



Volume 2

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Contents

In the Beginning.....	1
Christ Our Passover	13
Yahweh's Appointed Times.....	24
Thou Puttest Thy Nest in the Rock	35
Yahweh Elohim of Israel Liveth.....	49
Self Examination—An Exhortation	57
A Woman on David's Throne	64
Consider the Heavens	82
But Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?	97
Sorrow Is Better Than Laughter.....	108
The Prince of Peace	111
Lift Up Your Eyes On High!.....	125
The Living Creatures and the Bow.....	129
I Did As I Was Commanded	147
The Hand of Our God Is Upon Us	165
Destroyed for Lack of Knowledge	169
Seek the Lord, and Ye Shall Live	177
What Shall We Have, Therefore?.....	198
The Purpose of the Law	207
Tempted in All Points	214
What Doth the Lord Require of Thee?.....	222
He Found Nothing But Leaves	239
Yahweh Elohim	248
The Smitten Rock	273
The Treasures of Egypt	276
Sorrowful, Yet Always Rejoicing	280
Mortify the Deeds of the Body.....	293
Straight Words to the Colossians	302
The Mission of Jesus	311
By Himself.....	319
Grow in Grace	326
The Last Terrible Forty Years	366
Thematical Index.....	393

Preface

"Look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. The things which are seen are temporal: the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18).

Isaiah in chapter forty urges upon us a conception of God and the purpose of life that is overwhelming in its immensity. If we can by supreme effort, get in tune with His viewpoint, present things shrink into their true insignificance—

"Lift up your eyes on high, and behold Who hath created these things . . . by the greatness of His might, for He is strong in power" (v. 26).

"Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of His understanding" (v. 28).

This is the scale of conception that it is wholesome to dwell upon, and get away from the pettiness of our present surroundings. It is strengthening. It is uplifting. It engenders a sober, godly frame of mind.

The world is but a handful of dust, its troubled history an insignificant fraction of eternity, the seemingly real and actual present but a brief interlude that will pass like shadows before the rising sun.

This is the sphere of thought that is comforting and worthwhile. Keeping our minds in THIS channel will result in a course of action in harmony with these things and will fit us for a place in them.

We are told by well meaning but worldly-minded counselors that if we want a better position we must fit ourselves for it. We must fill our thoughts with its responsibilities and requirements. We must, as it were, mentally live in that sphere and accustom ourselves to it.

Now of course, this is entirely out of the question for those whose minds, in obedience to the counsel of the apostle, are wholly given to *better* things—they just haven't the time for it. But it illustrates the effort we must make on a higher and more satisfying scale. Often, sadly enough, the children of this world show more wisdom and initiative and energy in their aspirations than the children of light do in those things which are eternal.

The human mind is not bound to its immediate surroundings. If it were so, life would often become unbearable. But

consciousness is largely made up of memory and anticipation, beside that which is present to the senses.

Many people choose their solace by living in the past, comforting themselves with reminiscence and recollection. Most are wrapped up in the immediate present and the very limited future which comes within the scope of present undertakings.

"Eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die," is the universal doctrine, but only the shallowest, dullest minds can find merriment satisfying under such circumstances. Such an attitude requires the cruelest, bitterest form of self-deception and wilful blindness.

But in the mercy of God, there is a third alternative for those who feel the need. How is one brought to feel the need? By a recognition of the sadness and perversion of the present dispensation due to the incapability and inhumanity of man.

How do we learn differently? What prompts us to turn for comfort and satisfaction elsewhere? Usually it requires the rough hand of misfortune and disillusionment to make us fully appreciative of the vanity of present things. We are aware, it is true, in a vague, theoretical way, of the vast preponderance of sorrow over joy in the world, but we feel nobody's troubles as keenly as we do our own. This is in the very nature of things. Our minds can only work on what is being continually presented to them in some form or another. Unless constantly reminded either by circumstances or direct efforts of our own will, we soon forget and our attention is taken by other things.

This, too, demonstrates why we must constantly supply our minds with material for thought from the Word of God. If we do not, our minds will feed on other and unwholesome things that so easily present themselves to them.

What is the course of mental satisfaction that is offered to counteract the depressing effect of present considerations?

*"Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God.
Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her
that her warfare is accomplished and her iniquity is
pardoned."*

Such are the opening words of the reading from Isaiah 40. *"Her warfare IS accomplished and her iniquity IS pardoned."*

These things have been recorded for over twenty-six hundred years and the end is not yet. Some may be reminded, perhaps a little bitterly, of the statement by Paul to the Romans (4:17) that—

“God calleth those things which be not as though they were already.”

Clearly there could be no more striking example.

To speak assuringly of warfare being over when it still had a cruel course of over two thousand years to run may seem poor and misleading comfort—but is this the truth of the matter? A thoughtful consideration will show that this is but a narrow and unreasonable viewpoint.

Comfort depends upon the state of the mind. The comfort offered by the Scriptures is not dependent upon immediate fulfilment. It is the assurance of an ultimate reign of peace and good, that is separated from no individual by more than the brief span of a human life-time. Its comfort is not that distress is finished, but that distress is a controlled and necessary ingredient of the final result.

This is the viewpoint that prophet and apostle exhort us to maintain. We must live in patience and godliness, buoyed up by hope. We must center our minds resolutely upon that which is to come and face all present trouble in the confidence of this expectation.

“Sorrow endureth for the night,” says the Psalmist—and the night may be long—*“but joy cometh in the morning.”* The course of wisdom is not to ignore or belittle the sorrow, but to balance the whole picture. We shall not be overwhelmed by the one if the other is kept rightly in mind.

Thus we can enter into the spirit of these words of Isaiah and reap the comfort intended. We are not to regard the delay with skeptical impatience or lagging faith, but we are to build our lives and hopes upon these things in quiet and calm confidence that they represent the realities and that in God’s good time all will be accomplished.

—G. V. Growcott

Several years have passed since *“Be Ye Transformed”* Volume I was presented to students of God’s Word. The return of Jesus Christ is that much closer, and preparation for the day of Judgment has thereby become more urgent in our lives. The Psalmist states—

“So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom” (Psa. 90:12).

Volume I of *“Be Ye Transformed”* having been received with appreciation from many quarters we are moved to present

further exhortations and expositions by bro. G. V. Growcott; meditations which have appeared in "*The Berean Christadelphian*" pages over many years. While he has been at rest for over nineteen years, his words still speak with clarity, appeal, urgency, and force for those who have ears to hear.

The force of bro. Growcott's analysis of the Word is illustrated in the preface above, impressing its commands and warnings upon the senses, contrasting the passing nature of the world picture with its history of failures and frustrations over generations past. He presents the value of that which is eternal, against that which is temporal and passing.

"Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:16-18).

As prophets and apostles alike have exhorted—

"I set before you, life and death; blessing and cursing."

And Isaiah predicted—

"Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it."

By the mercy of God, this is the divine alternative, provided for those who feel the need, as bro. Growcott presents above. His words may be appealed to with assurance, having stood the test of many years, enlightening those seeking for salvation in their younger years; refreshing minds and memories of veterans in the warfare; comforting those of advanced age. They are a ready reference for diligent students and laborers in divine service, giving assurance to heavy hearts in their daily anticipation of the Master's return.

Volume II is therefore sent forth to accomplish the works of the Lord. May it be received in the wholehearted manner that its companion, Volume I has been. It carries the message of the Apostle Peter—

"Beloved, I now write unto you; stirring up your pure minds by way of remembrance: that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour."

May it receive the blessing of our Heavenly Father.

—E. F. Higham

In the Beginning

Psalms 1-2

"Forgetting those things that are behind, I reach forward unto those things that are before" (Phil. 3:13).

Today we stand at a new beginning—the beginning of a new year. In our readings we begin Genesis: *"In the beginning God created."* We begin Psalms: *"Blessed is the man . . ."* We begin the Gospel record: *"The book of the generations of Jesus Christ"*—Savior of the world.

There is great power in a new beginning. It is a time for self-examination and renewed determination and dedication.

In the wisdom and love of God, our lives are divided up into little periods of activity and consciousness, separated by periods of rest and sleep. Each new day is a new beginning. If we are sincerely trying to serve God, we can each day, with complete confidence, forget the failures of the past, as long as we rise up and try again.

God assures us through the prophet Ezekiel (18:22) that all past failures will be forgotten if at last we overcome. We must daily begin again. We must greet each day with renewed faith and hope, thanking God for each new day's beginning as it comes, doing our best for that one day while we have it, and closing the account as each day ends, to arise once more and begin again.

And now another full year of days has ended and been laid away, and we start a fresh new chapter in our lives.

* * *

Genesis 1 is a foundation, and a fortress. It is simple and satisfying, dignified and devout. It tells us of the creation of the present dispensation of things on earth in six days, about six thousand years ago. It is in direct contradiction to the speculation of "Evolution," and attempts to harmonize these two opposites have brought shipwreck to the churches of the world.

This is the frontier on which the Truth is being most seriously attacked today, both within and without. The ultimate purpose and end of the modern superstition of "Evolution" is to eliminate God and escape the authority of His Word.

And we see before us today the unbelievable sight of the churches of Christendom, corrupted by Evolution, seriously debating whether there is a God at all. What will the next generation see?

Let US hold fast to simple Bible Truth! Let us get the true BIBLE picture of man—the pitiful limits of his intellectual capacity and judgment. The mind of the flesh is folly, ignorance, change and confusion.

To be fearfully stampeded into going partway to accommodate the speculation of the fleshly mind is fatal. This chapter is our rock foundation. Hold its simple record, and we are safe. Evolution cannot get a foothold. This is the revelation of God.

But begin to twist it to fit man's speculations—and we are lost. There is nowhere to stop, as we see by the current speculations of some calling themselves Christadelphians, that Adam could not have been a special creation from the dust, as the Bible says, but must have evolved from a millions-of-years-old race of creatures.

And truly, this is the only reasonable and logical and inevitable conclusion once we let Evolution get its foot in the door.

There is nowhere to stop. We must at last go all the way down the slippery slope from the light of divine revelation to the darkness of fleshly speculation, as many are finding to their sorrow and dismay.

Some are toying with Evolution, trying to go to the brink, then stop and switch back to divine creation for Adam. But it cannot be done. Once the fatal course of accepting a little bit of Evolution is started, there is no logical end except complete abandonment of the Word of God and at last of God Himself. The churches of the world are very close to this now.

Let us thank God fervently and continuously for this first chapter of Genesis which is under great attack today by its reputed "friends." Let us accept it in childlike faith as our true brethren have in the past.

Let us not be swayed for a moment by the dark speculations of men, who know—and can know—NOTHING of the past; who cannot even run their own lives with wisdom; who in blind and proud folly choose the paths of death.

"The fear of God is the BEGINNING of wisdom." Anything short of this, however seeming wise, is darkness and folly, ending in death.

* * *

The Hebrew name for the Psalms is *Tehillim*—"Praise" or "Songs of Praise." The word "psalm" is from the Greek, meaning "A song sung to a harp," from the verb "To play on a stringed instrument."

The Psalms are divided into five books, like the books of Moses. This division is of great antiquity. The last psalms of each book are 41, 72, 89, 106 and 150, and each book ends with the words (or something similar):

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting! Amen and Amen."

The final psalm is a fuller expression of this same praise.

Of the one hundred fifty psalms, seventy-three—about one half—are attributed in the heading directly to David, and about twenty-five more to men associated with him—Asaph and the sons of Korah. These latter could well be psalms of David for these singers to use, making about one hundred as attributed to David. (That is, the word translated "of" as, "A psalm OF Asaph," does not necessarily mean "by," but can mean "for.")

A very few are attributed to others—one to Moses, two to Solomon, etc., and about fifty are anonymous. These headings of the psalms are very ancient and are considered generally authentic, though not part of the inspired Scriptures.

The total number of direct quotations from the Old Testament in the New is 238. Of these, one half, 116, are from the Psalms. We see, therefore, the great doctrinal importance of the Psalms.

Christ and the apostles, when speaking of the Psalms, refer them to David, and quote them as wholly inspired Scripture. They unhesitatingly base fundamental arguments on *single* words or even *parts* of words.

Jesus so used Psa. 82:6, "*I have said, Ye are gods,*" and Psa. 110:1, "*The Lord said unto my lord.*"

Paul, Psa. 110:4, "*Sworn with an oath,*" and "*A priest after the order of Melchizedec.*"

Peter, Psa. 16:10, "*Neither suffer Thine holy One to see corruption.*"

There are nine direct quotations from the Psalms in the first two chapters of Hebrews, and many more throughout the rest of the book, proving doctrinal points.

Let us keep these passages clearly in mind when any try to blur the edges of infallible inspiration, or to downgrade the Old Testament.

We must fully recognize the direct divine element throughout the Psalms—the INSPIRED element, and purpose: to foreshadow Christ and reveal the godly mind.

Passages which on the face of them appear to apply to David's own circumstances are quoted in the New Testament as specific, inspired prophecies concerning Judas and Christ.

The prophetic, Messianic interpretation of the Psalms was received by the Jews long before the time of Christ. The nation looked forward to a Son of David, who would be King of Israel and who would fulfil all the glorious things foretold, all the many detailed prophecies.

This is without parallel or precedent in any other religion or national history, and infinitely strengthens the evidence of divine inspiration.

Christ and the apostles confirm this expectation, and explain what was always a mystery to the Jews: the combination in one Messiah of a smitten sufferer and a triumphant conqueror.

Seven Psalms are strikingly and outstandingly prophetic of Christ, and they give the key to the others. They are: 2, 18, 22, 45, 72, 89 and 110.

Concerning 110, Jesus specifically says that (1) David wrote it by inspiration and (2) David is not the person addressed in it—that it applies to the promised Messiah.

* * *

The Psalms manifest an intense zeal against all forms of sin and wickedness, and all who choose such ways. This annoys moderns who in their supposed superior understanding and “compassion” prefer to pour a murky haze of what they call “love” over all distinctions of right and wrong.

But true godliness will stand with the Psalms: eager to help, eager to show compassion, but rigid and uncompromising and clearly outspoken against any ungodliness, anywhere, any time; and looking forward in eager and unashamed anticipation to the universal vindication and triumph of righteousness and holiness, and the unsparing crushing and annihilating of all who deliberately choose the God-defying ways of wickedness.

David showed great personal restraint in dealing with his personal enemies, under extreme provocation; but he recognized that *if good is going to triumph over evil, those who choose evil MUST be destroyed.*

Any sin, from smallest to greatest, when intelligently viewed, is seen to be rebellion against God, against goodness, against reality, against the divine purpose of ultimate joy and perfection and beauty for all. And though God is very long-suffering, all such must at last be called to account, and rigidly annihilated from God's glorified earth.

The mind of Christ hates sin with implacable hatred, as the enemy of God, the destroyer of all good for man, loathsome bringer of sorrow and death.

David, the "man after God's Own heart," hated sin (though truly on one occasion he sinned grievously). Psalm 51 portrays an utter abasement and remorse unparalleled in all Scripture. We should never think of David's great sin without connecting it with this Psalm—

"Have mercy on me, O God . . . blot out my transgressions.

"Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

"For I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me.

"Against Thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight.

"Purge me with hyssop . . . wash me . . .

"Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.

"Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation . . . Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God of my salvation!"

This is important in order to get the basic picture of the Psalms and David's special fitness to be the Spirit's instrument in recording the mind of Christ and of the ideal godly man. Paul said—

"Jesus Christ died to save sinners, of whom I am chief" (1Tim. 1:15).

He had done more harm to God's people and offered more obstruction to God's purpose than any man then living.

But, likewise, he was more intensely devoted, and suffered more, and labored more, for the sake of Christ and the Truth, than any man then living.

So David. His sin was terrible, both of itself—and infinitely more so because of his position of favor and prominence in God's purpose, and the harm it did to the cause of righteousness, and the glory of God among men.

Like Adam's sin, David's brought a long and bitter train of sorrow, strife and evil, and gave an occasion to blaspheme God that sinners still joyfully avail themselves of.

In the lives of David and of Paul we can find great lessons and great comfort. No failure is final if we will only continually rise and try again. Paul said—

"Forgetting those things that are behind, I reach forward unto those things that are before" (Phil. 3:13).

Today, as the New Year begins, is an especially fitting time to remind ourselves of this inspiring and comforting principle of Truth.

The supreme object of the Psalms is to declare the glory of God. This is not just an abstract or merely academic consideration, as far as man's welfare is concerned.

It is of primary *practical* importance for man's *health and happiness* to recognize and declare the glory of God as the central fact of reality and eternity. It is satisfying, purifying and ennobling. It is peace and joy-producing.

It is absolutely NECESSARY that we have this joyful frame of mind—continual praise to the glory of God. This is a vital first principle of the Truth, and without it we do not have the Truth. It is the first and *greatest commandment*—

*"Thou shalt love—worship, praise, adore, glorify—
the Lord thy God with ALL thy heart, soul, strength and
mind"* (Mk. 12:30).

The Psalms embody worship, song, prayer, meditation. They emphasize the great importance of singing—of the *spirit* of singing. Paul expresses it best when he says (Eph. 5:19)—

"Making melody IN YOUR HEART to the Lord."

If this is not our fixed and peaceful frame of mind, even amid sorrow and trial, then we have not yet found the power of the Truth and the mind of Christ.

Singing in joyful thanksgiving and worship always accompanied the sacrifices in the Temple, and made them acceptable.

Christ and the apostles sang together in praise to God on the night he was betrayed. (The usual portion sung at the Passover time was Psalms 113-118).

Paul and Silas joyfully sang praises to God—in prison and in great suffering.

Paul, writing to the Ephesians and the Colossians, prescribes the singing of Psalms, and so does James (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Jam. 5:13). Many of our hymns are from the Psalms. (All those we used this morning were.)

The spirit of praise is the godly frame of mind: the joyful, confident recognition of the eventual, irresistible triumph of goodness and godliness.

The Psalms combine true, inward, spiritual living with the fullest respect and obedience to God's specific appointed outward forms of worship, in perfect balance. Neither dare be neglected: neither dare be set against the other, or exalted to the exclusion of the other.

The Psalms manifest intense delight and interest in all holy seasons, services, observances, etc., and a fervent longing to be

in God's Tabernacle. While giving full weight to the spiritual aspect, we dare not belittle the literal. There is deep wisdom in all God's requirements and appointments. It is only the mind of the flesh that considers itself too "spiritual" and mature to need to obey the specific ordinances and commands.

* * *

The fundamental requirement that the Scriptures present to us for attaining salvation is that we MUST have the mind of Christ. We must put away the natural thoughts of the flesh, and bring our thoughts and desires and interests into harmony with his. The Psalms are the major provision that God has made to enable us to do this.

David was uniquely the "*man after God's Own heart*" or mind. He perfectly illustrates in his life, in his weaknesses and his strengths, in his stumblings and in his overcomings, the man who is well-pleasing to God.

The Psalms of David present the mind of the ideal man. Not the perfect man, in the sense of never having experienced imperfection, but the IDEAL man in God's sight, who out of weakness is made strong, and who, from the flesh, rises to the Spirit. The characteristics of this man are—

Unshakable trust in God;

Entire devotion of the life to God's service;

Full submission to God's will;

A deep, intimate mutual relationship of love with God;

A constant longing for God's presence;

An unmovable conviction of God's perfect righteousness;

An overwhelming consciousness of God's nearness;

A confident assurance of God's omnipotence, and of the final eternal triumph of goodness and the suppression and destruction of all evil, and the joyful salvation of all faithful servants of God who "hold fast to the end."

The Psalms show us man as he is, and what he may become in the love and promise and providence of God.

We find portrayed therein a deep sense of sin and weakness, together with integrity of purpose and recognition of the divine standard of perfect holiness that is the pattern and the ideal. The mind of Christ—the godly mind—recognizes mortal weakness and uncleanness, and seeks for divine strength and holiness—recognizes the sorrow and vanity and death related to present things, and seeks for joy and peace and love in God.

The Psalms express, above everything else, intense devotion and absolute trust. Their chief characteristic, and the chief

characteristic of David himself, is an intense awareness of God's immediate and all-pervading presence and care—over all nature, but especially over those who seek Him, most strikingly expressed in Jesus' words (Matt. 10:29)—

"Not a sparrow falls without your Father."

* * *

Psalm 1 is an introduction to the whole book. It sums up its entire message and purpose—the blessedness, happiness, joyfulness, God-favoredness, of the godly man—

"Blessed is the man . . ."

This was Jesus' first word in his teaching, as he began his public ministry to Israel—

"Blessed are the poor" (the trembling—the reverent—the godly) *in spirit*" (Matt. 5:3).

It is fitting that this book of praise, which so beautifully expresses the mind of Christ, should start in the same way as his oral, personal teaching.

"Blessed" includes all good—excludes all evil. It is all we need to know or have. If we are among the blessed of God we have everything, we lack nothing.

If we are not among His blessed, then nothing matters. Nothing can begin to compensate us for the loss of this all-important, all-embracing thing.

Verse 1: Tells us what the godly man does not do.

Verse 2: What he DOES do.

Verse 3: His blessing and destiny.

We cannot go any deeper, nor make the message any simpler, than this. This is life: plumbed to its depth and reduced to its simplest realities.

Attain this, and you have attained everything. And it can be learned, practiced, perfected anywhere, anytime, and under any circumstances.

"... that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful" (Psa. 1:1).

"Walking, standing, sitting" seem to express progressive degrees of association and involvement.

"Ungodly, sinners, scornful" seem to indicate degrees of active and confirmed wickedness.

Everything in life is moving. We cannot stand still. We are going up or down—toward life or death. If we WALK incidently with the unconcerned ungodly, if we permit a transient and apparently harmless passing association to develop, we shall

soon find ourselves **STANDING** with the deliberate sinners, and at last **SITTING** down with those who are confirmed in their scornfulness of God.

Why? Because to enjoy the company of the ungodly we must deliberately dull and suppress our spiritual sense, as with a drug, and this is fatal.

We must stifle our conscience—and this course is fatally progressive. And when we choose it, God judicially pushes us deeper into it, to our own helpless destruction. He sends a “strong delusion.”

Truly we inevitably must have many contacts with the world, both of necessity in daily activity, and by choice in endeavoring to proclaim and radiate the light of the Truth. Jesus actively and deliberately filled his ministry to the utmost with contact and association with people—even the openly sinful.

But he was never for a moment one of them, or one with them, though his enemies made great capital out of this association—
“Behold, a friend of publicans and harlots!”

But he was always completely separated from them by a perfect insulation of purity and holiness of mind and purpose.

He never for a moment forgot his one great purpose in life, his perfect oneness with God.

* * *

“Blessed is **THE MAN** . . . ”

—and only Christ is the perfect fulfillment of this Psalm—
“**THE MAN**.” But all may share in his blessing by being in him and like him as best they possibly can.

“His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law doth he meditate day and night” (v. 2).

Two important thoughts are here:

1. Delight in the law of God.
2. Constant day-and-night meditation.

To be acceptable to God, we must “delight” in His law. We must perceive its beauty and necessity and desirability. It is the freely-given, joyful allegiance of our hearts that God desires—not just the enforced obedience of our bodies, however dutiful and faithful such obedience may be.

We must see the *beauties* of God’s holy law, and we must be irresistibly moved by His love and goodness to *want* to please Him and draw near to Him.

We must love His law, both because it is holy, and because it is His. Truly, spiritual love cannot be forced or invented, but it **CAN** be *learned* and *developed*.

God first reveals Himself to us as all-good and all-powerful. He asks our love, and He asks us to conform ourselves to eternal reality.

He teaches us that we are by nature animal and unspiritual—unable to either comprehend or conform to purity and spirituality, but He assures us that love and affinity for these divine things that lead to eternal life CAN be learned and developed.

He assures us that the more we learn, the more we shall love, and the more we love, the more we shall learn. It is a progressive spiral upwards to life and joy, just as living after the flesh is a progressive spiral downward into sorrow and death.

“In His law doth meditate DAY and NIGHT.”

Does this seem like an impractical ideal—only for those who do not have a pressing daily round of labor and responsibility to take care of?

Perhaps we are missing the meaning of the meditation. It is not necessarily a withdrawn, abstract, inactive meditation, but rather a positive, active, practical application of the law of God to every phase and detail of life’s necessary activities.

We should do nothing, say nothing, think nothing, without the guidance of the law of God.

It must be our constantly consulted compass—our *“meditation day and night.”* We must ask at each step of the way, “What is the will of God?”—which is but another way of saying (and it is the whole key to life that we perceive and realize this)—it is another way of saying, “What is the way of wisdom, and joy, and harmony, and facing reality?”

