

THE PROPHECY OF JEREMIAH

(Continued)

by H. L. ELLISON

VII. GRACE AND JUDGMENT

As we said earlier, the encouragement to Israel to repent (3:11, 12) is not based on Judah's sin being worse than Israel's, but on Judah's history revealing the grace of God. But if that grace could be effective for Israel, even though its leaders at the least had been taken off into captivity a century earlier, it would avail for Judah too. Hence in the final compilation of this part of the book one (or perhaps two) of Jeremiah's later oracles was added here (3:14-18) as an express indication that God's offer of grace covered Judah too, though it in turn had experienced the bitterness of exile. In v. 14 we should almost certainly translate *shub* as 'return', referring to the return from exile. This implies that the oracle cannot be earlier than 598 B.C., when Jehoiachin and the cream of the population were taken to Babylonia, and it is more likely to have been given after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. The mention of the Ark is no guide to dating, for we do not know its history after its mention in 2 Chr. 35:3.

(14) Return, apostate sons — oracle of the LORD — for it is I who am your master.¹ I will take you, one from a clan, and I will bring you to Zion. (15) I will give you shepherds according to My own heart, who shall pasture you with knowledge and understanding.

The optimistic popular prophets could not grasp the possibility of real judgment. Even when faced with the fact of Jehoiachin's deportation and the loss of the bulk of the Temple vessels they could not take God's action seriously (cf. 27: 16; 28: 2-4). Jeremiah could be the prophet of grace just because he took God's judgment seriously. Israel apostatized until Samaria had to fall. Under Hezekiah and Josiah Judah had responded to her sister's judgment by purely outward reform; Jeremiah knew that now there was no hope of averting her own judgment, which would be

¹ So R.S.V., Moffatt correctly as against A.V., R.V.; cf. also 31: 32, R.V. mg., where R.S.V. has quite inexplicably retained the traditional rendering. The R.S.V. is, however, doubtless incorrect here in linking v. 16 with the preceding.

bitter. Though there would be a return from exile, only a mere remnant would be involved.

Then we catch the note struck in Jeremiah's commissioning "to build and to plant" (1:10). God's judgment was one of grace as well as of well-merited punishment, and therefore out of it would come the accomplishment of God's purpose. This would be demonstrated by the appointment of true kings, a promise that is doubtless to be interpreted in the light of 23:4-6. They were to be marked out by true knowledge of Jehovah and understanding.² This would in turn lead to material prosperity — "when you have multiplied and become fruitful in the land" (v. 16) — and true religion: "At that time Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the LORD, and all the nations shall be collected to it, to the name of the LORD and to Jerusalem" (v. 17). We shall consider the prophecy about the Ark later, when dealing with Jeremiah's relationship to the cultus in general.

Indeed, so effective is the grace of God, that whether the remnant is great or small, "In those days the house of Judah shall go with the house of Israel, and they shall come together from the land of the north to the land which I gave as a possession to your ancestors" (v. 18). Judah might well wish to arrogate salvation to herself, but God in His faithfulness would show mercy to both the erring sisters to whom He had pledged His grace.

Man's No

In the preceding there have been two implicit assumptions. The lesser is that 3:1-4:4 forms an essential unity created by Jeremiah, however diverse its constituent parts. As earlier mentioned, some would make a major break after 3: 5³; then 3: 19-4: 4 forms an introduction to the oracles of doom at the hands of the northern foe. It does, however, seem to bring out the balance of the prophecies better, if 3:1-4:4 is interpreted as a picture of the darkening scene once the pleas of ch. 2 had been rejected.

More important was the assumption that 3:6-13 was inserted in its present place as a reinforcement of 3:1-5; in other words this oracle, with its appendix vv. 14-18, is strictly speaking in brackets and not a direct expansion of the main line of thought.

² By some, e.g., Peake (Century Bible), p. 110, and Moffatt, the shepherds, i.e., kings, are regarded as primarily teachers, but this seems intrinsically unlikely. It is questionable whether there is any Old Testament passage that would support it.

³ E.g., Oesterley and Robinson, *An Introduction to the Books of the Old Testament*, p. 293.

There are those, however,⁴ who consider that it is such an expansion and that Jeremiah was teaching that Israel would have to be restored before Judah would abandon its sin and return from exile. There is no parallel to this, however, elsewhere in Jeremiah or in any other prophet, and so the thought should not be imported into our exegesis, unless it is absolutely necessary.

