

or that of his converts. We have therefore the authority of St. Paul himself in interpreting such expressions as "we the living," "we who remain" as general indications of those living at the time of Christ's return.

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*What exactly was the nature of the pillars of cloud and fire in which the Lord went before the Israelites to guide them in the exodus from Egypt? (Exod. xiii, 21; Numb. xiv, 14; etc.).*

It is a general principle of Catholic exegesis (and indeed, one might say of common sense in literary matters) that words should be taken to mean just what they say, and in their literal meaning, unless there be some good reason for preferring some applied meaning. Thus, if someone points to the horizon and remarks how clearly it stands out, we know that he means the horizon in the strictly literal sense; but if he says that the political horizon has become clouded, he is evidently speaking metaphorically. The English language appears to be unusually free in its use of metaphors, and it is one of the advantages of a Latin education that it helps us, by means of translation and composition, to say what we mean and mean what we say. Holy Scripture has likewise many metaphors and parables and other such free use of words, and we need to be careful in our terminology when dealing with it; the literal meaning of a parable, for example, appears to be found rather in the application than in the setting.

When God (Jehovah, Yahweh) is said to go before the Israelites in a pillar of cloud (Exod. xiii, 21), we know that he cannot have been present in the cloud in some special manner peculiar to the cloud. Holy Scripture is very free in its "anthropomorphisms" (a word from the Greek, meaning "man-figurings," i.e., figurings of God as man); it attributes to God, without always asserting any qualifications, the actions, emotions, etc. of man. But it also provides the necessary qualifications or limitations of such expressions; at the very beginning of Genesis, for example, God is said to be the creator of all things, and (not to dilate upon the matter) one may cite Psalm 138 (139: *Domine, probasti*). The cloud and the pillar were symbols of his especial protection, and he is said to be in them because he is acting through them. We ourselves sometimes say of a person that "he is in this matter" when he has had some part in the arrangements, and God was in the cloud and the fire in a far more effective sense than that.

On the other hand there does not seem to be any reason to doubt that there was real cloud and real fire; they were just what was wanted for the purpose, and could be made by God's almighty power to alternate. There does not seem to be any definite warrant for supposing that the cloud was luminous; on the contrary, the Hebrew of Exod. xix, 9, seems to imply a dark or thick cloud. In II Paral. (Chron.) v. 13, we should perhaps read, with strong support from good manuscripts of

the Greek Old Testament, "The house was full of the cloud of Jehovah's glory"; the cloud was glorious because it represented God's presence and power.

This glorious cloud was the "Shekinah," the "dwelling" of God with men. Much was made of the Shekinah in rabbinical writings, but the word does not itself occur in Scripture, though St. John may well be alluding to it, with a play on the words, when he writes that the Word "dwelt" (eskenosen : 1, 14) amongst us. We should presumably understand II Paral. (Chron.) vii, 1-3 to narrate how the Shekinah came to dwell permanently in the Holy of Holies in Solomon's Temple; but there is no sign that it dwelt in the second Temple, after the first had been destroyed by the Babylonians (587 B.C.)

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*What is one to make of the "mighty wind" of Acts ii, 2?*

The Greek translates more literally, "a noise as of a violent wind being borne along," and "being borne" may be rendered more intelligibly by "rushing." The wind, like the fiery tongues, symbolized the Holy Spirit, and the best commentary on the passage is John iii, 3-8. We may begin by translating John iii, 5 quite literally but inadequately, "Unless one be begotten of water and wind, he cannot enter into God's kingdom." The Latin "again" (born again) and "holy" (spirit) should be omitted. The reference is of course to baptism; and the Council of Trent (Session 7, in the second canon on baptism) has condemned the view that true and natural water is not meant. It is one of the rare cases in which the Church has defined the literal meaning of a passage of Scripture. But the word "wind" needs further explanation. In Hebrew (*ruah*), Greek (*pneuma*) and Latin (*spiritus*) the word for "spirit" is the same as that for "wind"; the former meaning is a refinement upon the latter. The word for "wind" in John iii, 5-8 is *pneuma*, but in Acts ii, 2 it is the more poetical *pnoe*, which does not appear to be used itself for "spirit," but comes from the same root as *pneuma*; here too the symbolizing of the Holy Ghost by "wind" is evidently implied. In English, unfortunately, although we have two names for the Holy Ghost ("Holy Ghost" and "Holy Spirit"), and although the word "spirit" comes from the Latin *spiritus* which *does* signify "wind," neither word can mean directly "wind," so that the full sense of John iii, 3-8 may easily be missed. If with all possible reverence, and for the sake of this explanation only, we speak of the Holy Ghost as "the Holy Wind," the passage may become clearer. Our Lord, as so often, is explaining what is spiritual by what is matter of everyday experience—not least, in this case, in our own country. We hear the noise of the wind, we note that again and again it has baffled the weather-prophets, that the weather-cock swings about without our really understanding why. "So," says our Lord, "it is with every one