* * *

“He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water.”

The law of the Lord is the river of water, without which the tree does not have a chance to live at all, let alone to bring forth fruit.

It is not enough just to have a vague urge to do what is right. There are people on both sides of every war with a driving urge to do what is right, and they cheerfully murder each other fulfilling that urge.

Clearly something more is necessary—and that is: TRUTH, Reality, Divine Light and Guidance.

The big issue is: are we going to trust our own natural thoughts and emotions and opinions as to what is right and good, or are we going to recognize that our own natural thoughts—however well intentioned, however well pleasing to

us—are deceptive and fatally misleading; and consciously seek God's law for guidance.

The latter course offers the only POSSIBLE chance of success and acceptance, and yet so pitifully few—even of those who claim to be Christ's brethren—follow this course.

The common view is: "I think this is all right, so it must be all right. I think this worldly fashion is all right. I like this worldly custom. It is so pretty. It is so appealing to the flesh. It pleases me and gratifies my lusts. I see no harm in it. I do not want to look into it honestly, and find out the real truth about it, and what GOD thinks of it. I do not really care what God thinks—I am only interested in what I think and like."

This is human nature—the thinking of the flesh; and if we are honest with ourselves, we can all see ourselves here, with our head in the sand of our own self-will.

But what about God's law, which we profess to love. If God has spoken on a subject, even (as we may think) obscurely—the only possible course of honesty, wisdom and love is to study it intently, search it out, and if there is any doubt as to the meaning, to keep on the safe side, because we love God.

Sometimes God is obscure on purpose, so that the true state of our heart and love will be exposed.

If our roots are not reaching ever more deeply and thirstily into this pure river of water that is God's law, we do not have a chance of life at all, for we are voluntarily (though perhaps blindly and unknowingly) choosing the flesh-pleasing way of death.

* * *

"That bringeth forth his fruit in his season."

This is what John said—

"Bring forth FRUITS. Every tree that bringeth not forth fruit is cut down and cast into the fire" (Jn. 15:2).

This is the test. "Faith without works is dead." Where is our fruit? What do we have to show? What have we done, what are we doing, for God?

Truly at best we are unprofitable servants, and we cannot be discouraged if our best seems very little, as long as we can honestly say it IS our most and our best.

"His leaf shall not wither" (Psa. 1:3).

Here is the real test of the wisdom of anything. What is the END? Will it last? Are we building for eternity? Or are we building on sand? Is the *ultimate result* of our course life or death?

Planning and providing for the future is recognized in the world as the difference between thoughtful intelligence and improvident stupidity, yet the REAL planning and preparing for the future almost everyone neglects.

But how soon health fails, and life comes face to face with death, and it is all over, and one more sinks into an endless grave—

“This their way is their folly” (Psa. 49:13).

But, *“HIS leaf shall not wither.”* He, and he alone, has really planned for the future, and the future is his—in glorious, endless immensity!

* * *

“And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.”

Can we take this literally and unqualifiedly?—

“WHATSOEVER he doeth shall prosper.”

Are we guaranteed success in everything we do? Yes, we ARE, if our “everything” is the everything of the godly man—

“ALL things work together for good to them that love God” (Rom. 8:28).

There are no failures, no mistakes, no disappointments, in the great and triumphant plan of God.

There IS a way of life in which we are *guaranteed* success and satisfaction in everything we do. That way is to *“bring every thought into captivity to Christ”*—to have but one pure, clear, single aim and intent in life: the fulfilling of the will of God.

In this way of life—(which only Christ perfectly achieved, but to which all can steadily get closer with ever-increasing satisfaction and success)—everything we do and everything that happens to us is, and is joyfully SEEN to be, one more meaningful, purposeful, necessary step carrying us forward to our eventual eternal goal at the end of the way (Prov. 4:18)—

“The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”

“AND WHATSOEVER HE DOETH SHALL PROSPER.”

Christ Our Passover

"Put away leaven out of your houses . . . whosoever eateth that which is leavened, even that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel" (Ex. 12:15-19).

EXODUS CHAPTER TWELVE

We have assembled again in joy and thanksgiving to commemorate the loving life-sacrifice for us of our faithful Elder Brother—

"CHRIST OUR PASSOVER IS SACRIFICED FOR US"

(1 Cor. 5:7).

In our first reading, Exodus 11 and 12, we have the historic institution of this observance: the *very first* of the Mosaic ordinances—given before the Law itself, and the only sacrifice still observed by the Jewish people. In chapter 11, God announced the final plague, and told Moses that as a consequence, the Egyptians will not only let them go but will actually drive them out. Let us consider together chapter 12, and learn what we can from the working out of these wonderful events.

Verse 1: *"In the land of Egypt."* The Passover preceded the Law. It was instituted while they were still in Egyptian bondage. It was in fact the very means of deliverance from that bondage. This is fitting.

Verse 2: *"The beginning of months."* This event is the foundation of their national existence: a completely new beginning as a chosen nation of royal priests. The word "beginning" is *Rosh*: chief or head.

Verse 3: *"The 10th day."* The Passover lamb was to be selected and separated unto God four days before it was offered. This may portray Christ's sacrifice four thousand years after the Woman's Seed was first symbolically designated in Eden as slayer of the Serpent seed and deliverer from the Serpent bondage. It was on this tenth of Abib, exactly forty years later, that Joshua led Israel across the Jordan into the Promised Land. And it was on this same day, too, that Christ rode triumphantly into Jerusalem, and was acclaimed as King. Israel, all unknowingly, thus selected its Passover Lamb of deliverance.

Verse 4: Each household must have a lamb, except that if a household were too small, two or more houses must combine in the observance. When we are few, we must draw more closely together in worship.

Verse 5: "*without blemish.*" Christ must be absolutely perfect in character and conduct, never once yielding to the sinful motions of the flesh. This was the tremendous, agonizing, lifelong burden he bore in love for mankind. Truly it was for himself also, as in God's wisdom he was constituted one of them in order to save them, and he partook of all their needs, including deliverance from the body of death by a perfect sacrifice. But the motive of doing it for self would have been far too little and weak to supply the power for this mighty work. Only selfless love for mankind was strong enough for this highest and greatest accomplishment in the history of the human race.

We are not required to do the same, nor could we; but we *are* required to make a tremendous, lifelong effort in that direction, with the same motivation of love: and produce measurable "fruit."

"*A male.*" God's arrangements are orderly in beautiful variety and distinctiveness. There is a distinct place each for male and female, and each excels in its own sphere. God has appointed the man as head, but the woman is uniquely blessed in being the source of the Seed of deliverance, without the participation or intervention of the man.

Modern, fleshly notions—on this as on everything—are an ugly, barbaric, misguided reaction to man's wicked and cruel abuse of his position of headship. All the spiritual beauty God appointed is lost.

"*Of the first year.*" It must be young. Christ was young, cut off in the midst of his years. Youth is ideally the time of freshness and strength and innocence and vigor. The redeemed will "*renew their youth.*" Age is weakness and decay.

"*Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth*"

(Ecc. 12:1).

"*Or from the goats.*" This is interesting. At first glance, it doesn't seem to fit the type, but there must be a lesson in it. Really, it is the goat-element which requires the sacrifice, the putting to death. It was the goat-nature Christ overcame and nailed to the cross. The sheep-nature does not come naturally. We are all wild goats by nature, but we must *learn* to submit as sheep to the hand of the Shepherd.

Verse 6: "*Ye shall keep it up.*" The word means "guard carefully." Some versions render it "guard" or "safe-keeping." God's Own purpose in Christ is sure and safe, and He also

requires very diligent care in man in relation to it. For four thousand years the glorious Lamb-purpose was safe and sure with God, Who changes not.

"Kill it in the evening."—of the fourteenth day. Literally, as margin: "between the two evenings." No one is sure just what this means. The Jews, and commentators generally, suggest it means between two parts of the evening, though they do not agree on where the evening is divided. This seems an awkward explanation: there's no hint in Scripture of one evening ever being called "two evenings."

The simplest explanation seems to be that of bro. Thomas (who comes up with many unique, yet clear and logical, explanations of puzzling passages). He suggests it simply meant sometime during the twenty-four hours of the fourteenth day, between the evening that began it and the one that ended it. (Jewish days begin in the evening, at sundown.) This, in the providence of God, enabled Christ to both partake of the Passover and be killed as the Passover lamb, all within the appointed time.

Verse 7: The sacrificial blood of the lamb was to be struck on the two sideposts of each house's doorway, *and the lintel* across the top of the door which connected the two posts. This was covering or purifying or protecting blood. It preserved the life of the *firstborn* from the Angel of Death. Christ is the Doorway: but considered more in detail, he is the lintel; and the two separate components of the Multitudinous Christ—Jew and Gentile redeemed—are the two sideposts or pillars he unites into one doorway. The lintel (Christ) is sprinkled with the sacrificial blood to deliver the firstborn (Christ). Truly we cannot always safely prove doctrines merely by types of *themselves* (though Paul by the Spirit is able to do this)—but the beauty and fitness of the type adds power and depth to the doctrine.

Verse 8: *"Eat the flesh in that night."* Night was the time of opportunity for partaking. Next morning would be too late, as there was to be none left available then. Clearly this is the present Gentile Egyptian night.

The Angel of Death struck the oppressor at midnight, and Pharaoh immediately arose and ordered Israel out. Too late then to fulfil what may have been neglected. It was similarly at midnight, we remember, that the sudden summons to the ten Virgins came to *immediately* "go out" to meet the arriving Bridegroom.

"With unleavened bread." This is clearly the most important part of the entire ordinance. Some aspects are specified once; some two or three times. But from verse 8 to verse 20 the prohibition against leaven is repeated *ten times*, and several times later, too. And the penalty for violation is being "cut off from Israel," which is used elsewhere (as Ex. 31:14) as synonymous with being "put to death." This is said of no other instruction here regarding this ordinance.

Paul, speaking of the Passover, tells us what the leaven means, and we see why the warning is so emphatic and oft-repeated. Leaven is "malice and wickedness" (1 Cor. 5:8). And unleavened bread he calls "sincerity and truth." Malice is any unkind or uncharitable feeling or intention toward others; and wickedness is anything displeasing to God.

Leaven, then, is sin, fleshliness, worldliness—anything contrary to God's will, or out of harmony with His holiness. Leaven refers to the state of the heart, and mind, and character, and intentions, and desires. "*Sincerity and truth*" is submitting wholeheartedly to the will of God in everything; utter single-mindedness. There is no other way.

"Eat it with bitter herbs." "*We must through much tribulation enter the Kingdom.*" Tribulation comes mainly from faithfulness: from denying the flesh, and obeying the self-crucifying commands of the Gospel. It is largely the inner struggle against self: self-control and self-denial, as against the self-pleasing and self-indulgence. Very few of us in these days have much we could honestly call "tribulation" from without—from our external circumstances. If we think otherwise, consider Hebrews 11, and be humbled.

Verse 9: "*Eat it not raw or sodden.*" Raw we can easily understand: both literally and figuratively. But why not "sodden" (boiled)? In all other sacrifices, it would appear from the incident of Eli's sons (1 Sam. 2:13-15) that the parts of the sacrifices to be eaten were *required* to be boiled and *not* roasted. Certainly at the consecration of Aaron (Lev. 8:31) and the purification of the Nazarite (Num. 6:19) the requirement was boiling.

It would seem that the requirement of *roasting* in this one unique sacrifice of the Passover is related to the required cooking of it *whole*, and not separating the parts. The latter part of the verse emphasizes this. This is the same principle as that which required *no bones to be broken* (v. 46): it must be prepared and preserved as an unmaimed entity.

We see this *literally* fulfilled in Christ on the cross, and *spiritually* in that sacrificial and purifying fires of tribulation are not to maim and break up the Christ-Body, but to perfect and purify and *unify* it.

Verse 10: "*Let nothing remain till morning.*" All must be consumed. All must be absorbed and assimilated by the participants. The meaning and the lesson is quite obvious: we must wholly assimilate Christ our Passover before the morning dawns. He is the Word: we must absorb it all.

If, due to any uncontrollable circumstances, any were left, it must be burned. It could not be allowed to even begin to corrupt. Christ could not be allowed to see corruption. It was not fitting for the spotless Holy One of God. And when the New Day comes, nothing will remain of the mortal flesh of the Christ-Body: it will be consumed and transformed by the Spirit-fire.

Verse 11: Four related requirements: they must eat—not in the normal relaxed way—but with *loins girded* as for energetic labor or travel; with *shoes on*, which Paul says is the "preparation" or readiness of the Gospel race (Eph. 6:15); with *staff in hand*—a staff is a support, a protection from danger, something to lean on, a help to steadiness and sure-footedness on a rough way. The staff is the guidance and instruction and law of God—

"Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me" (Psa. 23:4).

And, lastly, "*in haste*"—no time to be wasted. How vitally important is this last item in the race for life! Time is our most precious commodity. It is very limited in supply, as we realize as we grow older. We are given just so much. When it is wasted, it is gone forever: it can never be regained. At the soon-coming judgment seat of Christ, we shall have to give account of how profitably we have used it. How urgent then is the apostle's exhortation of brotherly concern—

"Redeem the time, because the days are evil"

(Eph. 5:16).

Verse 12: The final, culminating judgment on Egypt: God would slay all the firstborn throughout the land, of both man and beast.

God's ways are just. As a man, or nation, sows, so the same shall *inexorably* reap. That is inescapable, close our eyes in wilful blindness as we may. By our wisdom or our folly, day by day, we ourselves determine our own destiny.

God had warned Egypt from the beginning (Ex. 4:22-23)—

"Israel is My son, My firstborn: let him go!—or I will slay thy firstborn."

Egypt had cruelly oppressed God's people, and had decreed the death of the male children. Now was the inevitable day of reckoning.

Why firstborn of beasts? This verse says the judgments were against the gods of Egypt: to show their utter meaninglessness and powerlessness—those false, non-existent deities to whom they attributed their power and performed their licentious abomination of worship; and in whose name they oppressed Israel.

We are all well aware from archeological reproductions that all the gods of Egypt were animals. Their idols were all animal-headed. It was a vile, debased pantheon of fleshly abominations. The entire series of plagues were humiliating judgments on powerless beast-gods, but this final one was the climax.

Verse 13: When God saw the blood on the door, He would *pass over* that house. Here is the meaning and origin of the name. The blood of the lamb, applied in faith, shielded them from the Angel of Death.

Verse 14: The Passover was to be "a memorial for ever" in all their generations. It pointed forward to Christ, and was fulfilled in him. Since then, the memorial ordinance of Bread and Wine has taken its place. But the Jewish nation still keeps it, three thousand five hundred years after it was first ordained. Blindness, truly—but what a wonderful witness to the Truth!

Verse 15: "*Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread.*" This is really a separate feast, though related and connected. The Passover was the fourteenth of Abib. The seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread was from the fifteenth to the twenty-first. Seven is the full cycle: completeness of time. That is, leaven, or malice and wickedness, must be put away for ever. Not a trace of it may be found in the House for the whole period, or the offending soul is "*cut off from the congregation.*" We are dealing with very holy things.

In the natural type, it is a Jewish tradition—possibly in this case true—that it was seven days from the Passover till they crossed the Red Sea to freedom from Egyptian bondage, and that the unleavened dough they took with them lasted those seven days.

Verse 16: The first and seventh days were "holy convocations." This is the first appearance of this word, and the first mention in the Bible of an assembly especially for religious

worship: again very significant in connection with the Passover. The word (*mikrah*) means "called out," the same as *ecclesia* in the Greek.

No work was to be done for self. The days of holy convocation were completely devoted to the work of God—the first and last days, from beginning to end in symbol. This is a type of what God requires of us all our lives: nothing for self; all for the glory and service of God.

Nine times in the six verses from 15 to 20, the law and lesson of the leaven is solemnly repeated. This was *very* important.

Verse 22: The blood is to be sprinkled on the doorway by the use of *hyssop*. Hyssop is a symbol of cleansing (and we bear in mind that all *symbolic and typical* cleansing points to and emphasizes the divine requirement of a real and actual cleansing of the heart and mind and life).

Hyssop was used in the cleansing of the leper (Lev. 14), and the preparation of the red-heifer Water of Purification (Num. 19). And David, after his great sin, prayed with strong crying and tears—

"Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean"
(Psa. 51:7).

As hyssop is divinely introduced here in the *first* Passover, we find that in the same divine providence it appears in the *last* Passover upon Calvary, when a common, nameless Roman soldier—all unknowing of the part he played in the Play of the Ages, gave Christ vinegar upon hyssop (Jn. 19:29), at the completion of his dreadful ordeal for mankind.

"None shall go out of the door of the house until morning."

Another striking injunction with an obvious meaning. Only inside the blood-sprinkled door is safety and obedience. "*Abide IN me,*" Jesus exhorts in the beautiful parable of the Vine (Jn. 15), and he makes it quite clear therein that it is tragically possible to *not* abide in him, even though we thoughtlessly think we are. To "*abide in him*" is to give the life to holiness and the love and service of God, as he commands.

Verses 26-27 indicate that this foundation ordinance and its meaning must be faithfully *taught to their children*, as must all the Law that followed (Deut. 11:19). There are many indications in Scripture that children must be diligently and thoroughly taught God's law, and carefully drawn into association with the activities of the service of God at an early age—trained to take an intelligent interest; patiently and lovingly answered

in all questions and enquiries, as one would so assiduously nurture the first hopeful buddings of a tender plant. They are not to be brushed aside as unimportant, or allowed to loiter vacantly in an anteroom. They are the building-blocks of the future of the ecclesia of God; and the younger the training, the more deeply it is rooted, and the more thoroughly it transforms the fleshly mind. It is a tragedy in the Truth when parental neglect of these divine commands leads to a new generation drifting off into the world. It is a tremendous responsibility and lifelong obligation to bring living creatures into the world.

And clearly the ordinances, and all the activities of the assembly—and all the activities *outside* the assemblies—must be performed with joyful holiness and rigid consistency, so that the growing child will be impressed, and will ask with interest and desire, “What mean ye by this service?” (v. 26). Children are quickly disillusioned and turned off by a double standard of official and actual “righteousness.” How many children have been turned from the Truth in sorrow or disgust by the unholiness and unChristlikeness of their elders!

Verse 27: As this instruction of God through Moses was relayed to the people, they “bowed the head, and worshiped.” They were impressed, and they were thankful. They rejoiced in faith of the promised deliverance. Yea, they went further—

Verse 28: “*They DID as the Lord had commanded Moses.*” They worshiped, and they were *obedient*. This is very important; it is an essential part of the picture—literally, typically, and antitypically. It is the key to all.

Verse 29: At midnight, as forewarned, the dreadful blow fell upon all the land of Egypt. Every firstborn died, of man and of beast. The unerring selectivity would add immeasurably to the impact and the terror; *every* firstborn, and *only* the firstborn.

Egypt had brazenly defied God; and had cruelly abused His people through whom He had in earlier days saved and blessed Egypt. They had decreed the death of the nation in the murder of all male babies. God is not mocked. The judgment day had come.

Verses 30-31: Pharaoh immediately rose up in the night, and sent word to Moses that Israel must depart, adding, like the profane Esau when it was too late: “Bless me also!” Pitiful indeed, in its so tardy folly.

Verse 33: The Egyptians as a body were now *urgent* upon Israel to get out of the land. This, too, would be providential, and would greatly aid and expedite Moses’ gigantic task of

rounding up and moving two million souls on short notice. We know how difficult it is to get just a few to move quickly and orderly together. And we know how naturally stiff-necked and obstinate Israel was. They had, of course, been warned, and were generally prepared, but the actual signal to move came with very urgent suddenness, *just as it will to us.*

Verse 35: "*And Israel borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver and gold, and raiment.*" "Borrow" is a completely wrong word here, and is corrected in the Revised Version. It occurs nearly two hundred times, and is only three times rendered "borrow" other than in this case. It is usually translated "ask," but often "require" or "demand," as when God said to Job—

"I will demand of thee" (Job 38:3; 40:7).

There was no thought of borrowing, on either side. This was the "great substance" that God promised Abraham the people would come forth with from their bondage (Gen. 15:14). This was a just and righteous *demand* for payment for the long years of toil and bondage they had endured. And God moved the Egyptians with fear to pay up, and they "spoiled the Egyptians" (v. 36). That is, they collected up all Egypt's negotiable and portable wealth. It was customary for men in those days to keep their wealth in the form of jewelry and precious stones and metals. It still is, or was till recently, in that part of the world.

Thus were providentially provided the riches and precious metals that the people later gave in joyful willingness to glorify and beautify the Tabernacle of God.

Verse 37: "*600,000 men.*" That would indicate about two million people altogether. There's no difficulty about Jacob's family attaining this number in the two hundred fifteen years sojourn in Egypt. We are told many times that God made them especially prolific in Egypt. World population today doubles in less than twenty-five years, despite all efforts to control it. Some countries are doubling in less than twenty years.

Jacob's total household must have been at least one thousand persons, judging from Abraham being able to muster over three hundred able-bodied men born in his own house (Gen. 14:14). This household would be passed on to Isaac and Jacob, with increases. One thousand, doubled every twenty years, would be two million in two hundred twenty years. But Israel's rate of growth was supernaturally increased (Ex. 1:7; Psa. 105:24); so even Jacob's seventy-five blood descendants, plus all their wives, could easily become two million in that period.

Verse 38: "*And a mixed multitude went with them.*"

There would be many who, for various reasons, would desire to leave Egypt and be joined to Israel. They must have had some faith, based on the mighty manifested hand of God on Egypt, to set out on such a journey with no provisions or knowledge of what lay before them. They turned out to be a problem and burden for Moses and Israel, but Moses allowed them to come. Throughout the Scripture record, we see the principle of God accepting believing Gentiles into Israel. It comes out even more clearly later in the chapter. Paul calls the Jews' attention to this factor throughout the whole Old Testament, as in Romans 10:18-20, etc.

Verse 39: "*They baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought.*" This seems to have been about all they had, for the latter part of the verse says they had not prepared any food for the journey. Complaints of lack of water began early, but there is no record of complaint about hunger until they were a month on the way (Ex. 16:1-3). The land they were leaving was very fertile, and doubtless God enabled them to find food by the way until they began to get into the barren wilderness.

Verse 40: "*The sojourning of Israel was four hundred and thirty years.*" Paul's statement (Gal. 3:17) that the Law of Moses was four hundred and thirty years after the Promise to Abraham makes it quite certain that the four hundred and thirty of this verse refers to the entire pilgrimage period, and not just the stay in Egypt—just half of it actually being in Egypt. This fits in with the general Biblical chronological picture, and has been the accepted view till modern times. Modern views do not give much weight to the Word of God.

Verse 41: At the end of the four hundred and thirty years—"*even the selfsame day*"—the hosts of the Lord went out of Egypt. This is very striking and interesting. This puts the solemn sacrificial confirmation of the Covenant to Abraham (Gen. 15) on exactly the same date as the Passover and Crucifixion, adding another link to a very precise divine chain.

Verse 42: "*It is a night to be much observed.*" It would rather seem that this should be "*It is a night of careful vigil or watching*"—a reference to the importance of care and diligence during the long night of waiting.

Verses 43-49 repeat or give added details of the Passover ordinance.

Verse 46: None of the Passover lamb could be carried out of the house to anyone elsewhere. It was not efficacious outside

the house. All who partook had to be *in* the house, and *stay* in the house.

"Neither shall ye break a bone thereof."

John refers to this (19:33-36) as fulfilled in Christ's death: no bones broken; no corruption. Though persecuted even unto death, the Christ-Body remains intact and pure.

Verse 47: All Israel, without exception, *must* keep this ordinance: no exceptions, nothing optional. It was vital to their continuing to remain in, and be part of, the congregation of the Lord.

Verse 48: A stranger who is circumcised and submits in all respects to the law of God may partake of the Passover Lamb of God's deliverance. Here is a provision, at the very inauguration of the Mosaic dispensation, for faithful Gentiles to enter the Divine Covenant, even at a time when God's dealings were exclusively with Israel.

Verse 49: *"ONE law for homeborn and for stranger."* There is no respect of persons with God. Here, in this very *first*, and *most fundamental* ordinance given through Moses—even before the beginning of the Law itself (which was fifty days later, at Pentecost)—this glorious and gracious provision is made for any one of mankind who sought God: foreshadowing the later, full opening of the door of faith to the Gentiles *"in the fullness of times"* after the true, anti-typical Passover of Christ.