Since this is so, there should be no difficulty in accepting with a majority of moderns⁵ that v. 19 is a continuation of v. 5; in fact this seems to be the only satisfactory way of explaining the opening words "But I". So in vv. 19, 20 we have God's reaction to, "So you have spoken, yet done evils to the uttermost" (v. 5). Israel, as in vv. 1-5, is the whole nation and specifically Judah as its representative. In the translation Rudolph's pointing has been followed. The Massorettes, having forgotten the link with v. 5, interpreted v. 19 in the light of v. 20, and as the *Qere* bears witness, changed the masculine to the feminine, and the plural into the singular.

(19) But I thought,

How I would set you (on high) among the sons
and give you a delightful land,
a heritage most beautiful of all nations.

And I thought you would call Me, My Father,
and would not turn from following Me.

(20) But in fact as a wife acts treacherously on account of her lover, so you, O house of Israel, have acted treacherously against Me — oracle of the LORD.

The thought in v. 19 is reminiscent of that in Ex. 19:5. It is not a question of daughter's being lifted to the level of the sons⁶, but of the favourite son's being raised above the others. In 3:1-5, 19, 20, while Israel's sin is constantly being expressed in sexual terms, there is no consistent identification of Israel as Jehovah's wife; God is the Father as well as the Husband.

Repentance in Word and Fact

In our ignorance of the ritual of pre-exilic days of fasting (cf. 36:9) it is impossible to offer more than a purely subjective interpretation of the beautiful psalm of repentance in vv. 21-25. It might perhaps be easier, if we knew precisely how we are to understand the somewhat similar passage in Hos. 14. We have

⁴ E.g., Driver, *LOT*⁹, p. 251.

⁵ Weiser, *Das Buch des Propheten Jeremia (Das Alte Testament Deutsch)* p. 38, is a major exception.

⁶ The almost universal modern interpretation since the commentaries of Duhm and Cornill, but not followed by Rudolph, *Jeremia*², p. 27.

to choose between seeing here Jeremiah's version of a typical psalm of penitence, which is promptly followed by God's inexorable demand for true repentance (4:1-4), or considering that Jeremiah optimistically offers the people a suitable penitential prayer.

Personally I cannot find any indication that by this time Jeremiah had any hopes of the people's repentance until after the judgments of God had passed over them. Nor do I think that Jeremiah was much concerned with the beauty of words provided there was true penitence in the heart. It was with the visible and factual expression of repentance that he was concerned. I think it far more likely that we have here essentially an expanded version of 3:4, 5a. Josiah's reformation will have produced numerous penitential outbursts on which Jeremiah could have modelled himself.

It may even be that in the opening words (v. 21) we are to detect a note of mockery :

Hark! on the bare heights is heard
the weeping and pleadings for favour of the children of
Israel,
because they have twisted their way,
they have forgotten the LORD their God.

The people are pictured as gathered at the sites of their hill-top sanctuaries, destroyed by Josiah's compulsory reformation. Though no worship could be carried on there, the lure of the place was still in their blood.

When we read on, we find very little real confession of sin :

(23) Truly the hills are become a deception
and the hubbub on the mountains ...

(24) And from our youth Baal has eaten up that for which
our fathers toiled.

(The rendering assumes that *boshet*, shame, is an example of scribal substitution for Baal.) But there is no real conception of sin here, no realization that false religion means false living, no understanding of the basic prophetic message.

God's Answer

God's answer falls into two parts. In 4:1, 2 we have the answer to the question of 3:1 :

If you turn (*shub*), Israel — oracle of the LORD —
to Me you may return (*shub*).

If you remove your abominations,
from Me you need not wander.

If you swear 'As truly as Jehovah lives'

truthfully, rightly and honestly,
 the nations shall bless themselves in Him,
 and in Him shall they glory.

This may seem very superficial at first sight. The gracious message of God's willingness to receive Israel back is based on repentance, removal of idols and the honest use of God's name. But when we consider that the implications of swearing 'As truly as Jehovah lives' are in fact the submission of one's life to God's scrutiny, we should realize that a radical change in life is being demanded, which was not suggested in the psalm of repentance. This demand is expanded in vv. 3, 4.

