

VISTA OF JORDAN

INDICATIONS OF change began in 1960. So far as the brethren in general were concerned, the situation was unaltered. Local fellowships carried on their church life, services of worship, conventions and the like. Literature was in plentiful supply from the London centre, and a certain amount of desultory tract distribution went on. But something of the old fire was lacking. The zeal which had fuelled the public meetings and the witnessing work of past years was evaporating; the "old stalwarts" who had borne the heat and burden of the day were still as stalwart but considerably older, and natural powers were fading. The later members and the younger generation, which had never known the fervour of the old sense of mission to proclaim the imminence of the end of the Age and the coming of the Millennial world, growing up in a materialistic Age in which these things were as idle fancies, were more concerned with the practice of the faith in their own fellowships. There was evident in many of the meetings a partial return to the old Christian tradition stressing the holiness of Jesus and emphasis on his death at the expense of the magnitude of his coming work for man in the power of his resurrection. The degree to which this became true varied as between one fellowship and another; there were those, mainly where the elderly were predominant, where something much more like the old standards prevailed. The zeal was there, and the certainty, but the onset of old age had sapped the essential vigour to act, and changing social conditions closed the doors which once had always stood open. The fires burned low, not because of loss of faith and belief, but of physical strength and outward opportunity.

So the older ones began to pass off the scene, familiar faces were disappearing, and there were not so many younger ones

after 1960. It was more fully realised by then that the tremendous increase in membership over the period 1910-20, consequent upon the results of the Albert Hall and other national campaigns of 1910, and the Photo-Drama exhibitions of 1914, was now to have its repercussions. A great many who then were young in years - and the movement at that time was essentially one of young people, largely in their twenties and thirties - meant that an equivalent number was now at the end of the way. In the ordinary way one would expect such losses to be made up by new and younger adherents, but this has not been the lot of any Christian denomination for many years and the Bible Students have been no exception. By 1970 some 80% of the brethren who took part in the 1919 secession had passed on and by 1980 most of the rest had followed. By this latter year the fellowship consisted for the most part - by far the most part - of newly-joined members and the children - and grandchildren - of the original founders. But the newcomers did not make up the number of their predecessors and the scale of things lessened.

Among some of those most deeply concerned light began to dawn. Certain words of the writer of the Book of Ecclesiastes came to mind; "say not thou, what is the reason that the former days were better than these, for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this". The former world, the world of well-attended public meetings, of wholesale tract distribution, of mass evangelism, with hundreds and even thousands coming together to hear the message of "Present Truth", had passed away, and it was not going to return. The day of organised Bible Student churches in the cities, where the worshippers were numbered in the hundreds, and numerous lesser fellowships in the towns and villages, was ended. Those that remained were as convinced and confident as ever, but they were lesser in number, and smaller in size, and quieter in outward activity. The number of the faithful in 1970 was 60% of what it had been in 1930, and the number of regular meetings 50%. One might be forgiven for wondering if in fact the Harvest was ended, the message given, the work done, and the entire fabric of service and worship that had been built up over seventy years now

doomed to enter that category outlined by the writer to the Hebrews in the words "that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away".

It was not so to be. This train of thought led inevitably to the reflection that right at the beginning, when Charles Russell commenced his monumental work, he had no idea of creating a new denomination or fellowship, but rather of circulating his message among Christians of all existing denominations, or of none. It was the wide-spread impact of his preaching and writing which led later to the emergence of the distinctive fellowship which became known as the Bible Students. And now the question came to the top: Are we intended to go back to the beginning and turn our efforts to the systematic introduction of the message to individuals without thought of bringing them into another fold? Is it to be an example of the parable spoken by Jesus and recorded in the Gospel of Mark, "so is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how"? Could there be a method of making known the message among those most likely to receive it more fitted to the present-day world than the old now largely ineffective ones?