"One LAW." Except for one previous occurrence—appropriately to Abraham himself (Gen. 26:5)—this is the first appearance in Scripture of this word "law"—*torah*—which occurs so often thereafter. It is here applied to the Passover ordinance. The Spirit of Christ in the Psalms says—

"O how love I Thy Law (Torah): it is my meditation all the day!" (Psa. 119:97).

"CHRIST OUR PASSOVER IS SACRIFICED FOR US."

Brethren and sisters, above all things, let us cleanse from our hearts and lives any fleshly leaven that will cut us off at last from the Holy Convocation of God in Christ Jesus.

Yahweh's Appointed Times

"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him COME UNTO ME, and drink" (Jn. 7:37).

LEVITICUS 23: THE MOSAIC YEARLY CYCLE

This chapter speaks of the yearly feasts, or rather "appointed times" of the Mosaic Law. The Jewish months were lunar. The years were solar, as ours. Each month started with a new moon. The cycle of the moon is just a little over twenty-nine and one half days, so the months alternated twenty-nine and thirty days, with two thirty-day months coming together whenever the fraction over twenty-nine and one half accumulated to a day.

The year normally had twelve months or new moons, which is three hundred fifty-four or three hundred fifty-five days: ten or eleven days short of the solar year, so an extra month was added about every three years (actually seven times in nineteen years) to keep the year in harmony with the seasons.

At the present time, the month Abib or Nisan, scripturally the first month, begins with the first new moon after the spring equinox (the date that night and day are equal: March 20 or 21). This year (1978), Abib began with the new moon on April 8.

If there is a new moon after the twelfth month *before* the spring equinox, then the thirteenth month is added to the year, so that Abib, the first month of the next year, does not start before the equinox.

By some method like this, the year was kept in balance with the seasons in Bible times, but the exact method is not known.

By God's command at the time of the Exodus (Ex. 12:2) the year was to begin with the month Abib—roughly corresponding with April. So obviously it had been different before that. Jews today begin the year with the seventh Biblical month: approximately October. This custom goes far back into history, and this was probably the beginning of the year before it was changed to the Passover month. It may seem strange to us to begin a year as winter is approaching, but for an agricultural people in that area, it was very logical. It was another natural dividing line—the autumn equinox, and it was the end and beginning of the agricultural year. All harvests were completed by September: plowing and planting for the coming year began in October. In 1978, the modern Jewish New Year begins with the new moon on October 2.

The Mosaic memorial periods are all based upon the number seven. Seven is completeness: not just completeness as such, but completeness *in God*—completeness of holiness and rest and absorption into God. Seven is the basic cycle: eight is a new beginning. “Scientists” have many theories to explain the widespread use of the seven-day week, as it has no relation to any astronomical phenomena, like the month and year. The obvious and true explanation, of course, escapes them.

The basic memorial day was the seventh—the Sabbath—when God rested from His completed Creation work, and saw that all was good. Consequently, we find this chapter begins (v. 3) with the Sabbath law: the primary “holy convocation”—that is “*sacred assembly*”: a gathering and uniting for holiness and worship.

Beside the weekly Sabbath, there were seven yearly “holy convocations”—

1. The *first* day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread: Abib 15.
2. The *last* day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread: Abib 21.
3. The one-day Feast of Weeks: Pentecost—fifty days after the Passover.
4. The Feast of Trumpets: first day of the seventh month.
5. The Day of Atonement: tenth day of the seventh month.
6. The *first* day of the Feast of Tabernacles: fifteenth day of the seventh month.
7. The day *after* the end of the Feast of Tabernacles: *the great culminating day of the yearly cycle*: twenty-second of seventh month.

On none of these days could “servile” work (relating to daily occupations) be done. On one of them—the Day of Atonement—as on the weekly Sabbath, no work of *any* kind (even preparing meals) was permitted.

The yearly “feasts” or “appointed times” had several purposes, all directed to Israel’s spiritual well-being and fellowship with God. These ordinances organized their lives into an active and profitable pattern centered in and pointing ever toward God. They gave Israel—

Religious and devotional activity; organized worship and praise;

Repeated, regular remembrance of God’s goodness and deliverance;

Wholesome, God-centered pleasure and rest and change;

Instruction in divine things and human duties;

*National unity and cohesiveness and purpose and meaning;
Types and shadows of the Eternal Divine Purpose of Redemption, and Fellowship and communion and friendship with God in holiness.*

As mentioned, seven was the basic pattern and theme—
The seventh-day Sabbath.

The seventh month the culmination and most sacred.

The seventh year a Sabbath for the land itself.

Seven times seven years to each Jubilee: a complete new beginning again—all bondage ended; all debts cancelled; all heritages restored.

Two times seven days to the Passover, on Abib 14.

Seven times seven days to Pentecost.

Seven days each for the Feast of Unleavened Bread and Tabernacles, and—

Seven yearly days of holy convocation.

* * *

Verse 2: "*The feasts (set times) of Yahweh.*"

There are two different words used in this chapter for "feast." Neither means "feast" or has anything to do with eating. Where plural (as here), it is *mo'ad*, meaning "set time, appointed season," and it is so translated elsewhere (Gen. 1:14; 17:21; 18:14). It is applied to the Day of Atonement, a day of mourning and fasting.

When "feast" is singular (as v. 6), the original is *chag*, literally, "a pilgrimage to a sanctuary." It occurs over seventy times and, with rare exceptions, always applies to the three yearly occasions Israel must assemble before the Lord: Passover, Pentecost, and Feast of Tabernacles.

These three great pilgrimages or *chags* were in the first, third and seventh months. All (except the Passover day itself, which commemorated the Egyptian deliverance) were based on and related to the agricultural year—the sowing and the harvest: the seed dying and rising again to a hundred-fold fuller life. It was a wholesome agricultural life, as in the Millennium.

This chapter does not go into the details of the sacrifices offered on these occasions: that is all given in Numbers 28 and 29. There were three kinds of animal sacrifices, offered in this order—

CLEANSING: Sin offerings: partaken of by priest—forgiveness, reconciliation.

DEDICATION: Whole burnt offerings; completely consumed on the altar: total dedication to, and absorption into, God.

FELLOWSHIP: Peace offerings: partaken of by offerer himself (as well as priest). Communion and fellowship with God.

Besides these *animal* sacrifices, there were the—

Meal offerings: of cereal, though called "Meat" in the Authorised Version: recognizing God's provision in all things, and sanctifying all one's possessions to God's use, and—

Drink offerings: of wine: rejoicing and thanksgiving.

Verse 4: begins to enumerate the yearly ordinances—

Verse 5: the Passover, on Abib 14. This introduced, and ran into—

Verses 6-8: The seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread, Abib 15-21. The first and last days were the first two of the seven "holy convocations" of the year when no work could be done. The unleavened bread (from the Passover meal) was the feature that bound the Passover to this Feast.

Verses 9-14 describe the offering of the wave-sheaf of Firstfruits. This was barley, for that was the grain that ripened first. The grain-sowing began, as mentioned, in October, and the grain harvest was from about mid-April to mid-June, beginning with barley and ending with wheat.

This sheaf was just as it came from the field: the very first springing of the new year's harvest. It was offered on the second day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread—the 16th of Abib—the day following the holy convocation Sabbath of the 15th, which began the feast.

This Abib 16 was the day Christ rose: having died as the Passover Lamb on the 14th, and having lain in the tomb and rested on the sabbath of the 15th. In the crucifixion year, this holy convocation sabbath was also the weekly Sabbath, as was fitting for the type. Christ was thus the Passover Lamb that *died*, and the Firstfruit Sheaf that sprang forth to *new life* two days later—on the third day.

The Passover-Unleavened Bread ordinance appears to apply more particularly to Christ; as the Pentecost does to the Firstfruit Redeemed of this age; and the great final Feast of Tabernacles does to the harvest of the Millennium.

Verse 14 instructs that none of the produce of the new year could be partaken of until the Firstfruit Sheaf had been offered to God. All waited upon *that* to open the way to the partaking of God's blessing. We are reminded that the Seven-Sealed

Scroll of the Eternal Divine Purpose could not be unfolded for the ultimate blessing of mankind until the Slain Lamb appeared who was worthy (Rev. 5:2-6). Paul, referring to this way-opening and sanctifying Sheaf (Rom. 11:16), says that if the Firstfruit be holy, then the "whole lump" or body of the harvest is holy and acceptable.

Verses 15-22 give the ordinance of the Feast of Weeks (Ex. 34:22), or Feast of Harvest (Ex. 23:16), or Day of Firstfruits (Num. 28:26): later called Pentecost because it was fifty days from the Passover.

This was also a Firstfruits. As Christ is the Firstfruit of all to God, so the Redeemed of the present age are the Firstfruits unto him from mankind. The term is applied to both in the New Testament, and *this* ordinance seems to specially apply to, and be fulfilled in, the brethren of Christ.

Israel were (v. 15) to count seven full weeks from the day they offered the Firstfruit Sheaf, then (v. 16) the next day was this Feast of Weeks. As in the crucifixion year, Abib 16 (the day Christ rose and the Sheaf was offered) was a Sunday, or first day of the week, so would *this* Pentecost day be, fifty days later: *another* new beginning. On this day the Spirit was poured out on the Apostles, and they went forth to call out the Firstfruits unto God from all mankind.

On this day (v. 17) they were to offer *two loaves* which were baked from the new *wheat* harvest (Ex. 34:22). We note here two things—

First, there were *two loaves*: Jew and Gentile: the two folds; the two olive branches and two candlesticks: the two sideposts of the Christ-Doorway, of which he is the crowning and connecting lintel. And—

Second, they were *leavened*. Now the Law was very strict about prohibiting leaven in anything to do with the sacrifices (Lev. 2:11). Leaven is "malice and wickedness" (1 Cor.5:8)—sin—and it made any offering it was connected with an abomination.

This ordinance, and one other place concerning the law of the Peace offering (Lev. 7:13), are unique in *requiring* leaven in the offerings to God. Clearly God is not condoning or countenancing sin. That is ruled out by every reasonable consideration, and the whole bulk of the word.

But this has some reference to sin; some cognizance of imperfection. "There is no man that sinneth not." If perfect

sinlessness were required, none could be saved. These loaves were (v. 17) "*out of your habitation*": that is, the ordinary daily bread, just as it was. Surely we have a merciful indication here that—without for a moment belittling the seriousness of sin and the necessity of its complete removal—God accepts us as we are constituted in our present imperfect state and imperfect service, IF—and *only if*—we are completely dedicated (offered) to Him, and striving constantly to obey Him.

This Pentecost ordinance was the only occasion in the yearly feasts where a Peace offering was required (v. 19). We have just noted that apart from the Pentecost ordinance, the ordinance of the Peace, or Fellowship-with-God, offering was the only occasion in the Law where leaven was required, or even permitted. Both come together here.

Pentecost was the third of the seven yearly days of holy convocation, in which no servile work could be done (v. 21). All activity must be for God.

Verse 22 adds another feature without which the service and worship of the day would have been a mockery: *goodness to others*, provision for the needy, love of neighbor, service to mankind. No man liveth to himself (Rom. 14:7). Professed love of and service to God that does not inseparably involve love of neighbor is sterile and dead. None can be saved who does not give his life to the welfare of others.

Verses 23-25 give the law of the Feast of Trumpets: fourth of the seven days of holy convocation. Passover and Unleavened Bread were in the first month; Pentecost in the third (three is resurrection). In the Law, the pattern of cleansing was often one-three-seven (Num. 19:12; 31:19).

We are now beginning the seventh month, and four of the seven holy convocation days occur in this one month alone, including the most solemn one of all: the Day of Atonement.

The year is coming to a climax. From Passover to Pentecost was the range of the grain harvest: mid-April to mid-June. There is nothing in the fourth, fifth and sixth months. But now we come to late September and early October, when *all* harvests—fruit, wine and oil—are in.

All months, and all feasts, were introduced by the blowing of trumpets (Num. 10:10), but the first day of the seventh month was the *especial* yearly occasion of trumpet-blowing. Trumpets are proclamations, calls to attention, to assembly and to battle, calls of warning, of instruction.

This seventh month trumpet announces the beginning of the end. The seventh Trumpet of the Revelation speaks of the "*finishing of the Mystery of God, as spoken by His servants the prophets*" (Rev. 10:7). Pre-eminently, the trumpet-voice is the calling to the resurrection—

"The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised" (1 Cor. 15:52).

There were special Temple sacrifices on this day (Num. 29:1-6), but it was not a national assembly to Jerusalem: rather an alerting of the land to the beginning of the solemn, climactic seventh month—and especially of the approach of the great and dreadful Day of Atonement. Dreadful, that is, if approached without the deepest reverence and solemnity and humility. Atonement Day was fifth of the seven holy convocations.

Verses 26-32 give the instructions for that day—tenth of the seventh month—when all normal activity was completely suspended for twenty-four hours throughout the whole land, and every Israelite must "afflict his soul" on pain of death (v. 29). Three times in these verses is this affliction of the soul strictly commanded. And three times they are charged to do *absolutely no work*.

What did this "afflicting the soul" consist of? Clearly it involved *external* aspects, for whoever did not comply was to be put to death (v. 29). It would certainly involve abstinence from food, and from all fleshly pleasures and enjoyments. This day became known as "the Fast" (Acts 27:9). This was the one great day of the year to bring sin to remembrance: for a man to "examine himself": to labor mightily for self-purification and to seek the cleansing and mercy of God.

Fasting of itself was not specifically prescribed, nor would it *of itself* have been acceptable (Isa. 58:5). In not prescribing specific rituals of affliction, the attention would be directed to the inner aspects—the realities: inward examination and repentance and humility and rededication of the heart, soul, strength and mind to God.

This was the day when even the normal priestly ministrations at the Tabernacle stopped (Lev. 16:17), and the holy precincts were silent and empty while the High Priest alone went about his solemn, once-a-year task of making reconciliation for the nation: entering, on this dread day only, the inner sanctuary of the Most Holy, beyond the Veil, where the glory of God rested between the Cherubim, above the golden Ark.

This day of all days called for a humble and contrite spirit: no levity, no lightness, no manifestation of rejoicing, no self-pleasing, no going thoughtlessly about one's ordinary activities and pleasures. The entire nation in affliction and mourning, conscious of the great burden and disease of sin and fleshliness and self-will—

"Whosoever shall not be afflicted SHALL BE CUT OFF FROM AMONG HIS PEOPLE" (Lev. 23: 29).

There is a historic counterpart to this great day. Indeed, this would be the final national climax to which this day in type pointed in all its ages of observance. Did Israel have any idea of what the High Priest's ministrations on this memorable day foreshadowed?—

"They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn . . . a great mourning . . . and the land shall mourn, every family apart" (Zech. 12:10).

So this somber day was passed: twenty-four hours "from even to even" (v. 32).

But once every fifty years, as darkness fell and this day of affliction and mourning ended, there was a striking and unusual event, all the more striking by its contrast with the hushed mourning of the day.

Suddenly, just as the day ended—beginning at Jerusalem and picked up in ever-widening circles until the echoes rang throughout the whole land—the joyful trumpets of the Jubilee began to sound. The day of affliction and mourning was over, and the day of freedom and release and a completely new beginning had begun—another wonderful type.

The rest of the chapter (vs. 33-42) speaks of the Feast of Tabernacles: the seven days from the fifteenth to the twenty-first of the seventh month.

"Tabernacles" should really be translated "Booths," for it is an entirely different word from the "Tabernacle" of God, which is *Mishkan* or "dwelling place." The word here is *succoth*, meaning "hut or booth," a rough, simple, temporary shelter—usually of tree branches, from a word meaning "to entwine."

This Feast was primarily to remind them of the forty years in the wilderness (v. 43). It was thus a memorial of both the *deliverance* from bondage, and the *afflictions* of the journey. It was also called the Feast of Ingathering (Ex. 23:16), and as such it was the joyful thanksgiving for the bounties and blessings of God throughout the year. It was the great Rest, after all the year's labors, when all the harvests were in.

The first day of this seven-day ordinance was the sixth holy convocation.

And this feast was the third and last of those in which all Israel must assemble at God's Tabernacle. They were there required to build simple little booths (v. 40) of tree branches, and live in them for the week of the feast: high and low, rich and poor together (v. 42). In their harvest joy they were reminded that we have here no continuing city, and should not set our interest on present things. In the later corruptions of the nation, the faithful Rechabites carried forward this memorial in their lives, dwelling simply in temporary dwellings (Jer. 35:7).

They were to take palm-branches, and willow-branches (v. 40). Palms throughout Scripture represent joy and victory: willows represent oppression and sorrow—illustrating both aspects of the memorial. God's loving purpose with mankind of redemption and glory manifests throughout these twin aspects of joy through sorrow, peace through suffering, rest through labor, and exaltation through humility: that no flesh should glory.

As the Passover is Christ, and Pentecost is the Redeemed from the present, so the Feast of Tabernacles is the great millennial harvest of the earth. Each in its turn is a harvest: the Firstfruit Sheaf, the Firstfruit Loaves, and the total Ingathering.

The sacrifices of this week (Num. 29) were much more than at any other of the memorial periods: seventy bullocks, fourteen rams, ninety-eight lambs. But the bullocks (the principal sacrifice) *diminish* day by day to a perfect unity and completeness of seven on the last day. Here, as bro. Roberts points out, is a winding down of sacrifice; an approaching the end of the *need* of sacrifice: an approaching the time when all shall have been brought into perfect subjection to God, and God shall be all in all.

This was the Feast of *Ingathering*. It was a thankful celebration of God's blessing in the harvest, and all centered round the harvest. But once in every seven years there was no harvest to celebrate. Once in seven years they neither sowed nor reaped, and what grew of itself was for the poor.

During the feast that year, the procedure was different. It was the Sabbatical year. That year, the Law of Moses was to be read and explained to the nation as it was assembled for this week (Lev. 25:4).

The whole preceding year had been a year of rest from daily labor. Ideally, it was a year of learning and meditation and

study of the Word. How fitting, then, at this final great week-long assembly *that* year, the time should be given to proclamation and discussion of the Law of God that makes wise unto salvation!

Israel being what they were, it is to be doubted if this ideal occupation of the sabbatical year ever materialized to any appreciable degree or length of time, but how wonderful it *could* have been! What wonderful opportunities they had! What a wise and ideal set-up! But how few, in any generation or dispensation, have had the wisdom to use their God-given (and God-owned) leisure time profitably or scripturally! What needless tragedy the judgment seat will reveal!

* * *

The yearly ordinances were now over: the seven days in booths ended. Only one last event remained—the final day of holy convocation: the day *following* the Feast of Tabernacles: the eighth day of new beginning:

"The feast of Tabernacles for seven days unto the Lord" (v. 34).

"Seven days ye shall offer an offering . . . On the EIGHTH day shall be an holy convocation . . . It is a solemn assembly . . ." (v. 36).

The original word here for "assembly" is different. It only occurs a few times, usually applied to this particular day. Note that the margin has "day of restraint." Rather it means "day of closing": a closing ceremony. It is *atzereth*, from *atzar*, "to close, to restrain, to shut up."

This was the final day of the cycle: the day over and beyond the three yearly feasts. They were no longer in the booths, representing the wilderness journey. The sacrifices for the Feast of Tabernacles had come to a climax with the gradual reduction of the bullocks to seven.

In the symmetrical pattern of the three yearly feasts at the national center of worship, this final great day balances out the Passover day by which the pattern began—

First the one-day Passover, immediately followed	1 day
by the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread.	7 days
The second, middle yearly assembly was just one day—	
Pentecost, in the third month.	1 day
The third yearly assembly was the seven-day	
Feast of Tabernacles,	7 days
Immediately followed by this special,	
separate eighth day.	1 day

In John 7 is a record of the last Feast of Tabernacles that was kept before Moses' Law was nailed to the cross and forever done away.

"In the last day, the Great Day of the Feast, Jesus stood up and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him COME UNTO ME and drink" (v. 37).

A call to leave the passing-away shadows, and come to the great reality. We can picture what a commotion this would cause.

This "Great Day" was the culminating eighth day that closed the Mosaic yearly cycle: the *Atzereth*, the "closing ceremony." Little did Israel realize the significance of THAT DAY. *The Mosaic cycle, after one thousand five hundred revolutions, had run its course for the last time.*

As the next cycle began, with the Passover of the next year, the true Passover Lamb himself fulfilled in one-time reality the age-old and oft-repeated shadowy type, and the shadows forever vanished away.

The Jews carried on robot-like with the dead rituals for another thirty-seven years, until reality was forced upon them by the terrible events of AD 70.

And there will truly be *memorial* Passover and *memorial* Feast of Tabernacles in the Kingdom of God (Eze. 45:21-25), but under the new Abrahamic covenant, not the old Mosaic—

"NOT according to the covenant, saith the Lord, that I made with their fathers when I brought them out of the land of Egypt" (Jer. 31:31; Heb. 8:8).

That New Eternal Covenant has been confirmed by the blood of the true Passover Lamb.

Thou Puttest Thy Nest in the Rock

"Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before Me for ever" (Jer. 35:19).

There is a strange and interesting people associated with Israel all through its Old Testament history. They first appear in Genesis 15:19, as the leading name in a list of ten nations whose land Abraham is promised he will later receive. They are the Kenites.

This reference shows they were already a nation at the time of Abraham. We know nothing of them at this time, but we do know Melchizedek, the priest of the Most High God, was there. There must have been some faithful people to whom Melchizedek ministered. Several of the nations in this list were descended from Ham through Canaan, but there is no way of determining which branch of Noah's family the Kenites came from. This silence concerning them is perhaps significant.

Their next appearance is in Exodus 2:16. When Moses fled from Egypt, he came into contact with Reuel the priest of Midian, and his seven daughters. They are not identified as Kenites in this passage, but they are several times later. Once they are called Midianites, apparently from their dwelling at this time in the land of Midian among that people. Usually they are called Kenites.

The Midianites (descended from Abraham) always appear as bitter *enemies* of Israel: the Kenites always as faithful *friends*.

One unusual aspect of the Kenites is their habit and ability of peaceful association with, and living in the area of, other peoples, as we shall see in many cases. They usually appear as simple and harmless strangers and nomads—on good terms with neighbors but not entering into their conflicts: a strange people set apart.

Reuel was a "priest of Midian," but he certainly does not seem to have been in a position of power or authority, for it was obviously customary for the local shepherds to harass his daughters with impunity. He was surprised on this occasion when his daughters came home early as a result of Moses' intervention for them against the bullying shepherds. Reuel may have been a "preacher of righteousness" among the Midianites for any who would hear.

In verses 21-22 (Ex. 2) he gives his daughter Zipporah to Moses to wife. She bears him two sons. Moses lived with Reuel

forty years. There is no indication *when* during that period he married Zipporah, or when his sons were born. The natural impression the record gives is that his sons were quite young at the end of the forty years when he returned to Egypt, but there is no certainty of this.

In verse 18 we read that *Reuel* was Moses' father-in-law. Beginning chapter 3 we read of *Jethro* his father-in-law, and later on in Judges of *Hobab* Moses' father-in-law. There is some uncertainty about whom these three names apply to. The term translated "father-in-law" simply means "in-law," and can be also "brother-in-law" or "son-in-law."

The most likely solution (though not positive) is that Reuel and Jethro were the same person—Moses' father-in-law—REUEL (Friend of God) being his name, and JETHRO (Excellency, or his Excellency) being his title. Hobab was most probably the son of Jethro, and thus Moses' brother-in-law.

In Exodus 4:24-26, we find Moses on his way back to Egypt with his wife and two sons. At a certain stopping place for the night, God "sought to kill him"—probably Moses but possibly his son. Zipporah quickly circumcised the son, and said, "*Thou art a bloody husband*" or "a husband or bridegroom of blood."

"So He (God) let him go." And she said again, "A husband of blood, because of the circumcision."

A strange incident, though not quite so strange if Jethro was a Kenite among Midianites, and not actually a Midianite. For he was a faithful man and acceptable to God. Therefore if he had been a Midianite (of the seed of Abraham), circumcision would have been natural and inevitable in his family. There was no law at the time that any not Abraham's seed must be circumcised to approach God.

It appears from Zipporah's action and statements that she had been the deterrent to the circumcision of the son, though we cannot be positive. The fault may have been entirely with Moses. Certainly the *responsibility* was his. Clearly Moses was at fault—and to a degree that God considered very serious. Moses was on his way to lead a whole nation to God, and he had neglected his own basic obedience *in his own family*—his own personal affairs. How human! If Jethro was a priest of God *without* circumcision, then Zipporah's reluctance and apparent objection is understandable.