It is widely held that the mention of "the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem" (so MSS and versions) in v. 3 indicates a separate oracle, unless indeed either vv. 1, 2⁷, or 3, 4⁸ are omitted as a later interpolation. These views are held equally by those that distinguish between Israel and Judah⁹ and by those that equate them.¹⁰

The transition from Israel to the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem may, however, have another and very simple explanation. It is true that Jeremiah speaks of the Northern Kingdom as Israel in 3:6-13, but he is looking at the past, when the term was at least hallowed by centuries of usage. Elsewhere this usage is rare in Jeremiah, "the house of Israel" or "Ephraim" being preferred; where plain Israel is used of the North, it is usually qualified by some other epithet. The chief exception seems to be 31:2-6, where, however, the mention of "the mountains of Samaria" serves to make it clear that the North is intended.

The simple fact is that Judah, the Southern Kingdom, had always been part of God's Israel, whatever their northern neighbours might call themselves. With the capture of Samaria and the transformation of the North into Assyrian provinces, Judah had effectively become Israel so far as the worship of God and the recognition of man were concerned, but it forgot that it was not its own merits but the sins of the North that had brought this to pass. Judah might plead for God's favour as Israel, the people of God, but even though Josiah's power had extended to

⁷ E.g., Cornill; Skinner, *Prophecy and Religion*, p. 86; G. A. Smith, *Jeremiah*⁴, p. 103; Moffatt.

⁸ E.g., Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament*², p. 502; Welch, *Jeremiah, His Time and His Work*, p. 72 (but they are recognized as genuine words of Jeremiah).

⁹ E.g., Welch.

¹⁰ E.g., Skinner, G. A. Smith.

Galilee, the people had to be reminded that they were in fact a historic state with very much that was evil in its records, above all the reign of Manasseh. God would deal with them not as ideal Israel but as the very real and guilt-stained Judah.

Peake¹¹ interprets God's demands in v. 3 with characteristic felicity, but while Jeremiah would doubtless applaud the sentiments we may question whether he would acknowledge paternity:

What is involved in the conditions laid down in the preceding verses receives here a classical expression. The ground, which has lain so long untilled, must be broken up. The hard unresponsive disposition must bear the discipline of plough and harrow, and be thoroughly prepared to receive the good seed. But that is not enough, for the soil is encumbered with evil growths, and unless these are cleared away, they will choke the seed and prevent it from ripening and bearing fruit. The people must break with their past, remain no longer unaccustomed to goodness, and give the new seed the most ample opportunity of unhindered growth.

We must, however, go beyond this. The command is *niru lakhem nir*; *nir* is not fallow ground in the normal sense of the term, but land that has not been tilled at all, virgin soil.¹² So it is a command to break new soil, no easy task on the rocky hill slopes of Judea. It is usual to burn the tinder-dry thorns after the harvest has been brought in¹³. So Jeremias¹⁴ can say, "This is easily understood when we remember that in Palestine sowing precedes ploughing ... He sows intentionally among the thorns standing withered in the fallow because they too will be ploughed up." That is why "the thorns grew up and choked them" (Matt. 13:7). This suggests that the amount of dried thorns mattered little, but the infestation of the soil with their seeds was all-important.

Jeremiah tells Judah that its "fields" are so infested with thorns that the only possibility is the reclaiming of new ground. In other words its whole future was so threatened by the legacy of its past history and sin that only a completely new beginning would suffice to save it. Historically the Babylonian exile to a great extent served this purpose, but in the fullest sense the command looks forward to the promise of the new covenant (31:31-34).

This is made the clearer by the call to circumcision of the heart. Irrespective of what circumcision may have meant to the neighbours of Israel (cf. 9:25, 26), for Israel it meant that

¹¹ *Op. cit.*, 116 f.

¹² So Köhler in *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros*.

¹³ A vivid description may be found in Thomson, *The Land and the Book*, ch. XXIII, and cf. Heb. 6: 8.

¹⁴ *The Parables of Jesus*, pp. 9 f.

the people belonged to Jehovah. But it was an outward sign and so in Deut. 10: 16; 30: 6 it is made clear that it must have an inner reality. The 'heart' is not man's intellect, or will, or emotions, though in given contexts one or other of these would be a suitable translation; it is the totality of man's inner and invisible life. No mere actions, however accompanied by expressions of repentance, would suffice to save Judah from judgment. The whole of their inner being would have to be devoted to their God.