Thought naturally turned to the one element in the British brethren's "stock-in-trade" which had survived the vicissitudes of the two post-war eras, the "Bible Study Monthly". During the whole period, from its foundation in 1924, while other aids to service and worship, and the number of the brethren, had first increased and then commenced to decline, the circulation and influence of the "Monthly" had been steadily rising. From its modest beginning in 1924, when it was founded to serve the interests of the British brethren who had seceded from the old Society, it had expanded its scope to cover all the English-speaking countries and to some extent areas such as the European continent, South America and the Far East. But always it had gone to the brethren; there was no thought of extending its circulation outside the fellowship. Now came the question: could this medium be used to reach enquiring Christians and non-Christians alike, outside that circle? At the very least, notices in periodical journals, particularly those read

by Christian people, might conceivably yield results.

The scheme commenced in 1956. Announcements in selected British journals appeared and were quickly followed by requests from enquirers. The results rather surpassed expectations. Within four years the circulation had doubled and before long it was four-fold. Some who became readers then are readers still and manifest real appreciation. A goodly number – about one in seven in the UK – are ordained ministers of almost every denomination, including some Anglican canons, one or two Bishops, the Moderator of a Nonconformist communion, the Heads of several theological colleges, quite a host of men who by means of correspondence indicate their interest in, and oft-times concurrence with, the outlook on the Divine Plan presented. Several evangelical churches display copies each month on their bookstalls for the use of their members. Many public libraries place the “Monthly” on their readers’ table. In quite a number of ways the “Monthly” now goes where the tracts and the public speakers went in times gone by. In later years both the “Dawn” and “Maran-atha” magazines, encouraged doubtless by this example, followed suit and also had encouraging results.

Of the many appreciations which constantly come in from ministers of religion the following, severely abbreviated, will yield some idea of the type of response:

“A wonderful collection. Has helped me much in my ministry both in my parish work and my evangelical work” – “Most helpful as a lay preacher in the Salvation Army” – “A good help when preparing my sermons” – “Helpful material which I am able to use in my ministry” – “Fine, fundamental subjects which are true to the Word of God” – “Many of the points you mention are to be found later in my sermons” – “So Scriptural, so devotional, and very helpful indeed; they are of great value” – “In these days of modernism and complacency extremely refreshing to find articles of such value and conviction” – “Very stimulating, building me up in the faith” – “Of immense spiritual value and profit” – “A lamp to illuminate many of the dark passages of the Word of God” – “Extremely interested in “The Coming of the King”; profoundly needed in this generation of the End Time; very sorry it is preached about so

little in most churches" - "The 'Coming of the King' has helped me to understand the Second Advent better".

These have come from ministers. There are, of course, similar observations from laymen readers who range or have ranged from a member of the House of Lords to some unfortunates serving prison sentences.

The logical inference to be drawn from all this is that a field of service is opening up in these more recent times which does not involve making converts to the Fellowship and enlisting them as fellow-workers, but rather to act as did Brothers Sunderlin and Bender a century ago, scatter the seed and leave it to germinate in its own way. Whether it will, as it did then, eventually fructify into a coming together on the part of some to study these things for themselves and proclaim it in turn no man can say; this has in fact happened in a number of cases where group meetings have been started under the aegis of the members' own denominational church to discuss these themes between themselves. But it has to be remembered that the Christian witness given with failing powers as the Age nears its end is to be overtaken by the emergence of the Divine Kingdom of Christ in which the Gospel will be proclaimed in power infinitely superior to the best that can be done in this present, and perhaps that is to be the real outcome of the present situation.

A certain amount of publishing continued. Between 1955 and 1965 sixteen new booklets were published and another twenty during the following decade. The quantities printed were considerably smaller than had been the case in former years but then there were not so many brethren to make use of them. Altogether the publishing centre had issued fifty-eight different booklets since 1939. Then in 1975 came a more ambitious effort in this field.