The fact that Zipporah immediately knew what was wrong and what must be done would indicate it had been an issue

between them. Moses' position may have been very difficult, especially for a "meek" man, but he had a clear duty.

Zipporah's double exclamation seems to indicate recognition and acceptance of the Abrahamic Covenant as a result of the open manifestation of God's anger: "*a Bridegroom of blood*"—the Blood of the Covenant.

Apparently because of this incident, it appears Moses sent Zipporah and his sons back to Jethro, and went on toward Egypt by himself, for in Exodus 18 Jethro comes out with Zipporah and the sons to meet Moses and Israel. This was very soon after Israel had left Egypt—as they approach Sinai. There are several interesting points—

Verse 7: Moses did obeisance to Jethro. This is fitting if Jethro was Moses' *father-in-law*, and the same person as Reuel. It does not appear so fitting if Jethro was the *son* of Reuel, and therefore Moses' *brother-in-law*, as some suggest.

Verse 9: Jethro rejoiced at God's goodness to Israel. This is typical of the Kenites throughout their whole history.

Verse 12: Jethro took a burnt offering and sacrifices for God, and Aaron and the elders of Israel came to eat bread with him "*before God.*" This fellowshiping together and God accepting his sacrifice is conclusive evidence that Jethro was a true priest of God, and accepted by God as such. He was host to Israel's leaders, and offered sacrifices in which they joined. They ate with him "*before God.*" It would seem from this incident that Jethro stood in a special relation to God. He is similar to Job and Melchizedek, though not of course in the same exalted category as the latter.

Verses 13-26: Jethro gives advice concerning the appointing of subordinate judges to take the burden off Moses. Here again there is a very strong recognition of God: almost an indication of inspiration—

"*Hearken to me . . . and God shall be with thee*" (v. 19);

"*If thou do this, and God command thee so . . .*" (v. 23);

"*So Moses hearkened to the voice of his father-in-law, and did ALL that he had said*" (v. 24).

Moses did *all* that Jethro said, and clearly God approved. Recognizing the exalted position of Moses before God, and his direct contact with God, and that he was the leading figure in the primary work of God in the earth at that time, even the eternal divine purpose—this incident gives unique stature to Jethro. We cannot draw the parallel too closely, but we are

reminded of Abraham before Melchizedek. Jethro departs (v. 27), and this is the last we hear of him.

* * *

Numbers 10 describes the setting forth of Israel from Sinai at the beginning of the second year—

Verse 29: Moses invites his brother-in-law Hobab to go with them, promising him good. Jethro had returned to his home a year earlier, but Hobab had either stayed on with them at Sinai, or had come in the meantime. Jethro must have now been quite aged.

Verse 30: Hobab declines the invitation. Perhaps this was just a polite preliminary formality, as in the case of Abraham paying for his burying place.

Verse 31: Moses presses the appeal, showing it is not just a courteous form but an actual desire for the benefitting of Hobab's help.

We are not here told Hobab's decision, but from later circumstances it seems clear that a considerable body of Kenites did go with Israel—probably the whole group, for we have no reason to think they split their community. This would be natural and fitting, (and providentially beneficial to Israel in later years), for they were worshipers of the true God, and God had now especially chosen Israel to place His Name and Presence among. Israel hereafter were to be the center of the worship and knowledge of God.

There was reason to expect, too, that Israel would be a righteous and highly blessed nation in the earth—but perhaps the Kenites had already seen enough of them to be too confident on this score. Perhaps Hobab recognized that it was God's will that the Kenites be helpers of God's people, for that is the part they play hereafter.

* * *

In Numbers 12, very soon after this, comes the incident of Miriam and Aaron speaking against Moses because of his "Ethiopian" wife. This comes into our present consideration if the wife in question is Zipporah, and this seems to be the case. This is the simplest explanation. "Ethiopian" (R. V.: *Cushite*) could well apply to the Midian area. Cush and Midian are associated in Habakkuk 3:7 in relation to this very area (when Christ, like Moses, advances *from Sinai* with his newly constituted nation). Cush, a son of Ham, begat Nimrod, the first great conqueror (Gen. 10:8-10), whose kingdom began in the Euphrates valley. Cush (or Ethiopia—same word) is applied in

Scripture to Asiatic areas and peoples before it is applied to Africa. Many of the nine other nations mentioned with the Kenites in Genesis 15 were Hamitic. Cush was the ancestor of Sheba, Seba, Dedan and Havilah—all in the Arabian area. So there is no difficulty in applying "Cushite" to Zipporah the Kenite who lived in Midian.

Furthermore, it is hardly probable Moses would take another wife. It is even less probable that, as the faithful and God-appointed leader of a people to whom he repeatedly conveyed warnings from God about foreign marriages, he would at this point himself take an alien wife. It would seem the poorest and most inconsistent example he could give. Yet God, in this very incident, commends and justifies him. We conclude, therefore, that the strongest possibilities are that the wife at issue was Zipporah.

Miriam, as Moses' sister, was very prominent at the Exodus. But at Sinai Jethro met them bringing Zipporah. Moses was extremely respectful to Jethro, and adopted without change all his suggestions for judging Israel. *Now* he pleads with his brother-in-law Hobab to help him lead the way. It is quite natural that Miriam and Aaron would feel that Moses' non-Israelite in-laws were becoming much too influential and prominent in the affairs of God's people.

The objections of Aaron and Miriam to the Gentile bride of Israel's leader and savior is a type of Israel's reaction to the taking in of the Gentiles. In fact, the Kenites as a whole—a faithful Gentile group taken into Israel through a marriage with Israel's leader—are a type of the Bride of Christ. Miriam's deathlike leprosy, and her being excluded from the camp for a period of punishment and purification, and also Moses' unique meekness and loving appeal to God on her behalf, all add beauty to the type.

The next reference to the Kenites is in Numbers 24—the prophecies of Balaam as he looked down from a neighboring height upon the vast, orderly encampment of the children of Israel in the plains of Moab, nearly forty years after the above incident (vs. 21-22)—

"And he looked on the Kenites and took up his parable and said, Strong is thy dwellingplace, and thou puttest thy nest in a rock: nevertheless the Kenite shall be wasted until Asshur shall carry thee away captive."

This immediately follows the prediction of the extermination of Amalek for their enmity toward Israel. Amalek was the

typical arch-enemy, while the Kenites are always friendly and helpful associates. According to a good authority, this can be translated—

"The Kenite shall NOT be destroyed, until . . ."

Either way, there is a contrast: Amalek to be exterminated; Kenites to continue all through Israel's history, and to be taken captive with them. There is no point in Balaam's being caused to mention the Kenites at all, *except* as they are related to Israel. Their relations with Israel are always good, so this can hardly be a pronouncement of doom or punishment, as for Amalek.

Another question: Is Balaam looking at the encampment of the Kenites who are accompanying Israel, or the Kenites already in the land? It would seem most likely and most fittingly the former. Though they are among the nations of Canaan in Abraham's time, there is no mention of them being there in the history of *this* time. They are hardly likely to be, as the nations of Canaan are to be utterly destroyed. If Balaam is looking at the Kenites *with* Israel, this adds deeper meaning to his statement—

"Strong is thy dwellingplace, and thou puttest THY nest in a (R. V.: the) Rock."

This would be in harmony with the imagery of his other prophecies. In Hebrew, "nest" is *ken*, and there is a play here on the name.

We wonder, too, whether from his lofty viewpoint, Balaam sees Amalekites lurking on the outskirts of the camp, ready to harass those who wander outside its protection. It would be very fitting.

* * *

The Kenites appear next just after the conquest of the land—

"And the children of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law, went up out of the city of palm trees (that is, Jericho) with the children of Judah into the wilderness of Judah, which lieth in the south of Arad: and they went and dwelt among the people" (Jdgs. 1:16).

This is the beginning of the indications throughout the record that Hobab and a group of Kenites—probably the whole community—*did* accompany, or finally join, Israel. It would appear therefore that some of them, led by Hobab, stayed with Israel all through the terrible forty years in the wilderness—a remarkable token of faithfulness and friendship.

We learn here that after the subduing of the Canaanite nations by Israel, the Kenites went from the vicinity of Jericho

to the southern wilderness of Judah, near the Dead Sea. Apparently they stayed in the Jericho area during the period of Joshua's conquests. This would be natural and logical, and in keeping with their later history. It was not their war, nor their land. They were close and friendly associates, but not actually of Israel.

Throughout the record they appear in a rather unique position of dwelling among and at peace with various nations, though those nations were natural enemies.

We met them first with the nations of Canaan. Then with the Midianites. Now they are with Israel. Later we find them with both Amalek in the south and with the northern Canaanites—not allies, but apparently at peace and unmolested. There is much food for thought here. They seem to have been a different kind of people, living on a different plane, with different interests, seeking little in this life, bothering no one, envying no one, at peace among warring elements—like God's people today.

Should they not have joined in more completely with Israel? Was not this expected of faithful aliens seeking God? Would they not then be expected to help in the war? In some ways they were unique. They appear to have been true servants of God *before* their contact with Israel.

From the very beginning of their association with Israel, Israel was rebellious and disobedient to God—all through the wilderness and as soon as they got into the land. The Kenites witnessed the whole sad picture, from the golden calf on.

We do not know to what degree they qualified themselves to enter into the national worship. Perhaps they went all the way. Perhaps the strange incident of the circumcision of Moses' son gives us a clue here (though in that case it was one actually married into Israel, so we cannot draw too close a parallel).

But as for their way of life, they doubtless felt that because of Israel's national proneness to rebellion and idolatry, it was best to maintain their separateness and distinction.

Jericho was the first point of entrance into the land. The people and city of Jericho were wiped out by divine decree in the first strike of Israel against the Canaanites. With the inhabitants gone, and the area well suited for flocks, this was the natural place for the Kenites to stay while Israel was subduing the land. The main Israelite camp was very close by, at Gilgal.

None of this story is actually explained. We have to piece it together. But this is almost inevitably the place the Kenites would temporarily wait, as we are told they *did*, until they could

go into the open desert area of the land more suited to their way of life. Consequently, when the tribes were settled in their inheritances, the Kenites moved to the very southern extremity of Judah, south of Arad (which was about twenty miles south of Hebron).

They may have particularly chosen to be with Judah, but it is more likely they chose this area because it abutted the open desert and suited their way of life. It was the only place in the land of this nature. Their actual *affinity* may have been (through Moses' family and their own inclinations) more with Levi than Judah. In one later reference some Kenites are spoken of as scribes—a Levitical occupation. There were Levitical cities nearby, and not only Levitical cities in general, but of the family of Aaron and Moses (Jdgs. 21:10-16). This is the area in which the priest Zacharias and his wife Elisabeth lived in New Testament times.

* * *

In Judges 4 (about 150 years later) we find one family of Kenites separated from the rest (v. 11)—

“Heber the Kenite, which was of the children of Hobab the father-in-law (R. V.: brother-in-law) of Moses, had severed himself from the Kenites, and pitched his tent unto the plain of Zaanaim, by Kedesh.”

This is on the furthest north border of the land, above the Waters of Merom, near the Dan settlement at Laish. Heber had moved from the extreme south to the extreme north, still on the open border. Again we see the characteristics of this people, choosing the less frequented border areas. And we note his dwelling is a tent, though Israel were now long settled in cities and houses.

The occasion is that of Deborah and Barak against Sisera and Jabin king of Hazor. In verse 17 we learn—

“There was peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite.”

It may seem strange that there should be peace between this cruel Canaanite oppressor of Israel and a member of the Kenites who had always been on such close and sympathetic terms with Israel. But it was just peace: not a league or alliance. It is in complete harmony with the general history of the Kenites who appear at peace with many discordant elements.

Certainly there is no doubt where Jael's sympathies lay in the conflict, and it would be unnatural to assume she was acting contrary to the sentiments of her husband Heber. She was not

betraying an alliance: she was merely bringing to justice a vicious criminal. Generally the Kenites seemed to dwell apart from the conflicts and rivalries of their more powerful and settled neighbors, but on two significant occasions in Israel's history, of which this was one, they struck a decisive blow for the people of God. Many times it would have been inappropriate for them to intervene, for God was frequently deservedly punishing Israel. On the two occasions they are recorded as intervening, it was in support of a man God had demonstrably raised up and was working with against current evils.

The Kenites next appear in 1 Samuel 15, when Saul was commanded to destroy the Amalekites, in fulfilment of Moses' curse and Balaam's prophecy. With our familiarity with the coarse surliness of most of Saul's actions as king, he seems rather out of character as we find him taking the trouble (v. 6), apparently on his own initiative, to gently warn the Kenites to get out of the way of danger, lest some harm befall them. Here we find them, again, dwelling in unmolested peace among the fierce and warlike Amalekites.

* * *

In 1 Samuel 27, David, while under the service of Achish the Philistine king of Gath, raided (v. 8) the alien tribes on the south borders of Judah, but in reporting this to Achish (v. 10) he says it was—

"Against the south of Judah, and against the south of the Jerahmeelites, and against the south of the Kenites."

This was true, but Achish understood him to mean he had attacked this part of Judah—not the nations south of it. We see the Kenites are still living on the south borders of Judah, and in sufficient numbers to give their designation to an area.

A little later, in 1 Samuel 30, when David is distributing the spoils of the Amalekites to the cities and areas that had befriended him when he was a fugitive from Saul in the wilderness of Judea, we find (v. 29) the "cities of the Kenites" among the recipients. The mention of "*cities of Kenites*" may be an indication that by this time they had begun to adopt a more settled form of life. This fits in with later events. We are now about five hundred years after the Exodus.

This incident is a clear indication that the sympathies of the Kenites were with David, though we have seen that—true to their pattern—they were on good terms with Saul. There must have been something about their simple and separate way of life that largely insulated them from the conflicts of the times.

They apparently had little themselves, and coveted nothing others had, and were therefore left in peace.

We now come to the two most interesting and instructive episodes of their long and unique history. About one hundred and fifty years after the time of David, we find Jehu anointed by Elisha to destroy the wicked, idolatrous house of Ahab, and to reign in his stead in the northern kingdom of Israel.

In 2 Kings 10, Jehoram, Ahaziah and Jezebel have been slain, and Jehu is in process of wiping out the remnants of the family. In the course of this slaughter, on his way from Jezreel to Samaria (v. 15)—

"He lighted on Jehonadab the son of Rechab coming to meet him."

Elisha had earlier prophesied that Ahab's house should be destroyed. This was public knowledge, as Jehu made clear in verse 10. Elisha had recently anointed Jehu, and said he was the one to do the work. This would not yet be public knowledge, but it seems clear that Jehonadab knew it. From their known characters and interests, it seems certain that Elisha and Jehonadab were acquainted. From some cause, whether direct instruction or not, Jehonadab was coming to meet and help Jehu—apparently from Judah, for all we ever hear of the Kenites they are in Judah, both before and after this, except for the single case of Heber who it specially says had "severed" himself from the main body. The Kenites, as worshipers of God, would certainly not move to the wicked, idolatrous kingdom of Israel, especially in the times of Ahab and Jezebel.

Verse 15 indicates that Jehu knew Jehonadab, but that they had had no previous intercourse about *this* matter. Jehonadab was a leader of the Kenites, and it is very probable he was widely known and respected as a righteous man. It is apparent from the subsequent history that he was a very outstanding character, and a strong and dominant personality. He left such a deep impression on his people that regulations he made were faithfully kept for at least two hundred and fifty years.

On meeting, Jehu blessed Jehonadab, and said—

"Is thy heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?"

Jehonadab said, "It is, it is!"—as the original has it. Jehu was saying—

"Are you with me in the destruction of Ahab's house and the Baal worship, as I am with you in the worship of the Lord?"

We know that Jehu was not a righteous man, but it was not apparent at this time. In the divinely appointed work of destruction he appeared very zealous for God, as many do. For the flesh, criticism and destruction are very pleasant and gratifying, but God requires faithful *builders*.

Jehu said, "Give me *thine hand*." Jehonadab did so. This was a joining together in the work. Jehonadab got up into Jehu's chariot and went with him (v. 17) as he killed the remnants of Ahab's house.

Then came the incident of the slaughter of all the worshipers of Baal by calling them to a supposed sacrifice to Baal. In this, Jehonadab was not only an approving supporter of Jehu, but an active partner, as we see in verse 23. It was a basic and necessary law of God that worshipers of false gods must be put to death. This was the second time when the normally peaceful and separate Kenites took a dramatic part in the history of Israel.

We hear no more of Jehonadab at this time. Immediately after the slaughter of the Baal worshipers we read (v. 29) that Jehu departed not from the sins of Jeroboam who had at the beginning of the northern kingdom set up the calf worship. The revelation of Jehu's unfaithfulness would be a great disappointment to Jehonadab, and would immediately end any association between them.

With the divinely decreed destruction at the hands of the seemingly so zealous Jehu of the two wicked kings of both Israel and Judah, and Jezebel, and all the Baal worshipers—Jehonadab doubtless looked forward happily to a reform throughout the whole land. Instead, wicked Jehu ruled in Israel, promoting the calf-worship; and even more wicked Athaliah ruled in Judah, promoting Baal worship, and the people were always ready to follow wicked rulers into the pleasant and fleshly corruptions of idolatry.

It may well have been at *this* time that Jehonadab renewed and reinforced the separated position of his people the Kenites, binding them to it in perpetuity. He doubtless could sadly see that national reformation was a hopeless dream that could not possibly endure, even if it should briefly happen.

In 1 Chronicles 2:55 we have the identification of Jehonadab, as father of the Rechabites, with the Kenites. This is in the midst of the genealogy of Judah, just before going into detail about David—

"And the families of the SCRIBES which dwell at Jabez: the Tirathites, the Shimeathites, and Suchathites. These are the KENITES that came of Hemath, the father of the house of RECHAB."

It is very interesting that they are spoken of as "scribes." Throughout their history we find them a pastoral people, choosing the open country and tent life, but this is no indication that they were rustic and ignorant. The shepherd David was the world's greatest poet. Scribes were usually associated with study and teaching of God's law.

In Jeremiah 35 we learn more of this house of Rechab of the Kenites, and of Jehonadab's relation to it. He is there called Jonadab, so we will use that form hereafter. This is the most detailed and intimate picture we get of this unusual people, and the most significant.

It is now two hundred and fifty years after the time of Jonadab, in the reign of wicked Jehoiakim, near the end of the kingdom of Judah. The armies of Nebuchadnezzar are, or already have been, in the land. A group of Kenites of the family of Rechab has taken temporary refuge in Jerusalem, because of the Babylonian invasion. Whether or not this was a wise move we do not know, but it fitted in with God's purpose at the time. They would be encamped in tents in some open place in the city, and would be an object of public interest because of the strangeness of their ways. Thus they were an ideal subject for God to use as a lesson to Israel.

God told Jeremiah to bring them to the Temple, and set wine before them, and invite them to drink. They refused the wine, saying—

"We will drink no wine, for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye nor your sons for ever. Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any."

"But all your days ye shall dwell in tents; THAT YE MAY LIVE MANY DAYS IN THE LAND WHERE YE BE STRANGERS" (Jer. 35:6-7).

For two hundred and fifty years this family of the Kenites had been faithful and obedient to the instructions of their father Jonadab. For two hundred and fifty years they had been a sign and a warning to Israel, for any who had eyes and ears to perceive. Clearly Jonadab's purpose was to keep their lives simple and separate from the settled inhabitants of the land, who were so easily given to idolatry and corruption.

No vineyards, no agriculture, a movable tent life such as faithful Abraham followed. No self-indulgence, few worldly possessions, no comfortable house or fixed abode: strangers and pilgrims in the earth. We live in very different times, but very similar in so many ways. It behoves us in these last corrupt and luxurious days of the Gentiles to examine ourselves in the light of these things, and take account of our stewardship. How much of God's goods, entrusted to us for *His* service, do we unfaithfully squander on ourselves and our families?

No vineyards: no wine. The Nazarite condition was the ideal in Israel of complete separation and self-abnegation from the things of the world, and devotion to God. In all probability, this was the foundation of Jonadab's regulations concerning wine. The end of verse 7—"that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers" (repeated from the fifth Commandment)—shows Jonadab's recognition of the relation between righteousness and possessing the land.

He could see Israel itself, the chosen people, both north and south, sinking deeper and deeper into those conditions of wickedness that God from the beginning—through Moses and later through the prophets—had warned would bring their expulsion and dispersion. Jonadab wanted to preserve his own Kenite people from corruption and punishment, and also to make them a wholesome element of preservation for the nation, and an example that might prolong God's mercy and forbearance toward them all.

It seems certain, too, in the light of Kenite history, that these were not on the whole new regulations, but were rather a calling back to, and making more firm and secure, a general way of life to which this people had always held, but which—with the passage of time and dangerous associations—was in danger of being lost, especially in the evil period in which Jonadab lived.

The addition of the Nazarite wine vow may have been Jonadab's way of reinforcing and adding spiritual depth to the testimony of the Kenites' separated way of life. There is much more power and dignity in the whole story if we can discern more in the Rechabite way of life than just blind, servile submission to arbitrary, man-made regulations. Certainly Jonadab had a *purpose*, and certainly his faithful descendants *recognized* that purpose. The closing words of the chapter—God's words—surely testify to this (vs. 18-19)—

"BECAUSE ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab . . . Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: JONADAB THE SON OF RECHAB SHALL NOT WANT A MAN TO STAND BEFORE ME FOR EVER."

Usually, to "stand before God" means more than just to be under His care. It usually means to hold a position of responsibility before Him in His work. It was used frequently of the tribe of Levi as the especial ministers of God.

In the final reference to the Kenites, Nehemiah 3:14, we find a "Malchiah the son of Rechab" helping Nehemiah rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. This reference is taken to indicate that, according to Balaam's prophecy nearly a thousand years earlier, the Kenites were taken away in the captivity, and some returned after the proclamation of Cyrus. It is to be expected that the faithful Rechabites would be among those anxious to return and rebuild the city of God.

Some apply the genealogical reference in 1 Chronicles 2:55 to the period of return from the captivity. This is quite possible, as the next chapter takes the line of David down to the return from Babylon. In the reference in 1 Chronicles 2:55 to the Rechabites as "scribes"—a Levitical occupation—some see the fulfilment of God's promise to the Rechabites of "standing before the Lord" as associated with the tribe of Levi in the Temple service.

It was through Moses, of the tribe of Levi, that the Kenites first became related to Israel. Jethro their father was priest of Midian and offered sacrifices of which Moses and the elders of Israel partook.

Certainly they were a very unusual people, and this final scriptural statement concerning them is a unique and high commendation in the direct words of God Himself.

Throughout their history they kept a separate path—a Gentile people drawn to Israel by the worship of Israel's God, living a simple life at peace with all, as far as they were able, though at certain times of crisis they play a decisive role in the affairs of Israel, always—as far as we have any record—on the side of helpfulness and faithfulness and wisdom and truth.

Yahweh Elohim of Israel Liveth

"What doest thou here, Elijah?"

Nothing is known of his family, tribe or background. He appears suddenly in the record for the first time in 1 Kings 17. His first utterance is of condemnation and judgment upon Israel.

The period of his ministry appears to have been about twenty years—from about 870 to 850 BC. This is during the reigns of Ahab and Ahaziah, kings of Israel.

The ministry of Elisha who followed him appears to have been about twice as long—from 850 to 800 BC—during the reigns of Jehoram, Jehu, Jehoahaz and Jehoash of Israel. Both these prophets were sent to the northern tribes.

The name Elijah means "Yahweh is God." This was his great message in a time of corrupt idolatry.

The name Elisha means "God is Salvation"—completing the message. These two prophets, Elijah and Elisha, parallel the ministry of John and Christ in many ways.

There were four great periods of miracles in Israel's history:

1. During the Exodus and wilderness wandering (the establishment of the nation).
2. During the time of Elijah and Elisha (the great crisis).
3. During the time of Daniel and his companions (the end of the Kingdom and beginning of Gentile times).
4. The time of Christ (new dispensation—end of the Law).

And the fifth is soon to come, the end of Gentile times and beginning of the Millennium.

As with Christ, there are three occurrences in the ministries of Elijah and Elisha of raising the dead: three is the symbol of resurrection. Also we find lepers healed, blind given sight, and multitudes fed.