VIII. DOOM FROM THE NORTH

The bulk of the remaining oracles, which we can with reasonable certainty ascribe to the reign of Josiah, deal directly or indirectly with the fulfilment of Jeremiah's second inaugural vision, that of the boiling pot. It is not easy to say with certainty how many oracles we should find in 4:5-31. The impression is, however, irresistible that they are based on a series of visions extending over some time. This is the more likely because there is no reason for thinking that 5: 15-19; 6: 1-8, which must in any case be later than 4: 5-8; 6: 22-26, have been artificially separated from the oracles in ch. 4; note also 8:16. Jer. 5:1-14, 20-31, though not referring directly to the foe from the north, are integral parts in the development of Jeremiah's message of doom.

While we may well agree with Rudolph¹⁵ that 4:5-31 will not have been made public *in its present form* before the first roll was read in 604 B.C. (36:9, 10), there seem to be no grounds for thinking with him that the individual oracles, apart from the purely personal sections, were not publicly given in the time of Josiah.

Though Rudolph¹⁶ is inclined to question it, it seems clear that vv. 19-21 can be understood only as the description of the effects of a vision — the suggestion that the people, and not the prophet, are speaking has little to commend it — and the same is true of vv. 23-28, so there is no adequate ground for doubting that at least the major part of 4: 5-31, is the clothing in poetic language of a series of visions. One of the great weaknesses of much discussion of prophetic inspiration is the tendency, whatever interpretation is adopted, to make one formula cover the whole activity of a prophet, and even of all prophets.

We cannot doubt that many of Jeremiah's oracles are the reproducing of the divine word, however it came to him. But a section like this shows that his visions were not confined to his

¹⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 33.

¹⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 33, though his comments on vv. 19-21 (p. 31) can be understood only in terms of a vision.

call (note especially 31:26), and that part of his task was the rendering of the vision into suitable words. It is particularly to be noted that the vision was not merely something seen but something shared.

- (19) My agony ! my agony ! I must writhe in pain !
 Oh, the throbbing of my heart !
 My mind is restless,
 I cannot keep silent,
 for the sound of the war-horn has penetrated my being,
 the alarm signals in the battle.
- (20) The cry is "Disaster on disaster !",
 for the whole land is devastated;
 suddenly my tents are devastated,
 in an instant my (tent) curtains.
- (21) How long must I see the standard
 and hear the sound of the war-horn?

I have rendered v. 19 very freely in an effort to translate the physical terms into their English metaphorical equivalents. The mention of tents in v. 20 is usually taken as a picture of the overthrow of the people, the possessive pronoun being explained as the prophet's self-identification with them. Of this self-identification the prophet's agony is sufficient proof, but for the tents we should look for another explanation.

In the face of such an invasion there would be no effort to meet it in the field (cf. vv. 5, 6), so military tents cannot be meant, while the time of nomadism was long past for all but the eccentric — even the nomad Rechabites fled to Jerusalem (35:11). The tents must stand for defencelessness, and it is probably the prophet's own isolation that is implied; he sees himself swallowed up in the storm which he has in God's name called upon the land.

Jeremiah and the Prophets

Perhaps the most remarkable verse in this section is v. 10:

Then I said, Alas, Lord Jehovah, surely Thou hast altogether deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, You shall have peace, but now the sword threatens our very life.

There are those¹⁷ that would follow the doubtful evidence of the Codex Alexandrinus of the LXX and the late Arabic (rarely earlier than 10th century) and render, instead of "then I said", 'and they (the priests and prophets) will say'. The textual evidence relied on is so weak as to be virtually valueless, and it would

¹⁷ E.g., Peake, Streane (Cambridge Bible), *Biblia Hebraica*, Moffatt, Rudolph, Weiser.

be much fairer to call their rendering a conjectural emendation. On the principle that the more difficult reading is to be preferred, we should hesitate very much before accepting this comparatively simple way out of a major difficulty.

Some twenty years after the probable date of this oracle (ch. 28) Jeremiah was faced by Hananiah ben Azzur's flat denial of his message. We find that while he doubted Hananiah's words, he was not certain, and in any case he would have been glad, if he had been correct. It is very difficult to imagine prophets like Amos or Isaiah sharing Jeremiah's doubts, if they had been challenged as he was. It seems that there was a side to Jeremiah's character—we will not call it a weakness—which was not usual among the prophets; this is made clear in his dialogues with God.