It had long been felt in some British circles that there was one notable omission in the published works of Charles Russell. Although the doctrine of Future Probation was inherent in his understanding of the Divine Plan, and often referred to in his writings, there was no formal and detailed treatise on the subject as had been with such matters as the Second Advent, the doctrine of Hell, and so on. It was resolved to remedy this

deficiency and to make this the basis of another evangelical effort. The result was the publication in 1975 of "Future Probation in Christian Belief", a 100-page book setting out the Biblical basis for the thesis with not only the work of Pastor Russell but also the supporting views of eminent 19th and 20th century churchmen and others on the subject, forming an up-to-date analysis of present-day thought on the subject. Theologians like Dr R. H. Charles (Anglican) and Dr W. B. Pope (Methodist), eminent ministers of the calibre of F. W. Farrar, F. B. Meyer, Dr J Paterson Smyth, Dr Vranken Holmes of USA, gave their testimony. Very little affirmative treatment of the subject had appeared since the days of Archdeacon Farrar of Westminster Abbey in the late 19th century and it was felt that a powerful witness to the Truth could be given by this book.

A first edition of twenty thousand copies was printed. As a first step copies were sent to a large number of ministers of all denominations in UK with an explanatory leaflet. At the same time the British public library system was approached and as many libraries as would accept copies were supplied with same for their shelves. In later years an appreciable number of enquiries were received from readers who had picked up the book from their local library; this source of interest still continues.

A great many ministers were favourably impressed. One surprise was the discovery that quite a few of them already had Pastor Russell's "Studies in the Scriptures" on their bookshelves and intimated how highly they thought of them. The "spade work" of past generations of brethren in the "Harvest" must have had greater impact than they knew. One C of E Canon was so impressed by the implications of the book that he called a conference of all the ministers in his area to discuss the subject after obtaining sufficient copies to present them with one each. A Methodist minister in a seaside town called a meeting of all the ministers in his town with a similar purpose. The circulation of the book has continued through the years and its wider use is only limited by lack of man-power.

A final flicker in the realm of public meetings came in 1986 when a few brethren in the North-East endeavoured to revive

the old interest in film presentations. A modern cinerama of still pictures with sound accompaniment entitled "For This Cause" had been produced by the "Dawn" brethren in USA and had evoked considerable interest over there. Would it be equally effective in the UK, was the question. Putting it to the test, a hall was taken in York and the function well advertised. A fair number of people attended and what seemed to be a reasonable harvest of enquiries resulted. In the long-term outcome there were a few permanent readers of the "Monthly" and that was about all. Further showings at Oxford and Yeovil elicited a flicker of interest but after that there was nothing.

The number of conventions, and their attendances, began perceptibly to diminish. The old regulars, Warrington and Glasgow at Easter, Leicester at Whitsun, London at August, remained, albeit on a smaller scale than of yore. Speakers began to comment on the increasing number of gray heads in their audiences. The last Conway Hall convention was held in 1969; after that, decreasing attendance and growing lack of brethren able to undertake the ancillary duties and services contingent on an organised convention dictated a change to smaller venues and so succeeding gatherings for London were held, first at Langley for a few years and then at the present venue at Chesham. By 1971 Blaby in Leicestershire had become the permanent home for the traditional Midlands Whitsun gathering, again with reduced numbers. The annual "Maranatha" week-long conference, which had commenced in 1950, closed its doors in 1980, for the usual reason, although on the other side of the coin a series of five-day gatherings in Yeovil, the "Patmos" convention, endured from 1978 to 1987. Dublin held just one fairly modest convention in 1976 but this was not repeated, and Lancashire friends organised a five-day function at Southport in 1986. It was evident, though, that the days of sixty years past when six or eight hundred brethren came together for a three or four-day session of exhortation, exposition, and fellowship, were no more.