But also there were punitive and destructive miracles. This first announcement of Elijah of the withholding of the rain from Israel, and the fire that he called down from heaven destroying successively the captains of fifty and their fifties.

In the case of Elisha—the bears destroying the young men who mocked him, and the leprosy put upon Gehazi.

Christ's ministry was of a different spirit.

Elijah was one of the greatest characters of the Bible. He appeared with Moses at the transfiguration as a representative of all the prophets, as Moses was of the Law.

He and Enoch alone did not die, but were taken into the heaven by God because of a special relationship to Him.

He is mentioned in the New Testament more frequently than any other prophet; and he is to come again at the last day to rouse Israel again to God.

He is the subject of the last prophecy of the Old Testament, Malachi 4. The Old Testament ends with the prophecy of the coming again of Elijah.

James cites Elijah as the great example of the power and prayer of the righteous. Jesus cites Elijah and Elisha as illustrating the call of the Gentiles (Lk. 4:26)—

“Many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, but unto none of them was he sent save unto Sarepta”
—that is, to a Gentile. And so with Elisha (v. 27)—

“Many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none was cleansed save Naaman the Syrian.”

Elijah performed eight recorded miracles; Elisha sixteen—it will be remembered he asked for a *double* portion of the spirit of Elijah, and received it because he was faithful and fearless, and saw Elijah's departure right through to the end.

Elijah is very prominent in the New Testament, from the angel's announcement to Zecharias of John's birth, to James' reference to the power of prayer.

Elijah was the great arouser and reformer of Scripture—to turn the hearts of the children to the ways of their fathers.

John the Baptist, whom Jesus said was the greatest of the prophets, was another strange, wild man from the wilderness, clad in the same rough garments; and he came in the spirit and power of Elijah.

Elijah paralleled John; while Elisha is strongly typical of Christ. Elisha means the same as Jesus—*“God Saves.”*

Elijah's ruling passion was uncompromising jealousy for the Lord God. He would tolerate no blurring of the issues, and no compromise with evil.

His great mission was to call Israel back to God—a mighty defender of God's Truth in a time of persecution and danger and wickedness in high places.

It was essential to God's purpose that such a man be raised at such a time—so he was raised up. He had come to arouse, to teach, to call out. Jehu who followed him was sent to purge and destroy without mercy.

Baal worship, like the world's current obsession, was glorification and worship of the lust of the flesh. Israel was fast sinking into utter Canaanite corruption and abomination, just as the whole world is today.

Elijah, the great Defender of God's Law, is tied in with Moses, the great Giver of God's Law—He fled to Sinai, the "Mount of God," and fasted there forty days. He ascended to heaven at or near Mt. Nebo—Moses' burying place. Like Elijah, Moses fled to Sinai when he felt his mission had failed.

Elijah's first sudden appearance (1 Kgs. 17) was with a dreadful message of judgment. It was a great crisis in Israel's history.

Ahab was the most wicked king Israel had (1 Kgs. 21:25).

"There was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up."

And in 16:33—

"Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him."

It was not just personal wickedness, but a systematic attempt to break down and corrupt the true worship of God—like today, a mixing of true and false—and mix Baal worship in with it.

Baal worship, brought in by Jezebel, beside having the prestige and power of the throne behind it, was very gratifying and appealing to the flesh, like the present corrupt modern philosophy of so-called freedom that is breaking down all the moral barriers; while the self-control of pure worship and obedience to God has always been humbling to the spirit and crucifying to the flesh.

Without a bulwark of strength like Elijah to sound the trumpet-call, Baal worship would have been triumphant.

The trend was—like today, in the world and amongst many of those called from the world—instead of a clear-cut distinction, to try to make the two compatible—to emphasize the similarities, and minimize the differences between Baal-worship and Yahweh-worship.

Elijah's first recorded words are especially significant in this connection (1 Kgs. 17:1)—

"The Lord God—Yahweh Elohim—of Israel LIVETH."

(Note that in the A.V. "as" is in italics—not in the original).

This was his great message, and the message of his name Elijah: his mission was to prove this. So is ours. There is a difference—a life and death difference—between Truth and Error.

"There shall not be dew nor rain these years."

The Old Testament record does not give the length of the drought, but Jesus and James both give it as three and one half years. This is clearly typical of the three and one half times, the 1,260 years, that occurs in various prophecies.

The Two Witnesses of Revelation 11, whose period was 1,260 years (three and one half times) had—

"Power to shut heaven that it rain not in the days of their prophecy."

Also in another application, from the Exodus of Israel to the return of Christ is three and one half thousand years. The Jews have been disobedient the whole time—there has been spiritual drought from the beginning.

At the end of the three and one half thousand years, Christ will come like Elijah, assemble Israel, force the issue, manifest the true God, and destroy all the false prophets of the flesh.

Verses 4-6: Ravens provided bread and flesh morning and evening. Bread and flesh are symbols of God's provision through Christ. We must *"eat his flesh"* and *"partake of the bread of life"* (Jn. 6:48-56).

The ravens were unclean birds. In Peter's vision, the unclean birds and beasts symbolized the Gentiles, and the extension of God's mercy to them.

Elijah, sustained by unclean birds, was to be sustained through the famine of Israel's wickedness by a faithful Gentile, the widow of Zarephath. Zarephath is close to Zidon, the center of the dominion of Jezebel's father. It is outside of Israel. Christ said of this (Lk. 4:25-26)—

"There were many widows in Israel, but to none was Elijah sent, but to a Gentile."

Similarly, Jesus himself went to this same place and found a Gentile of great faith—the Syrophenician woman. She recognized that the Gentiles were dogs and unclean, but she sought in humility the crumbs of God's mercy that Israel so carelessly dropped.

The widow was in the bitterest extremity—about to prepare the last meal left for herself and her son, and then resignation to slow death by starvation. Elijah said to her (v. 13)—

"Make me a cake first."

It seems cruel and selfish—but it was a divine test of her faith, with undreamed-of blessings in store if faith should prove true and strong, as it did on this occasion.

The woman showed great faith in serving Elijah first out of her last meal. But consider how much she received for so little! This is a picture of the salvation of God.

We must, in faith, freely lay our ALL on the line FIRST. Then, and then alone, will faith be rewarded, and salvation extended.

The little that she gave in faith FIRST was her ALL—and she gave it FREELY. That is the lesson. If we give all, freely, we shall receive a millionfold in return.

But we can't, in doubt or hesitancy, try it out just a *little bit* first, to see if it will work before we venture our all. Remember Ananias and Sapphira, who wanted to try it that way.

But the son of the widow died, and she cried to Elisha—
“*Art thou come to call my sin to remembrance?*” (v. 18)

She was conscious of unworthiness and had a sense of sin in the presence of this holy man of God. She felt his presence made her more responsible, and brought her sins into remembrance with God—

“*Where much is given, much is required*” (Lk. 12:48).

But the presence of holiness is to bless and not to condemn. Elijah restored her son to life, and she was comforted, and more deeply convinced of his divine appointment, and the truth of his words.

In the next chapter, the issue is joined between Baal and Yahweh. Israel is assembled at Mount Carmel, God is manifested in fire, and the prophets of Baal are destroyed.

Elijah ran before Ahab's chariot all the way from Mount Carmel to Jezreel. Here was the exultant apex of his zeal and triumph over Baal and for God.

But immediately, as he arrives at Jezreel, there was an abrupt and drastic change. He plunged in a moment from exultation to despair.

He had stood up alone against all the ruling power of Israel. He had fearlessly denounced the king to his face; forced a national showdown with the forces of Baal; and discredited and destroyed Baal's prophets.

Yet now he fled for his life, and hid, and had to be corrected and persuaded by God.

He, the great and zealous champion who had accomplished so much, and through whom the mighty power of God had been manifested; at whose word the heavens had withheld their rain for three and one half years—he gave up, and lost heart, and wanted to die—the great prophet who stood with Moses and Christ at the transfiguration.

There is both comfort and warning in this. He had done all he could—withheld rain—brought down fire from heaven—manifested God's power—exposed and destroyed prophets—still the evil power was in control and was totally unmoved by all the divine manifestation.

He had been fearless; but he fled, lonely and discouraged. Something was wrong in his outlook. He was very jealous for God, but took the whole matter too personally. He had counted on and set his heart on reform.

James says Elijah was a man "*of like passions*" as we. How true this was! There are no automatic heroes. We tend to expect the old prophets to be automatically and effortlessly strong, as if they were some super race.

This is how we excuse ourselves from manifesting the enduring, suffering faith that they manifested.

But the weak—and God can only use the weak, those who have sufficient wisdom to recognize their weakness—the weak are made strong and kept strong, only by constant effort, constant prayer. This is the record of the faithful.

"Out of weakness they were made strong."

This, and this alone, is how they—

"Subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of aliens" (Heb. 11:33-34).

But Elijah in his despair got things a little out of proportion. He took too low and narrow a view. There are no failures with God. All is foreseen, All is part of the plan. Most of the problems are just to develop us.

God was still in control—His plan would succeed. The whole weight of the problem did not rest on Elijah's shoulders. He was still just a servant of God, just to do what God said, and leave the concern about the outcome to God.

But we find God was very gentle and compassionate with him. God fed him and showed care for him and gave him time to come to himself, and manifested Himself to him in both power and love.

God gave him not just food as such, but a fresh, hot cake baking on the coals—food still bearing the evidence of living, loving preparation and care.

All have these periods of reaction and discouragement, especially after a great effort and a great manifestation of zeal

that suddenly is ended, perhaps unexpectedly and not entirely satisfactorily.

It is very comforting to see how the great characters of Scripture have had their times of stress and spiritual exhaustion, and to see how God has borne with them and brought them through—to labor in joy and zeal again.

"He requested that he might die" (1 Kgs. 19:4).

He was taking himself too seriously. He was presuming to tell God what was best.

He had had a job to do and had done it. It had not turned out as he had expected, but there are no mistakes with God. Only God can judge what is success and failure. Present, external results mean nothing.

And only God knows when a servant's work is done. Some have prayed to live when it was time to die. And some have prayed to die when it was time to live.

Both were misguided and unwise, and forgetting that God always knows best, and it is best to leave everything to Him. Only God Himself knows what He expects and what He is working out in us.

Disappointment seems to have been the great problem. He expected great results from great effort, and there were none.

Who are we to get discouraged if things do not go as we planned, or if there seems to be a lack of results in our efforts—just as if our puny little efforts really meant anything in the vast scope of eternity?

He ran away—right down through Judah—to Horeb (Sinai) where God had manifested Himself in power and glory, and where the holy covenant had been made between God and the people through the great mediator Moses—where the nation had been born in glory and in hope.

Why did he run there? Because it seemed like everywhere else there was evil and corruption and failure. There was a place of holiness, away from it all, the Mount of God.

"What doest thou here, Elijah?" (1 Kgs. 19:13)

Who told you to leave your post of duty, just because of your personal feelings? What happened to your work for God—your joy and zeal and faith in the Lord?

And there was a mighty wind, and an earthquake, and a consuming fire, but God was not in any of these. These are destructive things. God uses them, but He is not in them.

These are but the negative side—necessary because man is evil, and evil must be punished and destroyed. Man in his folly forces God to bring evil when He desires to bring good—

“Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly, therefore the Lord bringeth upon them the great river, the King of Assyria” (Isa. 8:6).

We foolishly force God to punish us.

But God is love. God is in the still small voice—the gentle voice of a loving Father’s instruction and comfort for His children. This is the real essence of the purpose. The other—the wind, the earthquake, and the fire—is but the passing background of travail through which the still small voice is leading many sons to glory.

Elijah should have known this. It was the seven thousand in Israel who had not bent the knee to Baal that counted. They did not show in the general evil picture, but they were there and God knew them. All others were but dross.

We can see why Elijah, in his discouraged flight, should be drawn to Sinai—why God would lead him there.

He was taken right back to the beginning, the glorious beginning, and was shown a broader view.

He was assured that sin would be punished, and that the purpose would not fail, and that a faithful successor should carry on his work, and Elijah would know that that work would go on and on in the earth—the still small voice of holiness and victory amid all the wind and earthquake and fire of evil and failure.

Jehu was the earthquake, as Hazael king of Syria was the wind, and Elisha was the fire, and the seven thousand faithful were the still, small voice.

If we but keep the right perspective, we can never get discouraged, we can never think of failure. In God’s sight there was no failure.

There is never more than a remnant, but that remnant is all-important to God, and He is ever watching over it, though it may sometimes appear that He leaves it alone in the darkness, as He appeared to leave Job—to test him to the uttermost and bring him forth like gold.

Self Examination—An Exhortation

In 1 Kings 20 we see God working through and for an utterly wicked and ungodly man, one who did evil above all who were before him. God's use of a man to do His work is no indication of Divine acceptance. We may see in this an explanation of why some labor brilliantly in the Truth and then leave it. They are just scaffolding, unfit for the temple but temporarily useful in its construction. We can never put our faith in men.

Why did Ahab make a covenant with Benhadad and call him brother, after all he had done to God's people? Was it a misguided sense of mercy and kindness? Ahab's character would appear to preclude this, although he may have told himself it was. One thing is certain: his course was dictated by the natural thinking of the flesh, and it was very displeasing to God. It was God who was fighting Benhadad, and yet Ahab took it upon himself in the midst of God's war to make a covenant of peace with the enemy. God decreed utter destruction. Ahab felt that because the enemy was weak he was harmless, and after the manner of the world he made a covenant that he felt would bring himself glory and profit.

God has decreed utter destruction to the flesh. The powers of this world are the flesh in political and social manifestation. The friends of God are the enemies of the world. There can be no private covenants of peace and calling them brethren while God is waging war.

When, through a faithful prophet, the God who had saved Ahab rebuked him, he went to his house heavy and displeased. The manner in which Ahab is led to condemn himself is very instructive. It was identical with Nathan's approach to David.

It is very difficult—almost impossible—to judge ourselves objectively, even when we are honestly making the effort, but if we mentally reverse the position, or look at our circumstances in the impersonal way it was presented to these kings, we often find our view of the matter is greatly altered and clarified. Few things are more instructive than to see others doing the same things that we ourselves have done, and to consciously compare our reactions. Viewed from that angle, determination is often revealed as stubbornness, kindness as weakness, self-reliance as pride, industry as ambition, thrift as greed.

Ahab felt a gratifying sense of magnanimity and benevolence. He had gloriously defeated this great king, and now he was

demonstrating the nobility of his nature by treating his fallen enemy with kindness and restraint. From every point of view, he would be well satisfied with his day's work, greatly and comfortably impressed with himself, in a receptive mood for well-earned congratulations and respect. How annoying, then, to have all this so rudely shattered, and in an unguarded moment to be led to publicly denounce himself in an obvious allegory. Little wonder that he went to his house heavy and displeased, disgusted with life and terribly hurt that he should be so misunderstood and unappreciated. How differently things can appear from different viewpoints! How easy to pity and excuse ourselves!

There is a little lesson in passing in verses 35-36. The prophet said, "*Smite me,*" and the man refused. And the prophet said, "*Because thou hast not obeyed the voice of the Lord, a lion shall slay thee,*" and so it happened.

God can be very terrible in His swift and relentless visitations of justice. It is imperative that we are fully and constantly aware of both aspects of His nature—severity and goodness. The flesh will inevitably presume upon its position if God's awful majesty is not kept clearly in view. It is those who have least cause for fear in this respect that are most acutely aware of the necessity for fear in its proper sense and place. Isaiah said, "*Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips.*" Daniel, the greatly beloved, in a vision that enacted the resurrection, stood trembling until the angel twice assured him, "*Fear not, peace be unto thee, be strong.*" When Paul says, "*Be not highminded, but fear,*" he gives us an idea of what he means by fear. It is the opposite of highmindedness. It is not terror or cravenness, but the humble and intelligent recognition of the exalted majesty of God and the unworthiness and insecurity of man at his best estate. If one sin could plunge the race into six thousand years of misery and death—if an entire lifetime under the tremendous strain of flawless perfection, followed by the most terrible of deaths, was necessary to establish a basis on which man could approach God—if we see around us and behind us the carcasses of millions wasting in the wilderness—then what other enlightened viewpoint is there for us than, as Paul says, "*Fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, we should come short of it?*"

The accepted in the day of judgment say, "*When did we those things for which we are being commended?*" The rejected say,

"When did we have an opportunity to do more than we did?" The only safe and acceptable frame of mind is that which strains every effort to render the best possible account of time and talents, but with a clear recognition of the deceptiveness of the flesh and the ever-present danger of failure if the efforts are relaxed. Any other course is gambling with eternity. Any other counsel is the mind of the serpent. If we could be doing more, and we are not doing it, how can we hope to be among the few chosen when myriads are swept away like a drop in the bucket? What distinguishes us from those myriads, that we should live forever, and they should die? Is God a respecter of persons or have we that one thing they lack—an entire, consuming devotion for the things of God? It won't come overnight. It won't just happen to us while we sleep. It can only come as the result of purposeful and sustained application and effort.

Do we, in moments of leisure or relaxation, turn to natural pleasures or to the Word of God? Here is the test of what is the deep undercurrent of our natures, and whether it will carry us to life or death. Do we do God's service as burdensome, necessary work, longing for a vacation from it; or is it a constant pleasure because of our great love for the One we are serving and our desire to be near Him and approved of Him?

There is the message to Ephesus. Let us look at it—Revelation 2. If we just read verses 2 and 3, what verdict would we give of Ephesus? Works, labor, patience, canst not bear evil, hast tried and exposed false professors of the truth; hast borne and hast not fainted. What more could be asked? What more could be done? They had fought the fight and kept the faith. Surely they could say with assurance, "*Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown.*"

But what do we find? Thou hast left thy first love—thou art fallen. Repent or I will come quickly and remove thy candlestick. The outer shell of works and labor and patience continued, but the original inner love was gone. They worked and endured and had patience faithfully, but just as a matter of duty, and were doubtless glad to get away from it all occasionally when they felt they had legitimate excuse to do so. They were conscious of their own patience and self-sacrifice. They performed the service of God as a necessary burden, faithfully done, but without the spontaneous pleasure and enthusiasm of love.

This does not please God. If, after all God has done and revealed and promised for the future, men are not sufficiently

enlightened and spiritually motivated to discern that the only real pleasure and satisfaction and relaxation is in Him and in His service, then He does not want their labors as a matter of burdensome duty, no matter how faithfully or patiently they are performed. We cannot give God anything. Even the service He requires is but the provision that His love has made for us to discover and enjoy the highest form of pleasure He has conceived and made possible.

He offers us an opportunity to work and live and commune with Him throughout eternity. All He wants is our full appreciation and wholehearted acceptance of the offer. He simply asks us to choose between Him and the world upon every occasion when the choice is before us, not as a matter of self-denial but of enlightened love and true preference. The fundamental requirement is that we must *want* to serve Him, whenever and however we can. We must desire Him above all things through a fully developed recognition of His infinite desirability. We all desire many things. Why? In many cases we could not give the reasons. We say they are natural desires. We desire things because we think, or feel that they are desirable; that they will satisfy certain longings within us. God has assured us that in Him all desires find their ultimate and permanent fulfillment. The purpose of life and the Scriptures is to bring a full realization and conviction of that fact to the minds of those whom God has loved and chosen.

There were many serious offenses among the Corinthians, things difficult to conceive of among brethren; but these very searching letters were written while the ecclesias were in the earliest formative stages. It had not been long since they had first heard the glorious news Paul brought and had come in out of the dark Gentile night. They had so many things to learn to make them spiritually-minded and acceptable children of God.

We marvel at the tremendous labor Paul undertook to form holy ecclesias of God out of the shapeless clay of Gentile ignorance and corruption. We get occasional glimpses of the material from which he drew. "*Such were some of you,*" he says, after cataloguing the deepest vices, "*but ye are washed, sanctified and justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus.*" Firmly and patiently he corrects them and molds them together into the body of Christ, always holding before them the highest ideals of holiness and perfection.

He speaks here only of going to law against brethren, but Christ had already gone much deeper when he taught us not

even to contest any legal action but rather to give more than is asked. We can afford to give. We have the limitless resources of the universe behind us. We have no need to worry about the consequences. We cannot lose. *"He that spared not His own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall He not with him, also freely give us all things?"* (Rom. 8:32). *"Take no thought—freely have ye received: freely give"* (Matt. 10:8). If only we can summon the courage and the vision to throw ourselves upon this promise—if only we can rise to the free and unrestricted heights to which we are invited—far above the petty, grovelling levels of anxious earthly care. Cannot we see here another major aspect of John's assurance, *"Perfect love casteth out fear?"* (1 Jn. 4:18). How perfect is our love and faith in this respect?

"If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31). Our only concern is to make sure that God is for us. Everything else will take care of itself.

Paul continues, *"Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?"* (1 Cor. 6:2). The flesh is so small. So wrapped up in little things. So concerned about passing trivialities!

The future rulers of the world! Those who lay claim to the exalted destiny of priests of God and kings of the earth. Those to whom will fall the administration of the lives of millions. What a sorry spectacle they all too often present! How out of keeping with their lofty aspirations! Custodians of priceless treasure bickering over pennies, each jealous of his fancied rights—each tenderly nursing his ruffled feelings.

Would Paul sometimes wonder if all his work were a sad mistake? Wonder if he were vainly wearing himself out trying to draw common clay to impossible heights of refinement and nobility? *"I fear for you,"* he said, *"lest I have bestowed labour on you in vain"* (Gal. 4:11). And the word *"labour,"* when Paul uses it, involved a measure of peril, hardship and bodily suffering that we can hardly even visualize. Paul, in his life, gave *"labour"* a real meaning. His was not composed of pleasant and convenient interludes, adjusted to the pampered desires of the flesh, but a steady, pushing, uphill course in the face of every conceivable disappointment and trial.

How he longed to draw them on to a point where he could enjoy deep spiritual communion with them, but they would not

follow. Their attention was taken up with other things that Paul knew were so unimportant. They would not put forth the sustained effort and application that was necessary. He must be constantly laying again the elementary first principles when, he told them, they should by now be teachers of the deep things themselves.

"All things are lawful unto me," someone answers Paul. How familiar that sounds! "Show me where it is specifically said to be wrong." Some never rise above this level. It is not God's intention to bind us hand and foot with multitudinous commands on every conceivable matter. He gives us general principles and expects us to apply them intelligently. He indicates the direction in which His preferences lie and expects us to be eager to press in that direction without being forced reluctantly by specific command. The frame of mind that hedges against giving any more than the absolute minimum commanded or hides behind the absence of a word-for-word injunction is useless to God. He wants the heart, and that freely given.

All things are lawful—but all things are not expedient. That is, profitable or conducive to the greatest good. There is a much freer and nobler purpose in life than just hugging the bottom limit of what is lawful. *"All things are lawful,"* Paul repeats, *"but I will not be brought under the power of any."* Much is made today of freedom, but how few are free! Freedom from the arbitrary domination of other men is a very small part of real freedom. Freedom from our own inherent bondage is much more important. Paul said, *"Who shall deliver me from the bondage of this death?"* (Rom. 7:24). The clutch of this inner law of sin that makes a godly life a constant struggle?

"I will not be brought under the power of any." *"His servants ye are to whom ye yield yourselves to obey,"* Paul tells the Romans. And Jesus said, *"Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin . . . The truth shall make you free"* (Jn. 8:32, 34).

Then Paul applies this basic principle like this: Do these "lawful" things in question, whatever they may be, hinder a complete fulfillment of the perfect ideal that God has set and Christ has exemplified and you profess to be your aim? Do they offend others, or cause them to stumble, or distract their attention from more important things, or reduce your weight and influence with them?

If any of this be true, then this verse applies—*"I will not be brought under the power of any."* I will not be a helpless slave

to anything, however small, that in any way interferes with my main objective. I will not enslave myself to a petty conception of my own dignity and "rights" when God calls me to the largeness of heart and breadth of perception comprehended in the Truth.

Paul says, as an example, *"If meat make my brother to offend, I will not eat meat while the world standeth"* (1 Cor. 8:13). The purpose of God is too great, and passing things are too small. The argument Paul uses is unanswerable. It should put to shame any contrary disposition. Christ gladly *died* for such a one—how far will *your* love go to avoid offending him or causing him to stumble? All things are lawful, but it is our glorious and exalted privilege to forgo our "rights" for Christ's sake, and with Him to suffer patiently when the wisdom of God requires it as a necessary ingredient in the bringing of many sons to glory. *"Let no man seek his own, but every man another's welfare"* (1 Cor. 10:24).