If even after God's instrument of judgment had become clear in Nebuchadnezzar, and the first stage of judgment had gone into effect in Jehoiachin's deportation, Jeremiah was prepared to hope — believe would be too strong a word — that his message might not go into effect, it is not unreasonable to suppose that at the height of Josiah's prosperity, with Assyria rapidly approaching its end, he would have been even more inclined to listen to the voices of the prophets. In addition he was to reach a deeper conception of the true nature of prophecy than did any other of the canonical prophets (23: 9-40). For this to happen, there is normally a deep understanding and sympathy which helps to penetrate to depths hidden from the normal man. So there is every reason for thinking that Jeremiah as a younger man will have been wide open to the passing influence of his fellow-prophets.

To all this we must add the fact that the concept of false prophet is really alien to the Old Testament. That is why for a prophet to prophesy falsely is "a wonderful and horrible thing" (5:30). Even if he had dismissed the popular prophets by saying that they had prophesied by Baal (2:8), yet he will have considered that they were as much under the control of God as those of Ahab whom Micaiah ben Imlah faced. At this stage of his life he evidently expected that however many aberrations the message of the popular prophets might show, God would not permit them to be entirely false.

For a young man to prophesy judgment and to see the judgment unroll before his inner eye were two very different things. The promise of peace by Josiah's prophets will probably for a time have blunted Jeremiah's concept of judgment. He may well have hoped that with all its terror the worst might be averted as it was in the days of Hezekiah. With the first vision of what the judg-

ment would really be these vain hopes vanished. Many have found difficulty in his charge that God had deceived the people. But this is not a considered judgment but the spontaneous reaction of a man of great depths of feeling. When we come to his later outpourings of soul before God we shall find the same tendency recurring.

If this interpretation is accepted, it implies that the earliest portion of 4:5-31 may precede the more sombre colours of ch. 3. This is quite reasonable. Nothing in our exposition until now has cast doubt on the principle that the call to repentance preceded the message of judgment, but there is no reason for thinking that the literary device of grouping similar oracles implies that all calls to repentance must have been exhausted before the dramatic picture of God's agents of judgment could be unrolled. Some degree of overlapping between the two sections may be looked on as certain, though ch. 5 is fairly certainly later than the oracles of ch. 3.

The Inrush of Chaos

We have offered an explanation of Jeremiah's agonized cry in 4:10 which seems psychologically compatible with what we know of his position and character. We may, however, ask ourselves further whether there was not something in the vision itself which added to the spiritual shock it created, especially when we recall the extreme agony recorded in vv. 19-21.

A vision may have a certain nightmare quality it is almost impossible to reproduce in words. It is reasonable exegesis to look beyond vv. 5-9; to the rest of the chapter to see whether any such quality is suggested in the other oracles. In vv. 23-26 we find that the destruction involves the earth and heavens (v. 23), while the mountains and hills tremble (v. 24) and even the birds vanish (v. 25), where we might well have expected a vision of the birds of prey gathering to feed on the slain (cf. Ezek. 39: 17; Rev. 19:17, 18). The picture of the involvement of heaven and earth is repeated in v. 28. But for one fact it would be quite sufficient to see in this language no more than extreme Oriental hyperbole.

All recent research seems to confirm that while there is very little direct borrowing by one prophet from another, yet there is a continuity of message, which expresses itself in the use of standard imagery and phrase. The mention of the mountains and hills links with Isa. 2:14, and that of the birds with Hos. 4:3, so in all probability Jeremiah intends the disappearance of beasts and fishes to be assumed as well. When we add the troubling of heaven and earth, it should be clear that we have a vision of

the breaking-in of chaos as one element of the Day of Jehovah. If indeed the coming judgment was the Day of Jehovah, we can understand both Jeremiah's anguish and his amazement that God had not impelled the prophets to foretell it.

