lord came to me, saying : Before I formed thee in the bowels of thy mother, I knew thee : and before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee and made thee a prophet unto nations. And I said : Ah, Lord God, behold, I cannot speak, for I am a child. And the Lord said to me : Say not : I am a child : for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I shall command thee, thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their presence : for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord.

Moses too feels that he is not yet fitted for the call. He could not speak well and so in any case the Lord might well call another in his place.

(Exod. iv, 9.)

And the Lord said to Moses : If they will not believe these signs, nor hear thy voice : take of the river water, and pour it out upon the dry land, and whatsoever thou drawest out of the river shall be turned into blood. Moses said : I beseech thee, Lord, I am not eloquent from yesterday and the day before ; and since thou hast spoken to thy servant, I have more impediment and slowness of tongue. The Lord said to him : Who made man's mouth ? Or who made the dumb and the deaf, the seeing and the blind ? Did not I ? Go therefore, and I will be in thy mouth : and I will teach thee what thou shalt speak. But he said : I beseech thee, Lord, send whom thou wilt send. There the Lord became angry with him.

Amos has another difficulty. Conscious of his call, he does not shrink, in spite of his humble birth, from speaking against the king, against the priest Amasias who was subservient to him, and against the whole people.

(Amos vii, 14.)

Amos said : I am not a prophet, nor am I the son of a prophet : but I am a herdsman plucking wild figs. And the Lord took me when I followed the flock, and the Lord said to me : Go, prophesy to my people Israel.

In an overwhelming vision Isaias is transformed by the fire of grace and says : Lord, here I am. Send me.

(Is. vi, 3.)

I have seen the Lord ; Seraphims stood before him. And they cried to one another, and said : Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God of hosts, all the earth is full of his glory. And the lintels of the doors were moved at the voice of him that cried : and the house was filled with smoke. And I said : Woe is me, because I have held my peace ; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people that has unclean lips, and I have seen with my eyes the King, the Lord of Hosts. And one of the Seraphims flew to me : and in his hands was a live coal, which he has taken with the tongs off the altar. And he touched my mouth, and said : Behold, this has touched thy lips, and thy iniquities shall be taken away, and thy sin shall be cleansed. And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying : Whom shall I send, and who shall go for us ? And I said : Lo, here am I. Send me.

With the strength of grace that 'Here I am' is easily said. But this strength is really tested when it means that a man must be driven into the desert as Elias was driven by Jezabel.

(III Kings xix, 4.)

And he went forward, one day's journey into the desert. And when he was there, and sat under a juniper tree, he requested for his soul that he might die, and said : It is enough for me. Lord, take away my soul. I am not better than my fathers. And he cast himself down, and slept in the shadow of the juniper tree.

Desolation surrounds him ; but it is also within him. Jeremiah is driven into the last stage of desperation by the revelations and tasks he is given.

(Jer. xx, 7.)

Thou has deceived me, Lord, and I am deceived. Thou hast been stronger than I, and thou hast prevailed. I am become a laughing-stock all the day : all scoff at me. For I am speaking now this long time, crying out against iniquity and I often proclaim devastation : and the word of the Lord is made a reproach to me and a derision, all the day. Then I said :

I will not make mention of him nor speak any more in his name. And there came in my heart as a burning fire, shut up in my bones : and I was wearied, not being able to bear it. For I heard the reproaches of many, and terror on every side : Persecute him, and, Let us persecute him : from all the men that were my familiars and continued at my side : if by any means he may be deceived and we may prevail against him and be revenged on him.

And now a great battle has arisen within man. His soul is turned into an arena, into a battlefield of the spirit. Each one who has received the call almost has the impression, like Jacob, of being overwhelmed by God.

(Gen. xxxii, 1-2.)

Jacob also went on the journey he had begun : and the angels of God met him. And when he saw them, he said : These are the camps of God.

(Gen. xxxii, 24ss.)

And Jacob remained alone : and behold a man wrestled with him till morning. And when he saw that he could not overcome him, he said to him : Let me go, for it is break of the day. But Jacob answered : I will not let thee go except thou bless me. And he blessed him in the same place saying : Thy name shall not be called Jacob, but Israel : for if thou hast been strong enough against God, how much more shalt thou prevail against men ?

Jacob entered into this battle—others, like Jonas, seek to flee.