Paul concludes with his customary exhortation to holiness, *"Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" "Ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's"* (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

To glorify God is to visibly show forth God's characteristics, to openly champion all the things that God stands for, to publicly demonstrate the superiority of God's holy way of life over the narrow and mean and ugly way of the flesh.

The temple of God was very holy. The greatest care and reverence had to be manifested in all things connected with it, not a reverence that was fearful and depressed, but one that was joyous and free. *"The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are . . . If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy"* (1 Cor. 3:17). Great privileges—great responsibilities. They cannot be taken up half-heartedly or fearfully.

Outside are the fearful and unbelieving, the hesitant and faint-hearted, greatly desiring the reward but not prepared to forsake everything for it—hoping to find some way of gaining the future without placing any jeopardy upon the present—drawn by the light but afraid of the flame.

"But ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them." *"Having therefore this promise,"* Paul observes, *"let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement . . . perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord"* (2 Cor. 6:16; 7:1).

A Woman on David's Throne

Among the many events divinely recorded in the history of Israel, one of the most remarkable is the interregnum of Athaliah—her usurpation, reign, and destruction—with the consequent restoration of the house of David. It is unique, no such circumstance occurring before or after.

The historian informs us (2 Kgs. 11:3) that "*Athaliah did reign over the land*"; and we are impressed at once by the spectacle—a woman sitting on the throne of David! And such a woman! No daughter of Sarah, but a Canaanitish idolater; a concretion of all that is detestable and abominable in the sight of the Deity reigning in Zion enthroned in Jerusalem.

Hath not Jehovah covenanted with David that he should never want a *man* to sit on his throne? Our faith is shaken for a moment, and we ask what were the circumstances producing this phenomenon.

In order to obtain a right understanding of this revolution in Israel we must go back in its history, trace out its origin and development. The *causes of things* are often more important to know than the things themselves in matters where learning and instruction are to be obtained.

While the event itself may impress us greatly, it furnishes no teaching—nothing observable to avoid, or to follow. It is to the causes we must direct our attention; results cannot be avoided, they are inevitable.

Who was Athaliah? Where did she come from? And how came she to be Queen of Judah? She was wife to Jehoram, King of Judah; daughter of Ahab, King of Israel. Jehoram was son of, and successor to Jehoshaphat, late King of Judah.

The characters of these two kings—fathers respectively of Athaliah and her husband—and their relationship to each other, must first engage our attention. From this we shall be able to ascertain how so disastrous a state obtained in Zion.

Jehoshaphat and Ahab were contemporaneous kings in Judah and Israel. Unlike many of the former kings, they were on very friendly terms. "*After certain years,*" Jehoshaphat paid a visit to Ahab in Samaria; the latter made a great feast and received him royally. Ramoth Gilead at this time had been taken from Israel by Syria; Ahab seizing the opportunity, invites Jehoshaphat's help—

"I am as thou art, my people as thy people, my horses as thy horses,"

replies Jehoshaphat; thus placing his whole resources at Ahab's disposal (1 Kgs. 22:4). The opposite characters of these men would incline us to the conclusion that Jehoshaphat would not have joined hands with so notorious an evildoer as Ahab: the one was undoubtedly a good man, the other, a bad one.

These terms are but relative and convey nothing; goodness or badness must be considered *by that to which it stands related*. In the present case it is the Word of Deity; we have then to search the Scriptures to know what made them so. Of Jehoshaphat it is recorded in 2 Chronicles 17:3-10—

“And the Lord was with Jehoshaphat because he walked in the way of his father David, and sought not unto Baalim . . . therefore the Lord stablished the kingdom in his hand . . . and he had riches and honor in abundance . . .”

“In the third year of his reign he sent princes, Levites, and priests to teach in the cities of Judah . . . and they had the Book of the Law with them . . . and taught the people.”

“And the fear of the Lord fell upon all the kingdoms round about so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat.”

In chapter 19:5-9, it is written—

“And he set judges in the land throughout all the fenced cities of Judah, city by city, and said, Take heed what ye do for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord who is with you in the judgment . . .”

“Wherefore now let the fear of the Lord be upon you; . . . thus shall ye do in the fear of the Lord, faithfully and with a perfect heart.”

This is a character pleasant to contemplate, resulting in great blessings not only to the king, but the subjects also. The Lord was with him, and the land had peace—

“When the righteous are in authority the people rejoice, but when the wicked beareth rule the people mourn” (Prov. 29:2).

The people of Judah were enjoying the blessings consequent upon a righteous reign.

For twenty-five years this continued, a sufficient time for the whole land to be well established according to the righteousness of their king; for we have this record at his death, that—

“He departed not from doing what was right in the sight of the Lord” (2 Chr. 20:32).

From such a record as this we expect to find a righteous continuance in the son and successor. We cannot admit that

so excellent a king, so diligent in teaching his people the ways of the Lord God of Israel, and in abolishing idolatry out of the land, could have been a less excellent father, neglecting his own children, not bringing them up in the fear of the Lord.

Instead, however, of this happy condition continuing, *an era of bloodshed and idolatry immediately commences*, the outcome of which is the spectacle presented to us of *a woman ruling Judah*, a worshipper of Baal established in Zion.

Although we have so admirable a character in Jehoshaphat, we can nevertheless trace to him the origin of this great evil. We find him lacking in that principle so characteristic of the prophets and all God's children in times past, namely—that stern contention for the truth shown in Phinehas.

Though so zealous in repressing idolatry and teaching his own people the law of the Lord, *yet we find him fast friends with one of whom it is written that he did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him!*

It is through this ill-advised friendliness, a yielding to that good natured but deceitful and destructive sentiment that makes friends with the world where purity is sacrificed for peace. This was the "cause" that produced the unhappy result we are considering.

"The law of the wise is a fountain of life to depart from the snares of death" (Prov. 13:14).

"When the King sitteth upon the throne of his Kingdom, he shall write him a copy of this law, and he shall read therein all the days of his life" (Deut. 17:18-19).

It was written in this Law (Deut. 13:12-18)—

"If thou shalt hear in one of thy cities that . . . men have withdrawn the inhabitants, saying, Let us go and serve other gods . . . behold, if it be true . . . thou shalt smite the inhabitants of that city destroying it utterly."

This was the Word of the Lord that Jehoshaphat should have executed upon the house of Ahab. He failed to do so. On the contrary, he is fast friends with him, helps him personally to fight his battles, providing him with war material, and *finally consummates his folly by joining affinity in marriage*, and Athaliah becomes wife to his son Jehoram, heir to the throne of the Lord in the land of the house of David.

How different the testimony to Ahab's character recorded in 1 Kings 16:25-33.

"And Ahab made a grove and did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him" (v. 33).

This is what we should expect from a son of such a father, for Omri, Ahab's father—

"... wrought evil in the eyes of the Lord, and did worse than all that were before him" (1 Kgs. 16:25).

But how much more are the evil conditions intensified when we consider the wife of Ahab.

"And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal King of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him" (1 Kgs. 16:31).

A fit wife for such a king—her unrelenting hatred of God's people and sanguinary character appears in her efforts to exterminate them. Faithful Obadiah took one hundred of them and hid them in a cave. Eight hundred and fifty prophets of Baal did eat at her table; these were all destroyed by Elijah, who fled to Horeb from her vengeance.

The murder of Naboth is the culminating act in her career; a righteous man charged with blaspheming God and the King, stoned to rob him of the inheritance the Lord had given him. But, *"Vengeance is mine, I will repay,"* saith the Lord, the terrible message comes (1 Kgs. 21:19)—

"Thus saith the Lord, in the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood."

And of Jezebel, God declares (v. 23)—

"The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel."

Not only themselves, but all Ahab's posterity were doomed to extermination—

"Him that dieth of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat; and him that dieth in the field the fowls of the air shall eat, and I will take away thy posterity" (1 Kgs. 21:24).

However bad Ahab might have been, he was influenced to still greater crime by his execrable partner—

"There was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up" (v. 25).

The good Jehoshaphat, had he exterminated this brood of vipers, would have done great good to Israel, adding lustre to his name. They were at least to be avoided as a pestilence.

We can reasonably expect an upright son from Jehoshaphat, but what manner of offspring can we look for from such a stock as Jezebel and Ahab?

"That which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned" (Heb. 6:8).

Knowing the readiness with which human nature absorbs all things contrary to the mind of Deity, and the vile nature of the worship of Baal so agreeable to that flesh by which it is devised, we may expect a reproduction in the children, or probably something still worse.

Such was the family with whom Jehoshaphat made affinity; from such a stock did he select a wife for his son who was to succeed him on the throne of the Lord.

"Jehoram was thirty and two years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem" (2 Chr. 21:5).

His marriage with Athaliah must have taken place at a very early age, his youngest son, who succeeded him, being twenty-two (2 Kgs. 8:26) when he began to reign.

It is necessary to note this in order to account for the great difference between the character of Jehoram and that of his father. Immediately the latter died, we look for the uprightness of the father in the son with a faithful adherence to the law of the Lord, having been in his early days brought up in that fear which is the beginning of wisdom—but we find it not; the days of peace and prosperity ended with Jehoshaphat. No longer could Judah rejoice in the blessing God gave through a righteous reign.

The direct operation of Deity for good or evil is the spirit of these records of His people. How could they be His people apart from this? Thus it is that their history is equally for God as the doer, and of Israel as the instrument. The divine character of the events recorded is imprinted upon the text recording them in the rigid, concise, yet all-embracing style.

In the histories we have a mass of facts, with little or no comment capable of indefinite expansion, this makes their study so interesting and absorbing, things new and old continually arising from this storehouse of the Spirit.

"Now Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers, and . . . when Jehoram was risen up to the kingdom of his father, he strengthened himself, and slew all his brethren with the sword, and divers also of the princes of Israel" (2 Chr. 21:1-4).

What an appalling introduction is this to the new King of Judah! Though a son brought up in the way he should go, of what advantage was it when a serpent was placed in his bosom?

This sanguinary character would not be hereditary from his father; we look to the other side and we see the leaven of Jezebel working the old animus. Those "princes of Israel" slain by Jehoram were not men according to his murderous heart, otherwise they would not have been slain. There was a wholesale clearing away of those obstacles to the purpose he ultimately attained.

The revolution that has now taken place in Judah makes the prospect for the future dark for the Lord's people. The probable reason for exterminating his brethren was to obtain "*the gold, silver, and fenced cities*" Jehoshaphat had given them, and this seems the reason for its being recorded. No doubt such gifts were not uncommon, though unrecorded, in the history of other kings.

The act shows its author; the Jezebel instinct in murdering Naboth for his possession finds its expression in Athaliah's moving her husband to do likewise. Again, these "*brethren and princes*" would be faithful men, worshipping the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Whatever Jehoram's disposition was, we are sure his wife, as a worshipper of Baal, was filled with all the deadly hatred that Jezebel exhibited against the people of the Lord. Having the power now in her hands in the authority she exercised over the king, we see it at once taking effect when Jehoram reigns.

That the influence of the wife was over the husband, and was the cause of these evils, it is so written—

"He walked in the way of the kings of Israel, like as did the house of Ahab: FOR he had the daughter of Ahab to wife" (2 Chr. 21:6).

The inspired writer sets it down as a natural conclusion. The peace and prosperity of the former reign soon ended, and as God had then given them rest round about, so now wars and troubles are the fruit of unrighteousness. Edom revolted, and Libnah also "*unto this day,*" because he had forsaken the Lord God of his fathers and compelled Judah to sin—

"Moreover the Lord stirred up the Philistines and Arabians and they carried away all the substance that was found in the king's house, sons and wives, so there was never a son left him, save Jehoahaz his youngest son" (vs. 16-17).

A writing from Elijah is sent to him; an awful message soon fulfilled; and after all this the Lord smote him—

"... with an incurable disease . . . and after two years his bowels fell out by reason of his sickness, so he died . . . and his people made no burning for him . . . He reigned eight years and departed without being desired; and was not buried in the sepulchre of the kings" (vs. 18-20).

No language can describe the horror of such a death, the merited reward of an iniquitous life; an example of the apostolic teaching that the Lord is not mocked, and that he that soweth to the flesh shall reap corruption.

Had the commandments of Moses been observed, no such cause would have been possible. Strange marriages constituted the fruitful source of idolatry in Jacob, which ultimately enveloped them in the darkness that altogether obscured for them *"the Light that came into the world."* Jehoram's fatal marriage was the cause of all.

By the death of Jehoram, Athaliah is left a widow; the throne vacant by her husband's death is filled by his youngest son, the only one who escaped death at the hands of the "band that came with the Arabians." We recognize the hand of Jehovah in thus preserving one of the house of David to fulfil God's promise to him.

"And the inhabitants of Jerusalem made Ahaziah king" (22:1).

The unhappy state of Judah, the miseries arising from the foreign invasions of the Philistines and Arabians, the wars undertaken against Edom and Libnah, with the evils within that would follow upon the suppression of the temple service, and the undoing of the good Jehoshaphat had brought to pass—this unhappy state of affairs which would not cease from the accession of a son coming from such a stock.

The tree—bad in Ahab and Jezebel—was made far worse in Jehoram and Athaliah; the fruit of such an union proves worthy of the tree equally corrupt with its bearers. *"Can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit?"* Let history answer. Ahaziah, son of Athaliah, grandson of Jezebel, reigned one year—

"He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab: FOR his mother was his counsellor to do wickedly. Wherefore he did evil in the sight of the Lord like the house of Ahab: for they were his counsellors after the death of his father to his destruction" (2 Chr. 22:3-4).

The friendliness commenced with Jehoshaphat towards Ahab would naturally increase after the two families had inter-married. Thus we find Ahaziah repeating his grandfather's

action in helping Ahab; he joins with his uncle Joram, Ahab's son, in battle against the Assyrians at Ramoth-Gilead.

AHAZIAH'S DEATH IS BROUGHT ABOUT SPECIALLY BY THIS ALLIANCE (2 Chr. 22:7)—

"And the destruction of Ahaziah was of God by coming to Joram: for when he was come, he went out with Joram against Jehu the son of Nimshi whom the Lord had anointed to cut off the house of Ahab."

Thus was the eighth son of the house of David slain, destroyed by the sword of God in the hand of Jehu; and again is the throne of Judah vacant. We look now for a son of Ahaziah to succeed, as had been the case with all former kings, for Ahaziah had many sons. But no, *there is now to be a new thing in the earth as concerning the rulers in Judah.*

The opportunity has at last presented itself; the throne is within her grasp, and Athaliah's ambition is satisfied.

"Two and twenty years old was Ahaziah when he began to reign; and he reigned one year in Jerusalem" (2 Kgs. 8:26).

He was therefore but twenty-three years old at his death; the children were young and tender, and at least had claims on the natural affection of Athaliah—her own flesh and blood, her own grandchildren.

But natural affection under the teaching of Baal had no proper place: its devotees were like brute beasts made to be taken and destroyed. A ritual that made prostitution a religious obligation would be utterly incapable of producing either a moral character or developing those finer sentiments so abounding in the Law of Moses and teaching of Christ.

These filthy abominations were practiced in the very House of the Lord itself—in that glorious temple built for His worship and service. So utterly degenerate had Israel become that Baal was established in Zion and Jehovah forgotten (2 Kgs. 23:4).

We readily understand the hatred such practices would engender in the human mind against those things written in that Book which the kings of Israel were commanded to study. To Athaliah it would be an intolerable burden, grievous indeed, and in like measure to those priests of Baal abounding in Jerusalem.

No such opportunity for serving Baal in Judah had before been possible. Now was the golden chance—the pinnacle of fame to be reached—High Priestess of Baal and Queen of Judah! With terrible brevity the sacred historian records it—

“When Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw her son was dead, she arose and DESTROYED ALL THE SEED ROYAL OF THE HOUSE OF JUDAH” (2 Chr. 22:10).

The murderous hostility of the mother against the priests of God, finds its counterpart in the daughter. True to the family instinct Athaliah stops short at no crime that serves her ambition and animosity. Void of all that is admirable and lovely in woman, the innocent children are ruthlessly slaughtered—her intention being to exterminate the house of David—and
“ATHALIAH REIGNED OVER THE LAND.”

In our consideration of these things we are enabled somewhat to realize the words of Peter and to account the longsuffering of God as salvation—for what had been the condition of things in Zion during the few years since the advent of Jezebel?—a king rises who murders his brothers and sets up the abomination of the Zidonians in Jerusalem; wars commence with the Gentiles round about who plunder Jerusalem itself; the king's sons all slain save one; the king himself, smitten by God with a horrible distemper which consumed him, dies uncared for; the son who succeeds, and in like manner follows the evil ways, is also smitten by God after a brief reign of one year.

Probably the children of Ahaziah were no better, and their murder was no more than a *clearing away of the serpent-seed* so strongly developed in Judah, and filling up the iniquity of Athaliah to the full before the judgments of Jehovah come upon her as upon the Amorite of old.

Athaliah, by killing her grandchildren, helps, with her own hand, to execute the judgment upon the house of Ahab and Jezebel then being so thoroughly performed in Israel by Jehu her own son, the late king, having been slain by that valiant man.

Doubtless had Athaliah lived in Israel she also would have suffered at the hand of Jehu; for surely no such pernicious offspring of Ahab would have been spared. The events then occurrent in Israel, the killing of all her own kindred, and the extinction of Baal so energetically carried out by Jehu would have a great effect upon such a woman urged on, as she no doubt was, by the priests of Baal in Judah, who would be anxious both for their own safety and that of Baal.

Athaliah herself would also be involved in the ruin that would ensue did Jehu extend his operations to Jerusalem. In this way did the Jezebel-leaven work its own destruction by her own daughter; there had been a general clearing out, with but one more left of this accursed family who had killed the children of

God and stamped out the truth to the best of their ability; and this solitary one is Athaliah herself.

By her counsel prevailing with her husband to kill all his brethren, and by her own hand slaying the remnant, she exists the last representative of a house accursed of God—murderers of the prophets—destroyers of God's people—doomed to extinction: an imperious, sanguinary, ambitious woman that hated Jehovah of Israel—inheritress of all that Ahab and Jezebel could leave, and where do we now find her? *Seated on the throne of the Lord at Jerusalem*—in that place concerning which the Lord said (Psa. 132:14)—

"Here will I dwell, for I have desired it."

Has the Lord forgotten His promise? Has His love for Zion ceased? Is it not written that the Lord—

"Loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob" (Psa. 87:2).

What a severe trial of faith this darkness in Judah must have been to the few faithful! The promise to David apparently a delusion—and Baal supreme! For the sons of Athaliah, that wicked woman, had broken up the House of God, and also all the dedicated things of the House of the Lord did they bestow upon Baalim.

No more hopeless picture could be presented to those believers in the sure mercies of David. David's sun had apparently set. They no longer rejoiced in their appointed feasts; no morning and evening offering was made to the Mighty One of Jacob; darkness was over the land.

Having comprehended the purpose of God involved in this kingdom, it is of absorbing interest to know all things concerning it—past, present, or future—and if we admit that God has a purpose with it, we thereby make a connection between past and future.

If this purpose were not fulfilled during the past existence of the kingdom, it follows that its past is a certainty of its future; it indicates it, prefigures it, and becomes a type of it. Having a prophetic character, its history is mixed with prophecy, and supplies us with information relative to the greater future.

The times of David and Solomon are eminently typical, shadows of good things to come to be fulfilled in David's greater son; and shall we say that these two kings *alone* are of a typical character and all the *subsequent* history affords no information of the future?

We think that *many* of them have this character. It may be said they are undesigned coincidences; but it is not human history we are considering, it is divine.

"It is the glory of God to conceal a thing; but the honor of kings to search out a matter" (Prov. 25:2).

We apply this scriptural principle to Israel's history, and its truth is evidenced. With this view interest is heightened, the past is but a reflector, throwing the light far ahead to the future. We look for a time when these things, realities though they were, will be finally consummated "*in that day*" when the events of which these were shadows will be fulfilled. They form part of those "*things written aforetime,*" that through them we might obtain patience, comfort, and hope.

It is from this aspect of *historic prefigurement* that we are considering the position of Israel's history from Jehoshaphat to Joash.

Continuing our history of Athaliah—we left her reigning and ruling Queen in Jerusalem. *Where was God's kingdom?* The people truly were there, as was the land, but kingdom there was not. The name of Jehovah—regally and ecclesiastically—was no longer in Zion. Neither—as was supposed by Athaliah and the Baalites—was there *any representative of David's line living to trouble them.*

The worship was to Baal; the ruler, a Canaanite; and the authority of Deity usurped by a woman. This is the condition of things today; God has no kingdom on earth. His power and authority are usurped by a "woman" who has climbed to this high position as Athaliah did, through blood.

In teaching us things spiritual from things natural, the Spirit employs one or more persons or things, as the case requires, to typify but one antitype. The many things Mosaic all converge upon one antitype—Christ.

So also in establishing the kingdom; two kings are required—David and Solomon—they are the two halves of a perfect whole; what is foreshown in the one could not be in the other. Yet they are both one in Christ, *the man of war and the prince of peace.*

As two men—though representing—one are the instruments in setting up the kingdom, so also two *women* are instrumental in setting up an idolatrous apostasy in the very seat of God on David's throne, casting the truth to the ground and prospering.

Athaliah completes the half-type of Jezebel as Solomon did that of David; and we consider the two as one, in the result of their operations. Athaliah's birthright is the curse pronounced

upon her father and mother; *it is her inheritance and will overtake her at the right time.*

The diversity in operation—though one in spirit—seen in the mother and daughter, is that their operations are respectively against the two great “estates” of the kingdom—kingly and priestly. Jezebel perpetrates her animosity against the prophets and the Lord’s people, and the saints in Israel. The land was hunted for them. They were hid in caves from her ferocity.

An easy solution of their difficulties would have been to serve Baal and receive his mark; but they were faithful and true. They were specially preserved by Jehovah who had reserved to Himself seven thousand that had not kissed Baal. So *completely was the Lord’s people suppressed that Elijah thought himself the last one left.*

Though Jezebel could thus operate against the prophets, she was powerless against the royal line. Not so with Athaliah; having by marriage got among the seed of David, it required but the opportunity to strike a blow at the royal line; with the result already seen. Here then we have a political and ecclesiastical, idolatrous, sanguinary power, doomed to extermination, usurping the highest position on earth; to which she has no shadow of a claim; and obtained through the blood of God’s saints and princes.

We have no difficulty in pointing out the living fulfilment of this prophetic personage and power. She calls herself a woman and a mother, thus indicating her own identity. The Spirit has branded her with the name of her infamous type “*that woman Jezebel that calleth herself a prophetess.*”

There she sits usurping the authority of God upon earth, claiming both regal and ecclesiastical authority over all men, sitting as a God, claiming to be possessor of the attributes of God, with no more right to her exalted position than had Athaliah. The high authority of king and priest belonging to the Prince of the House of David has been usurped by her, and the right of Christ to this position in the earth is consequently unknown by her followers.

She has attained to this position through the same means employed by her forerunner, scarlet with the same blood, the blood of priests and princes of Deity; for they are a royal priesthood hated by her. These faithful ones, who protested against both her abominable practices and right to authority, were put to death; their extermination was necessary in order that the throne be hers.

Thus has she attempted to destroy all the "seed royal." Not only has the seed of the kingdom been the object of her hatred and destruction, but also the "*incorruptible seed, the Word of Truth.*" As in Athaliah we had a Gentile usurper downtreading the Holy City, so again is there a downtreading by a Gentile persecuting power, which can be identified in this same second Jezebel. The resemblance is continued in the time allotted; they are both limited to prophetic periods, both are alike doomed to the same end.

The description of the latter-day Athaliah is also equally applicable to the former. We see them seated on their thrones arrayed in purple and scarlet, drunken with the blood of saints and martyrs, and of their own children; drunk also with pride (Rev. 18:7)—

"I sit a queen and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow, she saith in her heart. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day—death and mourning and famine—and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God that judgeth her."

Although the King of Israel who sitteth in the heavens had thus given over His city to a Gentile downtreading, yet had He not forgotten Zion or the covenant made with David. Should a Gentile woman be the means of breaking it by destroying the line royal and usurping the Throne? No; God will realize His plan. Jehosheba, sister to the late king, took his infant son—

". . . and stole him from among the kings sons that were slain, and they hid him and his nurse in the bedchamber from Athaliah, so that he was not slain, and he was with her hid in the house of the Lord six years" (2 Kgs. 11:2-3).