Against this perhaps rather sombre background there must be set the emergence of one or two periodic functions associated with the younger fraternity. These are set in the Midlands where there is a greater aggregation of such. From the later

1960s and into the present there has been a regular week-long Easter get-together, intended mainly for the young, but open to all, at Purley Chase Conference Centre, near Nuneaton. The nature of the sessions and the subjects dealt with are those more likely to interest the younger element in the fellowship as are the recreational side-lines so often associated with this kind of function in most Christian groups. Whilst not suiting the tastes of some of the older brethren it must have its place in the Master's scheme of things.

The organised Pilgrim service continued to find its place, perhaps a little quieter than in the past. A number of old friends came from USA by invitation and fulfilled itineraries, planned usually by the London centre, visiting local meetings all over the country. Thus Paul Thomson came in 1958, renewing old acquaintances in forty-two towns. The same year came Will Siekman for a shorter period. 1960 saw Fred Essler on his first visit to this country where he travelled the whole territory from Cardiff to Ipswich and Portsmouth to Dewsbury. He was followed by Percy Read, the new secretary of the USA. Pastoral Bible Institute, who in 1962 covered the area from Glasgow to Bexhill and Cardiff to Ipswich with some visits to Ireland including Dublin, Belfast and Londonderry. Alex Muir set foot in this country on his first pilgrim visit in 1962, where after a mix-up at London airport on his arrival where, after advice of his arrival on, successively, two separate planes arriving within a few hours of each other, two unsuccessful trips from the London suburbs to meet him, several Transatlantic telephone calls on the part of the airport authorities to find out where he really was, he was eventually discovered waiting patiently in an arrival lounge, having been there all the time. Despite this apparently inauspicious start, he covered the entire country from the South Coast at Paignton, Bournemouth and Eastbourne through London and the Midlands to Glasgow and Dundee, then Northern Ireland and Eire before returning home. This era of organised USA visits was closed by Fred Essler and Alex Muir in 1967 and 1968 respectively with similar travels through the entire country.

From this time onward the tendency was for local groups to make their own arrangements for this kind of service, usually on

a small scale involving a relatively small number of visits in a particular area, sometimes inviting a USA or Canadian brother but more often utilising the services of a British brother. The services of the London centre ceased to be necessary or desired in this field of service; in any case it largely died out in later years.

The ever-extending arms of the Welfare State, it had long been thought, would eventually render the Benevolent Fund Service unnecessary and redundant. This, however, did not prove to be the case. Founded in 1919 twenty-five years before the Welfare State was thought of, 1967 found it still actively operating with contributed funds and meeting a need. It had been under the personal supervision of George Ford, who had looked after its fortunes since 1946, but by 1968 George was feeling the weight of years and decided it was time for a change. Consultation with the former administrators resulted in an invitation to three younger brethren who readily accepted the duties involved. This committee, with occasional changes, has continued to the present. Despite the existence and amenities of the Welfare State, this committee has found that the Lord's words on one occasion "the poor ye always have with you" are still, sadly, only too true, and the twin facts that the need still exists and the funds still continue to come in hearten them to continue in the work as of yore. Whilst it had been true that most of the larger city churches, when they were large, had maintained benevolent funds of their own for their own members there was always a wide spectrum of need among isolated brethren and small communities in various parts of the country and while the contributions to the fund continued, and continue, to come in, that need was and is being met.

Concern for those in need was also manifested in the province of impecunious old age. In earlier days, before the advent of the Welfare State, in 1946, there was, in the case of extreme and impotent old age without means or relatives, no alternative to the old-time Victorian workhouse, where the hapless inmates could do little but sit and wait to die. Within the circle of the independent fellowship the solution was often found by brethren of younger years and possessed of the necessary facilities taking such older ones into their own homes

and caring for them in their last years. By the 1930s the average age of the brethren was rising into the later years and this practice was becoming less feasible. Some desultory discussion on what could be done was beginning to be instituted but the pace of this was too slow for one energetic sister who eventually sailed into action on her own account.