(Jonas i.)

Now the word of the Lord came to Jonas the son of Amathi, saying : Arise, and go to Ninive the great city and preach in it : for the wickedness thereof is come up before me. And Jonas rose up to flee into Tharsis from the face of the Lord. And he found a ship going to Tharsis. But the Lord send a great wind into the sea, and the ship was in danger to be broken.

(Jonas ii.)

Now the Lord prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonas . . . and it vomited out Jonas upon dry land. And the word of the Lord came to Jonas the second time.

The Lord does not call everyone again and again. The worst can happen : namely, through his disobedience Man loses his vocation. Saul should have destroyed Amalec and all that was his, but he wished to offer the spoils to the Lord. Thus he lost his kingdom.

(I Kings xv.)

And Samuel said to the king : People took of the spoils sheep and oxen, as the firstfruits of those things that were slain, to offer sacrifice to the Lord their God in Galgal. But doth the Lord desire holocaust and

victims, and not rather that the voice of the Lord should be obeyed? For obedience is better than sacrifices: and to hearken rather than to offer the fat of rams. For as much therefore as thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord has also rejected thee from being King. And the king said to Samuel: I have sinned because I feared the people. Woe me. But Samuel turned about to go away: but he laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent. And Samuel said to him: The Lord hast rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to thy neighbour who is better than thee.

The spirit of faith, sown in Abraham by the Living God, perished in his children. Only the rod sprung from the root of Jesse brought forth blossom and fruit. In Mary Abraham's longing is fulfilled. The thoughts of God, His design for mankind, become reality in her.

(Eccles. xxiv, 14.)

From the beginning, and before the world, was I created, and unto the world to come I shall not cease to be: and in the holy dwelling place I have ministered before him.

And I took root in an honourable people. (xxiv, 16.)

And as the vine I have brought forth a pleasant odour. (xxiv, 23.)

What God had looked upon from eternity was realized in time. (Luke i, 28.)

And the Angel being come in, said unto her: Hail, full of Grace. Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb and shalt bring forth a son: and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the son of the Most High. And the Lord shall give unto him the throne of David his father: and he shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever. And of his kingdom there shall be no end. And Mary said to the angel: How shall this be done, because I know not man? And the angel answering, said to her: The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. And Mary said: Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it done to me according to thy word. And the Angel departed from her.

Mankind's consent has been given and the Word is made flesh, and this is the message of the New Testament that is to be passed on. (Eph. iii, 8-9.)

To me, the least of all the Saints, is given this grace, to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. And to enlighten all men, that they may see what is the dispensation of the mystery which hath been hidden from eternity in God who created all things.

The treasure, however, is put into the hands of man.

(II Cor. iv, 7.)

We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency may be of the power of God and not of us. In all things we suffer tribulation:

but are not distressed. We are straitened : but are not forsaken. We are cast down : but we perish not. Always bearing about in our body the mortification of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifest in our bodies. For we who live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake : that the life also of Jesus may be manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us : but life in you.

The Christian now has to face the same struggle as Jacob. His soul is to be a battle ground of the spirit.

(1 Cor. iv, 9.)

We are made a spectacle to the world and to angels and to men.

We are reviled : and we bless. We are persecuted : and we suffer it.

We are the refuse of the world, the offscouring of all.

But all these doubts and enmities have no power to separate those who are called from the love of Christ.

(Rom. viii, 35.)

Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ ? Shall tribulation ? Or distress ? Or famine ? Or nakedness ? Or danger ? Or persecution ? Or the sword ? As it is written : for thy sake, we are put to death all the day long. We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. But in all these things we overcome, because of Him that hath loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Those whom God has called have in his love the assurance that they will one day join in the new canticle of the hundred and forty-four thousand.

(Apo. xiv, 1-5.)

And I beheld : and lo a Lamb stood upon mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty-four thousand, having his name and the name of the Father written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the noise of many waters and as the voice of great thunder. And the voice which I heard was as the voice of harpers, harping on their harps. And they sung as it were a new canticle, before the throne and before the four living creatures and the ancients : and no man could say the canticle, but those hundred forty-four thousand who were purchased from the earth. These are they who were not defiled with women : for they are virgins. These follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were purchased from among men, the firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth there was found no lie : for they are without spot before the throne of God.

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