Here was a seed *secretly and surely preserved by God in His house* for the purpose of bursting forth at the appointed time and consuming the idolatrous usurper.

So will it be with the latter-day fulfiller. Power has been given into her hands for a set time to tread down the truth and usurp the office of Christ. During the time of her oppressing, a seed has been developing *unknown to her and her Baalite daughters.*

The members of that seed are not only in the Temple of God, but *are* the Temple. There can be no more connection between this Temple and "Jezebel" than there could have been between Athaliah and Jehoiada, the High Priest; for the Spirit saith to them (2 Cor. 6:16)—

"Ye are the Temple of the living God, and what agreement hath the Temple of God with idols?"

These have been specially prepared by that Word of Truth she has striven to destroy; these whom she thinks she has destroyed are alive *to Him*; they live under the altar crying day and night against her for the blood she has slain, and to them are entrusted the execution of the "judgments written."

The Gentiles' dogs also shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh even as the Samaritan dogs ate the flesh of her predecessor under the walls of Jezreel.

The infant prince thus divinely preserved may be regarded as a *new seed in the earth*. His aunt, who had stolen him, was wife to the High Priest Jehoiada. Apparently his existence was kept secret from all others, probably through the state of things in Jerusalem.

The house of the Lord being broken up, and Baal supreme, the priest and his family doubtless lived very secluded lives, and their attention would be devoted to nourishing the young seed, the hope of Israel, at that time, with the good words of truth.

Thus, in secret, the work of preparation went on during the hidden period; though surrounded by Baal, the work went surely on. So with the seed-growing during the career of the second Athaliah. Surrounded by Baal, they are nevertheless *under the care of their High Priest*; his counsel and instruction they hear daily. Unheeded by those around, they are silently going on to perfection, and it will be their duty to pull down the scarlet woman, preparatory to raising again the Tabernacle of David in the holy place.

As there was a perfect number, seven thousand, who had not bowed the knee to Baal, whose existence was unknown, even to Elijah; and who had escaped the vengeance of Jezebel; so again are there those who have not received the mark of modern Baal on their hands or foreheads, who are known of God and reserved by Him, as were their brethren of old.

In the new seed, Jehoash, we recognize a strong prefiguration of Christ as the seed hid in the Temple; not the Temple made with hands, but the "*Most Holy Place*," heaven itself; the hope of Israel, on whom alone depends the hope of his people to destroy the idol-worshipping system of iniquity. With the spirit of his mouth and the brightness of his coming will he do this.

When this hidden seed is manifested to the world in order to accomplish this appointed work, then will those who are to share in the honor be revealed, for their lives are hid with him in God.

In the preserver of the young prince, we have an interesting instance of a Scripture name signifying some special aspect or character relative to God's purposes. Thus, *Jesus, Saviour; David, Beloved; Solomon, Peaceable*, etc.

In the present case, the Lord having sworn to David an everlasting succession, His oath was for the moment (humanly speaking) in danger of being thwarted by Athaliah's purpose to destroy "*all the seed royal.*"

The saving of the infant is evidence of God's remembrance of His oath; this is expressed in the preserver's name, viz., *Jehoshabeath, Whose oath is Jehovah*. She becomes its embodiment for the time being in the high honor she had in upholding it.

In the *seventh year*, God remembered His oath to David, and once again interfered for His Name's sake. The time had come for iniquity to have an end and His righteousness to be re-established. A terrible retribution was in store for the down-treaders of the Holy Place. The faithful High Priest commenced his operations secretly and surely—

"And the seventh year Jehoiada sent and fetched the rulers over hundreds with the captains and the guard, and brought them to him into the house of the Lord, and made a covenant with them, and took an oath of them in the house of the Lord and showed them the King's son" (2 Kgs. 11:4).

These were men upon whom Jehoiada could rely; that they were faithful is evident by their subsequent actions; truly their hearts must have rejoiced at the revelation made to them that *David yet had a son to sit on his throne*, that the Lord had not deserted them, and that the time had come to sweep away the desolating abomination from the Sanctuary.

A secret compact is entered into—a covenant made by oath to which they solemnly subscribe. Two things are necessarily involved in this, viz., *the pulling down of the one, and the restoration of the other.*

Here we have the constitution of a little kingdom—a king, priest, rulers, and captains—banded together, unknown to the usurper. Its organization, the work it had to do, with the allotments of their various parts, are given in the subsequent portion of the chapter. They did all Jehoiada commanded.

What an honor for those who "*compassed the king about!*" The hope of Israel under their charge! The captains who were

thus selected by Jehoiada, called and chosen and faithful, were armed in a manner not to be passed by (v. 10).

"And to the captains over hundreds did the priest give king David's spears and shields that were in the Temple of the Lord."

As captains of the guard, they must reasonably have been armed with their ordinary weapon, but *this seems some special arming*. Their shields and spears are holy, having been sanctified in the House of the Lord. The cause was a righteous one, therefore the Lord opened His armory and brought forth the weapons of His indignation; these shields of faith and swords of the spirit are invulnerable.

In the creation of this little kingdom, can we not see the figure of the future—when he whose right it is shall have gathered his warriors together, and clothed them with invulnerable armor, to sweep away the impostor whose right it is *not* to be the representative of Jehovah upon earth, and whose idolatry has covered with thick darkness the words of Deity? The arrangements completed, the coronation takes place—

"He brought forth the king's son and put the crown upon him, and they made him king and clapped their hands and shouted, God save the king!" (v. 12).

The shouting and rejoicing is taken up by all the people, for the king has come suddenly to his temple; Athaliah hears the tumult, and, rushing in, she sees at a glance the whole position. There stood the priest of Israel's God, and there was His representative, the youthful Jehoash; there stood the temple guard, and the shouts of the people, with the sounds of the trumpets as of old, making Jerusalem rejoice again.

She cries, "Treason! Treason!" and rends her clothes. There is something grimly humorous in this cry, remembering the path this woman had trod to attain her position—murdering the rightful heirs, and defying Jehovah by setting up Baal in His sanctuary; *and SHE cries, "Treason!"*

We have heard this cry in these latter days; the wailings and vain thunderings—unheeded by the spoilers who inaugurated the work—proceed from the modern woman, who has cried, and still cries, Treason! As with her sister of old, these cries were but the signs of her approaching end, so are they now. In either case sins have reached to heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.

The House of the Lord was not to be defiled by the blood of such a creature; *"Have her forth without the ranges"*; away with

her to an unclean place. Not only herself, but all who followed her out were to be slain—

“And they laid hands on her, and she went by the way by the which the horses came into the king's house: and there was she slain” (v. 16).

Her calamities came in one day, and Jehovah remembered the blood of the innocents, His seed, and the word He had given through Moses, His truth. Having dispatched the head and fountain of all uncleanness, a most important transaction follows, namely—a *covenant*, not with the captains and rulers; but, between—

“Jehovah, the king, and the people, that they should be the Lord's people” (v. 17).

This covenant involved the restoration of the truth; yet to be repeated when the people will again rejoice in the truth, confessing that they had inherited lies and things of no profit. Having made this priestly covenant through Jehoiada, yet another is made between the king only and the people: the political—or regal.

The two covenants combined declare the acceptance by the people of a new royal and ecclesiastical constitution in the room of those destroyed. Can we not discern here a foreshadowing of the new covenant to be made with Israel when they will rejoice at the truth then impossible to be disbelieved by reason of *their king being shown them*; when the Lord will write His laws upon their minds and hearts and remember their iniquities no more?

Having slain the queen and once again become the Lord's people, they give evidence of the nature of the covenants in their subsequent actions. They could not be the Lord's people and Baal's—

“. . . and all the people of the land went into the house of Baal and break it down, his altars and his images brake they in pieces thoroughly, and slew Mattan the priest of Baal” (v. 18).

What an example we have had presented to us of the result of marrying out of the Truth! Whatever good intentions there were at the time of the union, the facts before us are that *the unbelieving wife ate the Truth out of the “believing” husband*.

No such result could have been anticipated by Jehoshaphat. These things are written for our instruction; if we blind our eyes to the plain conclusions of such a history as Athaliah's, on our own heads be it.

Although we have a history which is in itself dark and sanguinary, we can recognize that which is a comfort to us; we see that the providence of God overrules all. *"Thus far, and no farther, shalt thou go,"* was the divine determination; while things on the surface seemed dark and cheerless.

Yet concurrent with the permitted evil was there the preparation proceeding for the deliverance. The preparation period for the manifestation of the King of Israel is again at hand. He will come again like Jehoshaphat, not to all the world, but first he will be shown secretly to a few, the faithful.

These, brought from their graves, will—with the living—enter into a covenant with him as King and Priest; they will then be armed with the holy weapons, invulnerable in person, in righteousness perfect. With their king they will proceed to the accomplishment of the work before them—the destruction of the Roman Athaliah and the Temples of Baal, even more "thoroughly" than of old.

"And he took the captains and rulers, and they brought down the king and he sat on the throne of the kings, and all the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was quiet" (vs. 19-20).

Then shall the impostor be eternally silenced, and he whose right it is set the righteousness of Deity in the Holy Place. Surely in that day, the land will rejoice with a rejoicing that shall be heard afar off. A new covenant will the inhabitants of the earth enter into, and that kingdom be established whose work is—

"Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Lk. 2:14).

Consider the Heavens

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge" (Psa. 19:1-2).

The first point to be noted is that the heavens DO declare the glory of God. God has given abundant evidence of His reality and power. There is no excuse for any denying Him. Paul said to the Romans (1:20)—

"The invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even His everlasting power and divinity, THAT THEY MAY BE WITHOUT EXCUSE."

This is GOD'S view of the matter—that He has given plenty of proof of Himself and therefore, as the Psalms declare (14:1), only the fool can say, *"There is no God."*

This solves the problem of how to deal with those who believe in evolution and choose to ignore and deny the obvious evidence of creative wisdom in every aspect of the universe.

"Speak not in the ears of a fool: for he will despise the wisdom of thy words" (Prov. 23:9).

* * *

The *"glory of GOD"* which the heavens declare is not just wisdom and power, but also character and purpose. When Moses asked to be shown God's GLORY, God said—

"I will make all my goodness pass before thee" (Ex. 33:19).

And it is recorded—

"The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, Yahweh, Yahweh Elohim (He Who shall be Mighty Ones), merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth" (Ex. 34:6).

The beauty of God's goodness is the glory that the heavens declare.

The whole range of creation—from the infinitely vast universe to the microscopically small—reveals God's love of beauty and order, and the highest form of beauty and order is the beauty of holiness, perfection of goodness, oneness with the perfect Divine mind.

* * *

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork."

These two thoughts are parallel, but there is a distinction in that in the *heavens*— the infinity of space—we see the broad and eternal picture of the *glory*.

In the *firmament*—our own atmospheric surroundings—we see a marvellous and detailed allegory of the actual working out of God's *handiwork*—His purpose with mankind.

All the elements combine in a harmonious picture—earth, sea, clouds, wind, rain, dew, hail, snow, storm, lightning, thunder, rainbow, etc., portray in their interworking and relationships the fulfilling of the everlasting covenant to fill the earth with God's glory and bring blessing to all mankind.

* * *

The subject begins with the first verse of Genesis—

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

The first picture presented to us is total darkness over an empty, formless, unbroken expanse of water.

"And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, LET THERE BE LIGHT."

Here are presented the two fundamentals of life—water and light—plus that which energizes and motivates all—the Spirit of God.

"And God saw the light, that it was good, and God divided the light from the darkness."

Let us discern the spiritual parallel, for the heavens are here beginning to declare God's glory, and the firmament to show His *handiwork*—light is good; and light must be separate from darkness. As we consider the first chapter of Genesis, we should lay beside it the first chapter of John's gospel, where this coming of the True Light is revealed, which the darkness comprehended not—

"And we beheld his glory, full of grace and truth."

"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light."

" . . . LIGHT IS COME INTO THE WORLD . . . "

* * *

Let us then consider together the various elements of the heavens, in order, endeavoring to trace their spiritual significance and their relationship to each other in declaring God's glory.

First is the Sun, a vast sphere of power and fire, the source of all natural life and energy on earth. The Psalmist declares in this 19th Psalm—

"In them (the heavens) hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, rejoicing as a strong man to run his course.

"His going forth is from the end of heaven and his circuit unto the ends of it, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof" (vs. 4-6).

The meaning is beautiful and unmistakable. Here is the "Sun of righteousness" of which Malachi speaks (4:2) who rises with "healing in his wings" for all who fear God's Name.

The rising of the sun is the end of night and darkness, the beginning of day and light. Our Sun of righteousness is seen in two symbolic risings—

The *first* is when he arose from the tomb and turned the darkness of sorrow and despair and death into the light of joy and hope and everlasting life. This rising of the sun is God's assurance unto all men that (Acts 17: 31)—

"He has appointed a day when he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained."

The second rising of the Sun is when he comes to dispel the darkness of earth's long night, and be as the light of the morning—the bright and morning star. . .

* * *

The moon, the lesser light of the heavens, is the bride of the Sun. She shines in her gentle whiteness, not by her own light, but by the reflection of light from him.

In this study, we are impressed more and more by the evidence God has given of the Bible's divine origin. Many facts of nature and the universe learned thousands of years later by man in his gradually broadening field of knowledge and investigation are manifested in the simple yet profound language of Scripture.

The moon was the lesser light to rule the night. Her shining was to be in the nighttime. The Sun, hidden from the earth during the earth's night, is shining upon her and she, during the darkness, reflects his light to the earth and gives glorious evidence that he, though hidden, still exists and shines in glory and will return to bring the joyful brilliance of the new day.

So the faithful waiting Bride, lifted up into the heavenlies by the promise of God, must turn her face to the absent Bridegroom and reflect his glory upon the earth until the morning return.

She is the candlestick in the Holy Place of present probation, while the Sun is the Shekinah-glory of the perfection of the Most Holy.

"Ye are the light of the world," said Jesus to his followers, and Paul exhorts them to "shine as lights in the world . . . in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation." This is the present nighttime of man's dark rule of sin. In Bible times, the Moon was a far more important factor in men's lives than today. In the clearer air of those lands, it shone more brightly, and there was no artificial outdoor lighting such as we take for granted today. When men had to travel, or had work to do on their lands at night, a bright, clear moon was a tremendous comfort and blessing.

* * *

Throughout the Scriptures the number of the stars is used to typify an incalculable number, like the sand of the sea. Until the invention of the telescope, less than four hundred years ago, the greatest number of stars that could be seen was about 6,000, and less than half that number at any one time. With the telescope, hundreds of millions can be seen and the total number is estimated in billions.

The Bible speaks of a few particular stars. The Pleiades, referred to by Job and by Amos as "*the seven stars*," appear to have been always the most famous and best known cluster. History has always spoken of them as seven, though to the natural eye only six are visible today. This is an interesting and perhaps significant fact.

This cluster of seven stars appears to be the foundation for the symbol of the seven star-angel of the ecclesias in the Revelation—"The sweet influences of the Pleiades."

While the Moon is the Bride, considered in her completeness, the stars represent individual members. Paul says—

"As one star differeth from another in glory, so is the resurrection of the dead" (1 Cor. 15:41-42).

And Daniel was told—

"Many that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake . . . they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever" (Dan. 12:2-3).

At the creation, the angels are spoken of as morning stars singing together as, at the bidding of God, they brought light and life to a dark, dead earth.

Morning stars are those whose rising heralds the dawn. Jesus is pre-eminently the Bright and Morning Star—the Sun himself—the ruler of the heavens.

In a secondary and limited sense, sun, moon and stars are applied to the present rulers and prominent characters of the kingdom of men. Suns being darkened, moons turning from peaceful white to bloody red, and stars being cast down to the earth, represent reverses and overthrowings among the powers of the world.

Jude refers to "*wandering stars to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever*," applying the figure to that class of erratic and unstable persons who appear and disappear irregularly in the ecclesial heavens.

One particular heavenly phenomenon—COMETS—fits Jude's reference strikingly. They flash spectacularly into view from outer space. They shine brilliantly for a short time, outshining the fixed and stable stars. Their actual mass and weight is very small—they are largely gases and small particles, giving, by borrowed light, a tremendously deceiving appearance of substance. They soon disappear again into the blackness. Some come back at intervals, some are never seen again. On bodies of any weight or stability, they have no influence because of their own lightness, but light bodies are disturbed in courses by them. They appear to gradually disintegrate. The spectacular brilliance that surrounds them is actually the evidence of their process of disintegration. How strikingly all these details fit some individuals!

* * *

Another heavenly phenomenon is the METEOR. This is a piece of some substance, usually stone or metal, traveling through space, which collides with the earth's atmosphere at great speed. Friction with the atmosphere creates tremendous heat and light.

A large meteor can dominate the heaven briefly with its brilliance. Some will travel right across the sky. But their life is very short and all soon burn up entirely in the air or fall to the earth.

In Revelation 8:10, the career of the Attila the Hun, one of the scourges God used against Rome, is prophesied under this figure. He blazed brilliantly and briefly in the Roman heavens.

In Revelation 9:1 Mohammed is described similarly, with the addition (which fits perfectly with large meteors) that when he struck the earth he opened a great pit, out of which smoke arose and darkened the sky.

But the sun, moon, stars, comets and meteors of mankind are passing things. All belong to the heavens that will be rolled

up like a scroll and taken away when the time has come to establish the—

"New heaven and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. 3:13).

* * *

We have seen how *"the heavens declare the glory of God."* Let us consider how *"the firmament showeth his handiwork."*

"And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament" (Gen. 1:7).

The firmament is the expanse—the atmospheric shell that envelops the earth and makes life thereon possible.

About this, ancient man knew very little. It remained for the last days for man to discover the importance and significance of this basic divine revelation.

God divided the waters so that there were clouds above and seas beneath, and thus was established, with the aid of the sun, the water cycle that turns the earth from a desert to a paradise.

Life for the earth depends on the water cycle: up from the seas into the atmosphere by the power of the sun, across the heaven in clouds moved and guided by the winds, down again to the earth in rain or snow, to cause the earth to bear fruit, back to the seas in rivers. So the endless, life-giving cycle flows.

Sometimes there are mountains in the way. The water problems in West Texas from time to time are because there is a hilly range between there and the Gulf of Mexico. As soon as that range is crossed on the way East, there ceases to be a water shortage problem. The mountains cause updrafts that cool the moisture coming from the Gulf and cause it to fall and it goes no further inland.

— Let us remember that often mountains stand in the way, but faith can remove mountains. The political mountains of the earth today, the great, proud uplifted fleshly mountains of brass, break up the peaceful harmonious cycle of life's waters, God's basic natural provisions for fruitful abundance; therefore there is sorrow and suffering and hate and injustice and inequality and envy and criminal waste and heartbreaking want.

But we are mainly interested in the deep and beautiful and spiritual aspects of these symbols. Today's mountains are cold, bare barriers of pride and antagonism. We hear a lot these days about "summits," and the expression is very significant.

Zechariah's two latter-day proud, fleshly mountains of brass—the King of the North and the King of the South—are shaping up wonderfully for the time when the cherubim chariots of God will smite them asunder and go forth from between them into the whole earth, to establish the true mountain of stone that will fill the earth and manifest God's glory.

"In the last days the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and all nations shall flow unto it" (Isa.2:2).

* * *

The water cycle begins with the sea. We remember that on the third day God gathered the waters under the firmament together. The dry land He called Earth, and the waters He called Seas. On the third day—the symbol of resurrection—the Earth was born out of water.

The waters of the Seas represent the people of the nations.

"The wicked are a troubled sea, casting up mire and dirt" (Isa. 57:20).

Daniel saw the four winds of heaven striving upon the Great Sea, and as its waters churned and roared with the agitation of the wind, they brought forth in succession the wild beast empires of Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome.

The wind, of course, was the Spirit of God, by which He—

"Rules in the kingdom of men and sets up over it whomsoever He will" (Dan. 4:32).

John, in the Revelation (I3:1) had a similar vision of powers rising up and out of the Sea. And Psa. 89:8-10 declares—

"Lord God of hosts, thou rulest the raging of the sea . . . thou hast scattered thine enemies."

This has a latter-day application—its fullest application. And so do the following—

"Was the Lord displeased with the rivers? Was Thy wrath against the sea that Thou didst ride upon Thy horses (Israel) and Thy chariots of salvation (the cherubim—the saints)?" (Hab. 3:8).

"He shall pass through the sea with affliction, and shall smite the waves in the sea . . . the pride of Assyria (King of the North) shall be brought down, and the sceptre of Egypt (King of the South) shall depart" (Zech. 10:11). (This chapter is about the latter-day gathering of Israel).

"The mountains quake, the hills melt, the earth is burned at His presence . . . He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry." (Nah. 1:4-5).

That is the final consummation—“*He maketh THE SEA DRY.*” In the vision of the New Jerusalem at the end of the Scriptures (Rev. 21:1), we are told “*there was NO MORE SEA.*”

During Christ’s millennial reign on earth, we are shown the redeemed of God standing upon a sea of glass, singing songs of victory. They have subdued the troubled, miry sea of nations to a crystal, glassy calm.

Then the warm rays of the Sun of righteousness begin to work upon it, to bring about the time when “*there shall be no more sea*”—no more subdued mortal nations—all absorbed up into the heavenlies.

* * *

This brings us back to the water cycle. When the Sun sheds his beams upon the sea, something begins to take place, although what happens is completely invisible—vapor is drawn up from the sea into the air—and as it is drawn out of the sea, it is distilled—all impurity is left behind, up and up it goes, a vast host of minute particles of water. Jesus said —

“*If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me*”
(Jn. 12:32).

And Paul rejoices —

“*God hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus*” (Eph. 2:6).

* * *

Elihu asked Job (37:16)—

“*Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds? The wondrous works of Him who is perfect in knowledge?*”

What keeps the CLOUDS—containing countless millions of tons of water—floating in their snowy beauty in the sky?

For here is the heavenly rendezvous of the vast host of tiny water droplets drawn up into the heavens by the sun. Here they become manifest in their shining splendor, ready to pour scourging judgment or gentle blessings upon the earth, according to their great Creator’s will.

There are many references to the clouds—in their spiritual sense—as the medium of God’s manifestations and operations:

“*He rode upon a cherub, and did fly. He was seen upon the wings of the wind . . . and thick clouds of the skies*” (2 Sam. 22:11-12).

“*He maketh the clouds His chariot. He walketh upon the wings of the wind*” (Psa. 104:3).

“*The Lord rideth upon a swift cloud*” (Isa. 19:1).

“*His pavilion round about Him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies*” (Psa. 18:11).

There are three Hebrew words for clouds, meaning thick, covering, and vapor. All three are used in the last passage—*“thick clouds of the skies”*—it is literally: “clouds of clouds of clouds”—a three-fold repetition, like *“Holy, holy, holy.”*

When we let our minds dwell upon the spiritual significance of clouds—how they are composed, what their purposes are, who they represent, we can see far more point and promise and harmony and beauty in God’s presence being so often manifested in clouds. This was how Israel knew Him—

“I will come unto thee in a thick cloud” (Ex. 19:9).

“The Lord went before them in a pillar of cloud”
(Ex. 13:21).

“They looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud” (Ex. 16:10).

Of the Tabernacle, God promised—

“I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy-seat”
(Lev. 16:2).

And when Solomon’s Temple was dedicated—

“The cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister for the glory of the Lord had filled the house” (1 Kgs. 8:10-11).

At the transfiguration of Jesus—the manifestation of the glory of his kingdom—a *“bright cloud”* overshadowed them, and they *“entered into the cloud”* (Matt. 17:5). And again, when he was taken unto heaven—

“A cloud received him out of their sight” (Acts 1:9).

When he returns—

“They shall see the son of man coming in the CLOUDS of heaven, with power and great glory” (Matt. 24:30).

Likewise—

“Behold, he cometh WITH CLOUDS, and every eye shall see him” (Rev. 1:7).

When the multitudinous Son of Man is manifested, the Rainbowed Angel, he is—

“Clothed with a cloud, and a rainbow is upon his head” (Rev. 10:1).

* * *

The rainbow is the token of the Everlasting Covenant, the sign of the Memorial Name, “Yahweh Elohim.” The rainbow occurs in only three places in Scripture, but very significant places—the covenant with Noah, the Cherubim visions of Ezekiel and the Multitudinous Son-of-Man similitude in the Revelation.

The rainbow is always associated with the cloud—

"I do set my bow in the cloud" (Gen. 9:13).

"The bow shall be seen in the cloud" (Gen. 9:14).