We must use the term 'chaos' with care. For the neighbours of Israel the cosmic background of life was the unending struggle between the powers of chaos and the great gods. The latter had won a great victory, and the creation of the world was a result of it, but there could be no certain guarantee that the powers of chaos might not one day triumph and destroy the world. For Israel chaos was merely part of Jehovah's creation. He could, whenever He liked, bring chaos over His creation, as He did at the flood — the waters of the sea are repeatedly used as a picture of chaos — but chaos remained His servant and a tribute to His lordship. The leading of Israel through the Sea of Reeds was as much a token of His power over chaos as had been the moving of the Spirit over the primaeval waters.

For the contemporaries of Amos the concept of the Day of Jehovah was doubtless a very simple one, but as developed by the prophets it brings together so many concepts that it is not always easy to make a true unity of them. Particularly difficult is its fluctuation between the universal and its apparent restriction to Israel. This is clearly seen in vv. 27, 28, where in spite of the use of *'eres* in both verses, the antithesis "land . . . earth" in the English translations is doubtless correct: "For thus says the LORD, 'The whole land shall be a desolation, and I will make a full end of it. For this the earth shall mourn, and the heavens above be black —' "

A psalm like 74:12-17 which links the Exodus and the Creation gives us the clue. Man, who should have been the maintainer of order in God's earthly creation (Gen. 1:28) in fact through the fall brought disorder into it, the most striking example of this being the confusion of tongues. Israel had been chosen by God and made into a people that through him order might once again be created.¹⁸ Israel was the centre and principle of God's order that was finally to extend to all men. The destruction of Israel meant the return of chaos to the world and had a cosmic significance.

I do not doubt that in dealing with the vision of the boiling pot I was correct in making the coming of the enemy from the

¹⁸ Cf. the excellent treatment of the thought in Knight, *A Christian Theology of the Old Testament*, ch. 14.

north no more than a reflection of the historical and geographical situation. Now, however, that an element of the eschatological has entered in — an expression that may not be used in our modern philosophical-theological sense when applied to the Old Testament — we see that it includes an element of the mysterious and demonic. Though chaos was God's servant, it was hostile to Him, and the forces that were to bring it in had powers of evil behind them. It is no chance that God used Babylon to destroy Jerusalem and Israel, for Babylon, more than any other state in Scripture, stands as the embodiment of that which is opposed to God and must finally go down into destruction¹⁹.

The Foe from the North

Once we have reached this point the attempted identification of the northern foe with Scythians has shrunk to due proportions. The man with eschatological visions of doom is little concerned with the identity of those he sees, nor do they spring naturally from purely natural and historic causes.

When Venema in 1765 first suggested that the enemy were the Scythians mentioned in Herodotus I, 103-106, so little was known of the period outside the pages of the Bible and Herodotus that the idea was completely reasonable. With the growth of archaeological knowledge the difficulties in the theory became increasingly obvious and the disparity between certain expressions in the oracles and the Scythian reality ever clearer. The theory that Jeremiah revised his early Scythian oracles to suit the armies of Nebuchadrezzar was psychologically so monstrous that its necessity should in itself be fatal to the interpretation that begat it. Wilke²⁰ is almost certainly correct in maintaining that Herodotus' statement, as it stands, is untenable. All more recent archaeological discovery combines to discredit him in this respect.

To seek then to disrupt Jeremiah's message on such grounds seems without justification. Nor need we look for another historical event or people to explain his language. Once there was the certainty that judgment had to come, the vision of judgment is in place, even though it proved to be worse than the prophet had anticipated.

(To be continued)

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¹⁹ For an excellent treatment of all these factors see Welch, *op. cit.*, ch. VI.

²⁰ *Das Skythenproblem im Jeremia Buch in Alttestamentliche Studien für Kittel* (1913).

“IF BY ANY MEANS . . .”

by DONALD L. NORBIE

MR. NORBIE examines Paul's words "if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead" (Phil. 3: 11), and concludes that they do not imply any doubt on Paul's part about his participation in the resurrection of the just. While the premillennial, two-resurrection schema with which he operates will not command the agreement of all our readers, the main thrust of his study is independent of one school of eschatological interpretation or another.

THESSE words were written by Paul after having known Christ for about twenty-five years and having been greatly used of God. They merit careful study.

Phil. 3:11 reads "... if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead" (A.S.V.). These words breathe the passionate desire of Paul to be with Christ in his resurrection body. They parallel the thought expressed in verse 14 of Paul's race consummating in the "upward calling of God". Death is not the goal of the believer, but resurrection (2 Cor. 5:4).