Rose Bush was an ex-matron of a large London hospital, now in the early thirties retired from the cares of that position. Rose Bush was a rather formidable and decisive character with some sense of humour and a heart of gold. The thought of brothers and sisters in the faith who had laboured for the Cause in their own younger years condemned to rot in the workhouse at the last was repugnant to her, and, in her book, a challenge for someone to do something about it. Nothing less could be squared with her conception of the fraternity of the fellowship. So she did something about it.

Came a day when a stately lady (described rather irreverently on one occasion when coming up the central aisle of a convention hall as resembling a 19th century full-rigged sailing ship advancing under full sail) stood in the street of a South London suburb surveying a rather ancient three-storey Victorian house having many rooms. Rose Bush went ahead and bought it. One of her erstwhile hospital colleagues, Ruth Pressley, a sister in the faith, joined her. The brethren generally were apprised of the fact that Rose Bush was in the market for gifts of unwanted furniture and linen. Before long the house was fully furnished. Soon after that it seemed to be full of residents, elderly people in various stages of physical decline. This part of the proceedings seems to be somewhat wrapped in mystery. It used to be said, apocryphically, that the authorities at various workhouses, going about their legitimate business, suddenly found themselves confronted by a large and somewhat awe-inspiring apparition and before they quite knew what was happening found that one of their charges was in a rapidly receding taxi half-a-mile down the street. This may have been an exaggeration, but anyone who had known Rose Bush would have no difficulty in giving the story credence.

The Home for elderly brethren endured for some twenty years until 1955 when the redoubtable Rose and her equally

redoubtable Ruth had to give up on account of age and health. Rose died in 1957 but her memory remains as one who had no patience with protracted discussions and went out to do things herself.

How the venture was financed was always a mystery. The "old age pension" of the times was ludicrously small. Rose Bush used to say that if the Lord wanted the enterprise to continue He would send the money; her faith was vindicated and He did. Various brethren contributed. It is not likely that she was ever over-burdened with funds with something like twenty to thirty people to care for. She did the shopping herself, and the general public got used to the sight of a very large lady riding a very small bicycle from Croydon market laden front, rear and both sides with large bags of commodities, at imminent risk of contact with passing vehicles and meeting disaster on the tramlines. It is certain that a small detachment of unseen guardian angels must have been deployed on such occasions keeping the entire complex upright and steering a tolerably straight course.

In Rose Bush's book, of course, the fact that they were brethren meant that they must have a meeting. It was obviously impossible to get them to existing regular meetings or to conventions, so there had to be a regular meeting in the house. It was equally impossible to sit bedridden residents in chairs so part of the large room used for meetings had to be furnished with beds. The one thing no one could ever find out was how Rose and Ruth got the bedridden ones down the staircase, which was of the old-fashioned spiral type, from the upper floors. By the time the invited speaker from some other centre had arrived to conduct the meeting, they were all tucked up and waiting. Anerley, South London, was probably the only Bible Student meeting ever where the speaker faced an audience of listeners in several rows of beds jammed up tightly one against another. No one ever thought of fire risk and how they could be got out at short notice, which was just as well for it would not have been possible anyway. It is certain though that the same detachment of guardian angels which supervised the shopping expeditions was on duty at meeting times as well.

By 1950, realising that Rose Bush would not be here for

ever, the Welling group mooted the idea of a concerted effort to establish a suitable Home for elderly brethren in line with Government regulations which had recently come into force for the conduct of such establishments - the old house at Anerley could not by any means be made to conform to such, although it did in fact subsist for another five years. A notice of enquiry appeared in the "Monthly" for November and December 1950 but the proposal, sadly, came to nothing. The complex regulations now existing for new enterprises of this nature appeared too formidable - and perhaps there was not enough faith! But in 1975 it was mooted again, by the original proposers, and this time there was a marked reversal of sentiment. The usual adverse criticisms were made, but this time the "ayes" considerably outnumbered the "nays". A heartening aggregation of moneys was pledged by an appreciable number should the scheme go ahead; rather embarrassing was the fact that some, in their enthusiasm for the enterprise, sent monetary gifts before any decision had been taken, and these had to be banked and recorded in case it later became necessary to return them. The number who signified their wish to become residents at such a centre seemed to afford promise that the scheme would be viable, and so early in 1976 the decision was taken to establish such a Home.