First of all, one should note the resurrection, that is described. It is not a general resurrection, but a resurrection out from (ἐκ) the dead. The majority of the dead are to be raised later for judgment. Daniel hints at a difference in resurrections in Daniel 12:2, although not stating a time lapse between them. The Lord Jesus refers to this statement in John 5:28, 29, and in Luke 20:35. He implies that one blessed resurrection precedes a general resurrection. This is the resurrection out from (ἐκ) the dead. Christ's resurrection is the first fruits (1 Cor. 15: 23) and thus is also a resurrection out of the dead (Acts 4: 2; 1 Peter 1: 3).

It is interesting that here in Philippians the noun used is unique in the New Testament. It is a compound noun, ἐξανάστασις, literally an "out-resurrection". This noun with the preposition emphasizes the "out-from" character of this resurrection.

In Revelation the time lapse between these two resurrections—and there are only two—is given (Rev. 20:5, 6). Compare also 1 Cor. 15:23, 24: "Christ the first-fruits; then they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end [the judgment of the great white throne, etc.]" (A.S.V.). This first resurrection then is for those that are Christ's, all believers in Him.

Let us look at another word in our verse, the word "attain". It means simply "to come to," "to arrive at" or "to reach". It

does not really shed too much light on one's interpretation of the verse.

The pivotal and controversial words are εἰ πως, “if by any means.” Do these words imply uncertainty, the likelihood of failure? Is Paul here denying the certainty that one can know he has a part in the first and blessed resurrection?

Paul in other places has said, “I know ... and am persuaded” (2 Tim. 1:12), speaking of his salvation. Speaking of the resurrection body he wrote, “We know ... we have a building from God” (2 Cor. 5:1). At the end of his life there is a triumphant ring of certainty, “I have kept the faith” (2 Tim. 4:7). He is confident of acceptance with the Lord. Previously he stated with joy, “We all shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed” (1 Cor. 15:51). Does he here change his attitude?

There are only four appearances of this expression εἰ πως in the Greek New Testament. These are Acts 27:12; Rom. 1:10; 11:14; and Phil. 3:11. In Acts the mariners, wishing for a better port for the winter, advised to put to sea “*if by any means* they could reach Phoenix, and winter there.” Certainly there was not real doubt in their minds as to their arrival or they would never have set sail. Of course, the unexpected could happen, but their firm belief was that they would anchor safely in Phoenix. Strong desire, a desire to use any means, is expressed by these words, not doubt.

Romans 1:10 gives Paul's prayer, making request, *if by any means* now at length I may be prospered by the will of God to come unto you.” The words express the longing of Paul's heart to visit the believers at Rome.¹

In Romans 11:14 Paul boasts in his ministry to the Gentiles, “*if by any means* I may provoke to jealousy them that are my flesh, and may save some of them.” Once again strong doubt or uncertainty is not the point, but a desire so strong that it will go to all lengths to achieve its goal.

This we take to be the stress of the εἰ πως in Phil. 3:11. In verse 10 Paul states he is “becoming conformed to his death.” This is a continual process of not only morally taking one's place in death with regard to the old life (Col. 3:5), but of such devotion to Christ that physical death for His sake is not dreaded but almost expected (1 Cor. 15:30, 31; Phil. 2:17). This is truly taking one's place with the Crucified One.

¹ See also for another example Moulton and Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*, p. 561.

Paul thus expresses a willingness to go through even a martyr's death to reach resurrection. Any means, any way, only let me reach the goal — such is the fervent cry of this soldier of Christ.

R. C. H. Lenski states it well :

Neither *ei* nor its addition intends to express doubt; B.-D.² is right, it expresses expectation. Paul confidently expects that "some-how" the conformation God is working out will attain its goal and make him arrive at last at the blessed resurrection from the dead.³

It is such a passionate desire to be with Christ and like Christ that causes words like these to well from the heart :

Blessed Lord, our souls are longing
Thee, our risen Head, to see;
And the cloudless morning's dawning
When Thy saints shall gathered be :
Grace and glory,
All our well-springs are in Thee.⁴

Oklahoma City, Okla., U.S.A.

² Blass-Debrunner, *Grammar of N.T. Greek*.

³ *The Interpretation of Galatians, Ephesians, and Philippians*, p. 844.

⁴ Mary Bowley Peters.