The die cast, the search for a suitable property began. The favoured area was to be Dorset and South Somerset, in the South of England, where the climate was genial, the winters mild, and, importantly, where property prices were among the lowest in the country. A team of explorers, five from London and four local who knew the area, set out, in blissful innocence, at least as far as the Londoners were concerned, to find a large country house set in several acres of land in the midst of rolling countryside with a picturesque village not far away, in which idyllic setting the fortunate brethren could spend their declining years. It is possible that a mental picture of the future Millennial earth had somehow got a little mixed up with the ideals which had inspired the pioneers.

Somehow it did not turn out quite like that. The search endured for two years during which some forty varied but very fine country houses were inspected by one or other of the three

teams into which the searchers were divided. Starting in the summer the glories of the countryside where the sun was always shining were ardently pointed out by the enthusiastic house agents anxious to find a buyer for any one of the available properties which at that time and in that area were something of a drug on the market. It was not long before an apparently suitable property was found, set in three acres of magnificent gardens in a tiny village nine miles from the nearest town - and, wonder of wonders, it had been on the market for nine months and no one had yet been to see it. Surely it had been saved for the searchers! The Trustees of the newly formed Bible Fellowship Eventide Trust hastened to offer a price which exhausted their available funds at the moment and consequently was a little under the asking price, on the agent's assurance that the bid would be accepted - and so it would have been had not some stranger walked in at the last minute and offered the full price, and the dream faded.

Another house was found and this was better than the former. Four acres instead of three, a greater number of rooms and they were larger. The nearest town was only two miles away and there was a bus service. A bargain was struck and the legal formalities put in hand. They would have been completed quite happily had not the owner of the adjacent property, a retired military man, conceived a violent antipathy to having what he described as "a lot of senile old people" living next door. The Trustees felt that life in that locality might not be too pleasant and it might be prudent to cut losses, withdraw and look somewhere else.

That somewhere else proved to be a house in every respect better than either of the other two and a second set of legal formalities was put in hand. The local landscape was flat and there was a river not far away but nobody took any notice of that until a chance word with the local Planning Officer revealed that the river periodically overflowed its banks and flooded the land for miles around. Somehow the idea of elderly brethren wading knee-deep in water to reach the dining room did not seem too appealing, and enthusiasm vanished.

So the story continued, until six properties in succession had been approved and tentative agreement for purchase arrived at,

and then for one reason or another abrogated. Two years had passed, and attainment of the object seemed as remote as ever. "What you people need is a miracle" grumbled one agent to the sister who had been a regular enquirer for longer than he cared to remember. "You are right" was the rejoinder "and we shall get one".

And we did!

It was beginning to be borne in on the searchers that the rosy vision of a large country house set in spacious gardens in lush countryside miles from anywhere could have its demerits. Who would look after four or five acres of garden? Who would do the shopping and get the old folks' pensions in a village where there were no shops and no post office? What about the winter when snow blocked up the country lanes and communication was at a standstill? What about the maintenance costs for a large house only half tenanted at the beginning of the project? Were ideas a bit too ambitious and should it not be remembered that most of the achievements of the Truth had sprung from small and inconspicuous beginnings?

The result of all this was a meeting of the Trust at which a new and definite specification of desiderata was drawn up. The property was to be small in area, not exceeding one acre. The house was to be moderate in size, able to accommodate a restricted number at first. It must possess an unusually extensive range of outbuildings suitable for conversion into dwellings as the need arose. It must be in or close to a village where a post office, good medical facilities, and a suitable array of shops adequate for daily needs existed, and have a bus service to the nearest town. And when the specification had been drawn up the Trustees agreed with each other that in all their two years' searches they had never come across such a village and doubted if one such existed.

Fourteen days later a property was offered which met the specification in its entirety.

Gainsborough House, Milborne Port, was a semi-derelict property which had been bought by a local builder with the express object of restoring it and offering it for re-sale. During the entire time that the searchers had been scouring the two counties for a suitable property, this preparation had been going

on unknowingly to them. Now the Trustees stood in the gardens of the house, viewed the extensive range of outbuildings which met all their hopes, looked at each other and said "This is it!". And this time there was no hitch and no failure. Within four weeks the property was in the hands of the Trust and ready for conversion. In December 1978 the first residents moved in.

Following the putting into service of the main house, successive years have seen the progressive conversion of the outbuildings into self-contained flats which, surrounding the garden on three sides, have taken on more and more the complexion of a miniature village, a work which is still going on, for the full potentialities of the property have yet to be exploited. The year-by-year progress of the work has been made possible by generous gifts and legacies, small and great, from interested brethren not only in the UK but also America and Australia. Under the administration of a Board of Trustees drawn from amongst the brethren, it bids fair to continue as long as the need exists. Besides fulfilling its primary purpose of a residential centre for the elderly, it also receives visitors from far and near, and houses a library in which the literature and publications associated with the Bible Student movement over the century of its existence is kept for record and reference. The Deed of Trust requires that Gainsborough House shall always be confined to use as a Christian residential centre for elderly Christians, so that whatever the future may hold, those who have contributed and do contribute to its establishment and maintenance may feel that their gifts will always benefit Christian work. And for the distant future, the project and its well-being are in the Lord's hands.

A century ago the Bible Students proclaimed that the world was encompassing its own end, and the greed and selfishness of man would bring about utter disaster. They said that man's extremity would be God's opportunity, and that the rulership of Christ over the earth would supersede that of man and all things be made new. They expected that consummation sooner than the events have justified, but all that was then predicted has come and manifestly is coming to pass. World war, followed by the fall of monarchistic kingdoms and their replacement by peoples' republics, followed by social discord and finally general

anarchy, the world's social and commercial systems collapsing; decline in religious observance and increasing demoralisation of human conduct; the restoration of Israel to her native land and re-emergence as a sovereign State; all these things were foreseen, and they have all happened. And now the ecological system of the earth is breaking down and it is admitted on all sides that things have gone too far and no man knows how to put them right. This world has come to its end and the message of the Bible Students is what it always was. The time has come. "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our God, and of his Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever."

So this is not the end. It is the introduction to a new beginning. The dawn gleams on the horizon. The heralds of the dawn are still needed, those who understand the significance of the times in which they live, and are prepared to make its proclamation their life's work. God never in all history has left himself without a witness, and now in what is perhaps the most momentous period of world history that witness must still be given - not with acclamation and outward show as in earlier times perhaps, more likely quietly, unobtrusively, reaching into the hearts and minds of men and women who perceive the course the world is taking and would fain know the outcome. So the sowers can only scatter the seed which peradventure may inspire to a new understanding and a new hope. Scattered, but effective, destined to grow and flower and at the last bear fruit in that coming Millennial world which was the burden of the Harvest message.

So, it may be, those who laboured in the proclamation of this message which replaced Christian orthodoxy with a better and more cheering gospel, "of great joy, which shall be to all people", looking back on the achievements of the past, and participation in the perhaps quieter works of the present, may take good heart. Like the Apostle Paul two thousand years ago, they can reflect that they have been - they still are - "citizens of no mean city".



GAINSBOROUGH HOUSE - MAIN BUILDING



GAINSBOROUGH HOUSE - MEETING HALL



GAINSBOROUGH HOUSE - GARDEN AND FLATS LOOKING NORTH



GAINSBOROUGH HOUSE - GARDEN AND FLATS LOOKING EAST

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