"The appearance of the bow in the cloud in the day of rain" (Eze. 1:28).

The cloud—the multitudinous droplets of water—are essential to the manifestation of the rainbow. Only they can thus reflect in brilliant beauty the manifold wonders of the glorious divine light—from the red of the flesh, through the yellow gold of tried faith and the green of life and resurrection to the heavenly blue and the royal purple.

The raindrops absorb the pure white light and reflect it back separated into its basic seven colors. They manifest the glory of God in detail—they manifest the various characteristics that together make up the perfection of His goodness.

The rainbow around the throne in Rev. 4:3 is said to be in sight like unto an emerald, that is, green. Green is the central of the seven colors of the rainbow, and is the color of life and blessing—

"Like a green olive tree in the house of God"
(Psa. 52:8).

"A green olive tree, fair and of goodly fruit"
(Jer. 11:16).

"As a tree planted by the water, her leaf shall be green" (Jer. 17:8).

And the opposite is shown by—

"The grass faileth, there is no green thing" (Isa. 15:6).

"I have dried up the green tree" (Eze. 17:24).

"If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" (Lk. 23:31).

The true form of the rainbow is a circle, symbol of perfection and endlessness, like the spirit-wheels of Ezekiel's cherubim. It is significant that the higher we go the more of the circle we can see. It is only our low, earthly outlook that prevents us seeing the fullness and perfection of the divine purpose—the endless, everlasting covenant.

In our weak mortal state we see through a glass darkly, and we know in part. But even in our weakness, the higher we raise the plane of our spiritual vision, the more of the full circle of the purpose we can perceive. From an airplane (up in the heaven, entirely, away from the earth's obscuring), the full circle of the rainbow is visible.

So in the spiritual—the higher the view, the fuller the perception, the more complete and entire is the vision of the eternal purpose.

The clouds are held up in the sky, and given motion and directions, by the wind. In Hebrew, there is no separate word for wind. It is *ruach*—"breath, spirit."

This may at first seem unnecessarily confusing. We are inclined to think there would be less danger of misunderstanding if it were a separate word, as in English.

But there must be a purpose. It must be to teach us something. Similarly, when we come to "thunder" we find again there is no separate word, it is "voice."

The thunder is the voice of God, and the wind His breath. Does not this give us a more intimate conception of His relations to His creation? Does it not make us more careful of ourselves, in relation to our attitude toward it?—toward all the various manifestations of His power and purpose in the weather?

We realize all too little the direct and continual dependence of the Creation upon its Great Creator. We get too detached and mechanical a view. The Scriptures try to teach us differently. Consider such Psalms as the 104th, designed to teach us how close God always is to the things that He has made—

"The young lions roar, and seek their meat from God."

"These wait all upon Thee, that Thou mayest give them their meat in due season."

"That Thou givest them they gather. Thou openest Thine hand, they are filled with good."

"O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! In wisdom hast Thou made them all: the earth is full of Thy riches!"

"THE LORD SHALL REJOICE IN HIS WORKS."

There is the whole glorious secret of Creation.

Similarly when God is speaking to Job, He calls into review all the elements of the world and the universe, from the feeding of the ravens to the guiding of the stars in their courses. Do we realize, CAN we realize, the infinite scope and magnitude of God's handiwork?

"Not a sparrow falls to the ground without God being aware."

We find no confusion in the use of the same word for wind and spirit. Each falls into its place. All is of God, in a diversity of operation. The wind, literal and figurative, plays an important part in the fulfilling of His will and accomplishing of His purpose—

"He rode on a cherub, and did fly; He was seen on the wings of the wind" (2 Sam. 22:11).

*"He bringeth the wind out of His treasuries"
(Psa. 135:7).*

"Fire and hail, snow and vapors, stormy wind fulfilling His Word" (Psa. 148:8).

"A man (that is, THE man) shall be as an hiding place from the wind, a covert from the tempest" (Isa. 32:2).

"I will raise against Babylon a destroying wind" (Jer. 51:1).

We have seen just recently how utterly helpless is puny man when God causeth His winds to blow.

"Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live" (Eze. 37:9).

The wind then, is the motive power—that which gives motion and direction, and, as breath, that which gives life. As the wind is in the natural heavens, so the spirit is in the spiritual heavens.

Actually, the wind is not a power in itself—as the Spirit is not a power in itself, it has a source—the sun. The basic power behind the wind is temperature, heat. Herein we see God as the Source and Center of all.

In scriptural imagery, the Sun is more commonly applied to Christ, as the manifestation of God. But it is also often applied to God Himself—the ultimate and original Source of all light and heat and power and life, just as the term Saviour is applied in its ultimate sense to God. Jesus said—

"I can of mine own self do nothing" (Jn. 5:30).

We must always see in him God manifested—

"Not my will but Thine be done" (Lk. 22:42).

"The words I speak are not mine, but His that sent me" (Jn. 7:16).

The whole purpose and meaning of Christ is as the manifestation of God, just as—if WE are to have any meaning or purpose—it must be as manifestations of God.

* * *

So in tracing the water cycle, we have the drawing up of the vapor into clouds, and the movement and direction of the clouds by the wind. What follows that?

God demanded of Job—

"Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds, that abundance of waters may cover thee?" (Job 38:34).

Here is the next step in the process—the rain. God declares—

"For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may

give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall My Word be that goeth forth out of My mouth: It shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please" (Isa. 55:10-11).

Moses similarly says, in his great prophetic song with which he closes his last message to Israel —

"Give ear, O heavens; hear, O earth!

"My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distill as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, as the showers upon the grass" (Deut. 32:1-2).

The rain from heaven is the Word of God, the Water of Life. This has various applications. In the fulness of the cloud symbol, the rain is the Word made flesh, the multitudinous Christ, overshadowing the earth and pouring out God's blessing in the Millennial kingdom of righteousness—

"He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth" (Psa. 72:6).

Why the "mown" grass? Because this will be the new, fresh, tender growth. The harvest will have been reaped, all the old coarse, growth taken away.

It is this gentle rain, falling in the midst of the morning sunshine, that manifests the beautiful rainbow symbol of the everlasting covenant of life and peace.

* * *

Isaiah 55 also mentioned the snow. Snow is of great importance in the yearly life cycle of nature. On mountain tops it stores the waters which constantly replenish such mighty rivers as the Nile during the hot summer months when otherwise they would dry up. The snow of Hermon is the source of the Jordan.

Snow provides the gentle blanket of the winter, conserving the earth's warmth through the cold months, and protecting both vegetable and animal life, storing the life-giving moisture for the springtime rebirth.

Snow affords one of the most wonderful and awe-inspiring evidences of God's infinite wisdom, power, and love of beauty.

Each tiny snowflake is an intricate lacy, six-pointed star of exquisitely fine and symmetrical design, far too minute to be seen by the naked eye.

In even a small snowstorm, countless millions of these fall and, as far as man is able to determine, *there are never two exactly alike*, though they all follow the same six-fold pattern.

Infinite forms of beauty, *never seen by any eye but God's*, created in inconceivable profusion and often lasting but for a few moments!

"He hath made everything beautiful in His time . . . as for God, HIS WAY IS PERFECT" (Ecc. 3:11, Psa. 18:30).

When we thoughtlessly take up a handful of snow, we all unknowingly crush these tiny jewels of beauty by the countless thousands. How little we know and realize about the wondrous works of God, Who creates such unseen objects of beauty in endless and infinite profusion, just for the sheer joy of creating!

Before the invention of the microscope, no natural human eye would ever have seen the breathtaking beauty of this *"treasure of the snow,"* to which God refers in rebuking, humbling, and teaching wisdom to Job.

There is great comfort and peace in the contemplation of these things. Our God is a glorious and marvellous God. *Goodness and beauty and life and joy are the eternal pattern of all His works.*

All things that mar that beauty and joy are but passing shadows that will be swept away when their brief purpose is accomplished.

"Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow?"

(Job 38:22)

These were the words of God to Job, as He marshalled before him the multitudinous manifestations of His boundless wisdom.

"HAST THOU ENTERED INTO THE TREASURES OF THE SNOW?"

The raindrop is a simple sphere which reflects the sun's light in the full range of the rainbow's spectrum of color. The snowflake, on the other hand, is an infinitely complicated pattern of symmetrical angles, forms, and surfaces that combine to reflect the light in its pure whiteness.

Snow is a symbol of purity—

"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (Isa. 1:18).

"The Nazarites of Zion were purer than snow"

(Lam. 4:7).

The snow of Lebanon, shining in pure white beauty upon Mt. Hermon, visible throughout all the land, was a constant type and promise of stored up life and blessing to come, when *"the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."*

It was a continual foreshadowing of the pure, white-robed city of God set upon a hill, even upon the holy mountain of God.

pouring forth its blessings to all the earth, under the healing rays of the Sun of Righteousness.

There are many other aspects of the heavens' declaration of God's glory. Much could be said about the marvelous beauty and significance of the "MORNING" symbol—

"In the morning, then ye shall see the glory of the Lord"
(Ex. 16:7).

"Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Psa. 30:5).

"He shall be as the light of the morning . . . even a morning without clouds" (2 Sam. 23:4).

"At eventide trouble; before the morning he is not"
(Isa. 17:14).

"His going forth is prepared as the morning"
(Hos. 6:3).

"The beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning" (Psa. 110:3).

* * *

We have considered mainly the gentle and beneficial side of the picture. There is a group of aspects, however, which portrays the other side—storm, tempest, thunder, lightning, hail, whirlwind, earthquake, and flood.

These things represent the righteous judgments of God against unrighteousness and disobedience. It is good that we remember both the goodness and severity of God. God is love, and God is a consuming fire. The purity of the love requires the consuming fire.

* * *

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork" (Psa. 19:1).

May we, brethren and sisters, in our brief day of opportunity, have the wisdom to lay aside all else, and give all our hearts and minds and souls and strength to preparing ourselves for a place in those "*new heavens wherein dwelleth righteousness*" which will eternally show forth His glory!

"For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.

"Be ye glad and rejoice forever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.

"And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall no more be heard"
(Isa. 65:17-19).

But Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?

"Wisdom is the principal thing; get wisdom" (Prov. 4:7).

Wisdom is something we do not naturally possess—something we must have for salvation. Something we can *never* naturally possess.

Wisdom is *divine* education, *spiritual* training, the learning, absorbing and practicing of eternal truth. It is a *full-time* occupation, a *life-time* job.

Wisdom is spiritual-mindedness. In his beautiful discourse on divine wisdom at the beginning of 1st Corinthians, Paul says—

"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

"But he that is spiritual discerneth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man" (1 Cor. 2:14-15).

Wisdom is knowing and doing that which is for the best—living in harmony with eternal facts. The Bible says all others are fools.

Wisdom is wanting to stand right out in the bright light of the Spirit's revelation and thoroughly examine ourselves—within and without—by it; then striving to eliminate all that is out of harmony with God, and develop what pleases Him.

Wisdom is the examining of every act and activity and asking, has this any eternal value? Does it help in the way of life? Could I be doing something more profitable, more spiritually beneficial, more pleasing to God? Something that would bring me into closer relationship to God? Something more mature, less juvenile?

The Scriptures continually contrast *wisdom* with *folly*, saying that wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness.

There are many scriptural words translated "fool" and "folly," indicating different aspects of foolishness. The original meanings are; perverse, wilful, boaster, self-confident, empty, senseless, thoughtless, unwise, witless, dull.

The Scriptures apply all these terms to those who do not have the wisdom to walk in the narrow way that leads to life—the spiritually enlightened way of wisdom—those who do not strive to bring every thought into captivity to Christ.

The principal word for "fool" in the Old Testament is *keseel*—self-confident, relying on self.

Self-confidence, self-dependence, self-reliance, relying upon and being guided and motivated by natural thinking—considered maturity and wisdom by the world—is really the *mark of the fool*. The Scripture says—

“He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool”

(Prov. 28:26).

The Scriptures make it clear that *naturally* we have no wisdom. Our *natural* condition is folly and ignorance, regardless of how well educated in worldly knowledge. We may have a mechanical, animal cleverness, but never wisdom, for the Scriptures speak of all worldly knowledge as foolishness.

The Scriptures measure wisdom and folly by the *final result achieved*. There is no other reasonable standard.

By *this* standard only *one* thing is wisdom, and that is *godliness*, for all else—regardless of how clever or prosperous or spectacular in achievement—leads only to the devouring worms of the grave at last.

Where is Aristotle? Where is Da Vinci? Where is Newton? Where is Einstein? They had tremendous animal mental power, far beyond normal—but no wisdom. They are wormy dust.

Only one path leads to life. All other activities lead to death. Therefore it alone is wisdom. And *anything* in life that does not contribute to this one purpose is folly—stupidity—idiocy: no word is too strong, the issues are so great!

It will help us a lot if we will honestly give our every action its proper label. Classification is the beginning of order. Face the facts. Face the Light.

We may still DO it, but let us at least, frankly, *face the facts* and label it clearly as *wisdom* or *folly*, according to whether it contributes to godliness or not.

We shall find, if we are honest, that *much* of our activity we will have to call *folly*. If we have any depth of sincerity toward God, things will soon lose their appeal if we frankly recognize them as time and life-wasting folly.

We are told that—

“The righteous shall scarcely be saved” (1 Pet. 4:18).

If this be so, it is surely folly indeed to spend *any* time and effort on anything that does not contribute to the attainment of salvation.

It is of utmost importance—yea, it is *absolutely vital*—that we perceive the clear distinction between *true* wisdom—the wis-

dom of God—and every aspect of that which the world considers wisdom. They are not only *different*, they are completely *incompatible*—diametric opposites, like light and darkness. They ARE Light and Darkness.

All throughout Scripture, the thoughts of natural man are described as false, foolish, vain—

"It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps aright"
(Jer. 10:23).

And "*directing the steps aright*" is the very essence of wisdom.

The present world, the present generation of man, for all its cleverness, and ingenuity, and education and self-glorification—for all its computers, earth-orbits, moon shots, and space probes—is no closer to true wisdom, but rather further from it; for *all* these things—all these accomplishments—are *detriments* to the acquirement of true spiritual wisdom which must begin with a true estimation of man's natural ignorance and folly. Jesus said—

"I thank Thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes, for so it seemed good in Thy sight" (Matt. 11:25-26).

This is a divine principle of action that is vitally important to recognize—

Wisdom is given by God only to those who fully realize the foolishness and emptiness of all natural man's thoughts, INCLUDING THEIR OWN, and who seek His guidance in love and faith and trust.

In the first three chapters of 1st Corinthians, Paul gives the divine estimation of all human thinking and natural attainment, and fully exposes its utter folly and emptiness. He completely clears the ground of all human fabrications and conceptions—

"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent" (1 Cor. 1:19).

"Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?"
(v. 20).

"God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise" (v. 27).

"The wisdom of this world comes to naught" (2:6).

"The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain" (3:20).

And he finally sums it up decisively and conclusively, dismissing all human learning as a stumbling-block in the way of life (1 Cor. 3:18)—

"Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, LET HIM BECOME A FOOL, that he may be wise."

Let him put it all behind him as empty human folly, as Paul did all his human learning—CAST IT OFF as a *useless hurtful thing* (1 Cor. 3:19)—

"For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God."

* * *

Let us, then consider what the Scriptures say about wisdom. In the Old Testament, the word occurs about one hundred sixty times. It occurs eight times in connection with those who helped build the Tabernacle in the Wilderness, then twenty-six times in the record concerning Solomon, one hundred times in Job, Psalms, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, and a few times in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel—the four major prophets.

It occurs first in Exodus 28:3—

"Thou shalt speak unto all that are wise-hearted, whom I HAVE FILLED with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron's garments to consecrate him."

In Exodus 35:26, they are spoken of as those—

"Whose HEART STIRRED THEM UP in wisdom."

Here is illustrated that combination of God and man working together that is the key to salvation. Frequently we are told that wisdom must be hunted for as treasure, cried after, diligently sought and striven after, through study and meditation upon the Word of God.

* * *

Two-Thirds of all the occurrences of this word wisdom *are in the life or writings of Solomon.*

Here was a man with every possible advantage, and he started out so well, and so wisely. God gave him wisdom beyond any before or since, save Jesus himself.

And yet the record is that when he was old, his *alien, worldly wives* turned away his heart from God. For all his wisdom, he was led into folly, even though he writes so clearly and forcefully in Ecclesiastes the utter *vanity* of the present, and the *wisdom* of serving God. It is very sad, very instructive.

We may ask, what is the value of wisdom if the man who had the most was a failure?

Solomon's failure does not detract anything from the value of wisdom. What it does teach is the tremendous power of the flesh, that it could cause *such* a capable, well-blessed man to turn aside from wisdom.

Perhaps Solomon's incomparable blessings caused his heart to be lifted up in pride, and *pride* is but a very small step to *stupidity*. Pride so easily blinds wisdom's eyes, and leads it helpless captive.

The proud are ready dupes for the most foolish and blatant deceptions.

God is just in all His ways. Where much is given, much is expected.

"We must through much tribulation enter the Kingdom" (Acts. 14:22).

Solomon's wisdom served a divine purpose. He was used to record essential teachings, and to manifest a striking lesson, but *it did not give him an unfair advantage*.

His testing was in accord with his privileges, and he *failed*, because he forsook the way of wisdom. We can never take salvation for granted. It is a matter of all-out effort, and fear and trembling.

Solomon's case is a marvelous illustration of the direct operation of God upon a man, combined with the wonder of responsible individual free-will. God's special gifts for certain purposes never affect or interfere with the individual working out of their salvation. This is a marvel we cannot understand, but must accept as essential to the justice of God.

* * *

The first Scriptural discussion on wisdom is in Job 28. Here is described in beautiful language the tremendous efforts men will put forth to extract the hidden treasures of the earth. No labor is too great, no danger too terrifying—man will seek treasures and fame with lifelong dedication—

"The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light" (Lk. 16:8).

After all this it enquires—

"But where shall wisdom be found?" (Job 28:12)

"Man knoweth not the price thereof; Neither is it found in the land of the living" (v. 13).

"The depth saith, it is not in me. The sea saith, It is not with me" (v. 14).

"It cannot be gotten for gold. It is greater than all treasures" (v. 15).

"WHENCE THEN COMETH WISDOM?" (v. 20)

"God understandeth the way thereof, and unto man He saith" (vs. 23, 28)—

"BEHOLD THE FEAR OF THE LORD, THAT IS WISDOM, AND TO DEPART FROM EVIL IS UNDERSTANDING."

In the well-known 90th Psalm, which is attributed to Moses, occurs this prayer—

"We spend our years as a tale that is told" (v. 9).

"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" (v. 12).

This is the whole secret of life. So often these words are repeated on occasions of sorrow or loss, but how little we truly heed them!

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask God, and it shall be given him" (Jam. 1:5).

We come now to the Proverbs, the heart of the subject. The Book begins—

"The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, King of Israel" (v. 1).

"To know wisdom and instruction: to perceive the words of understanding" (v. 2).

"To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice and judgment" (v. 3).

The purpose of the Book is to impress us with the importance of wisdom; to teach us the emptiness and foolishness of our natural mind; to try and awaken us to the urgency of our need to search tearfully for wisdom—

"To be FLESHLY minded is death, but to be SPIRITUALLY minded is LIFE and peace" (Rom. 8:6).

And only by the constant absorption of divine wisdom do we ever become or stay *"spiritually minded."*

The present is so real, and presses so closely upon us, that all things tend to encourage and feed the mind of the flesh. Attaining divine wisdom is slow and uphill and laborious for our mortal minds, and *most of us are very lazy mentally.*

But only those who struggle all the night, and overcome, will gain the prize.

* * *

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Prov. 1:7).

A recognition of the reality and authority of God is the very beginning of all true learning. The Scriptures say that anyone who does not recognize the reality of God, and make Him the center of all their thinking, is a FOOL.

This is basic—there is no use sugar-coating it; no use going any further until this is learned.

Wisdom does not hide from man. Her advertisements are everywhere in creation around us (Prov. 1:20-21)—

"Wisdom crieth without. She uttereth her voice in the streets. She crieth in the chief place of concourse. . ."

The Scriptures tell us that God's wisdom and power and divinity cry out continually in all the beauty and order of creation, and that any who cannot see His hand in it all are blind fools.

And this testimony is true. The recognition of God is the very beginning of the opening of the eyes to Light. All wisdom, all true knowledge and understanding, must start there. Proverbs 1:22 continues Wisdom's urgent plea—

"How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in scorning, and fools hate knowledge?"

Let us take what instruction is due us from these words. WE DO NOT STAND ABOVE AND BEYOND THEM.

We ALL fall far short in our appreciation of, and search for, divine wisdom. We drift along from day to day, largely taking salvation for granted.

These strong words of exhortation are to rouse us from such fatal self-deception. We are at school, with much to master, the time is short, and the judgment seat will determine with terrible finality, whether we have passed or failed. There will be much bitter weeping and gnashing of teeth then, for wasted time and lost opportunity, but it will be too late. Many parents who have berated their children for failing to study will find they themselves have failed far more grievously.

* * *

Chapter 2 emphasizes this theme that the attainment of the knowledge of God that alone is life eternal is a matter of prolonged and intense yearning.

We must go forth every day consciously determined to use every effort and opportunity TO KNOW MORE AND MORE OF GOD—of the deep things of His revelation and manifestation.

We can never be content with shallowness; yea, we can never be content AT ALL. We must have a sense of pressing urgency—of knowing so little—of having so much to learn—so much to develop—so little time to spare.

"Great peace have they that love Thy law, and NOTHING shall offend them" (Psa. 119:165).

Is not this an infinite desirable condition? *Have we "great peace?"* It comes only to those whose roots are deep in the knowledge of God. If we do not have peace, that is a danger sign. Solomon says here—

"My son, IF thou criest after knowledge and liftest up thy voice for understanding . . .

"If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures,

"THEN shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.

"For the Lord giveth wisdom" (Prov. 2:1-6).

James says (1:5)—

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God . . . and it SHALL be given him."

But he warns (v. 6)—

"But let him ask in faith . . ."

"A doubleminded man is unstable in all his ways"

(v. 8).

"Let not that man think that he shall receive anything"

(v. 7).

It must be in pure singleness of heart. All other interests must be put away.

"If thine eye be single, the whole body shall be full of light" (Matt. 6:22).

* * *

Proverbs 2:10 speaks of—

"When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul."

The way of life is not an arbitrary or mechanical set of rules. It is a glorious, personal, joyful, exciting relationship with the Father, the eternal Fountainhead of all glory, joy and love.

Beauty is that which is pleasing to the senses, and it is the opening up to our understanding of the beauty of holiness that makes knowledge pleasant to our soul.

Who can desire the ugliness of the flesh when their eyes have been opened to the beauty of holiness?

The flesh is ugly, terribly ugly; ugly in its self-centered and self-destructive stupidity. All its reactions are ugly, in ourselves and in others, and the more clearly we can see its ugliness, by comparing it with the beauty of holiness, the more we shall seek to overcome it.

* * *

Proverbs 3 gives further instruction in the way of wisdom (vs. 5-6)—

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

"In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths."

Here is a wonderful promise—

"In ALL thy ways acknowledge Him, and He SHALL direct thy paths."

God will not *"direct our paths"* unless we on our part *"acknowledge Him in ALL our ways."* There can be no holding back. Continually uppermost in the mind at all times must be the remembrance of God and a desire to please Him, which is stronger than any other desire.

If we do not have this, let us stick with it and think it through until we clearly see there is no other sensible or satisfactory way to live. God said to Israel, and it applies to all—

"Be ye not as the horse or as the mule, which have no understanding" (Psa. 32:9).

Most people live like the horse and the mule. They never do any real thinking. They live by custom, and desire, and habit, and emotion, and self-gratification. God's people must be different.

* * *

The end of Proverbs 3 gives two aspects of an important divine principle—just to whom God gives wisdom—

"His secret is with the RIGHTEOUS" (3:32).

"He giveth grace unto the LOWLY" (3:34).

Life-giving wisdom is a precious gift of God to those alone who seek to please Him and conform to His desires. The way of wisdom is defined in the words of Paul to the Philippians:

"Whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule" (Phil. 3:16).

If we truly seek divine wisdom, we must honestly and consistently walk according to what we already understand, and put away what we know to be out of harmony with divine perfection. Otherwise we mock God by asking for more guidance.

* * *

Proverbs 8 is a beautiful exhortation by Wisdom herself, personified as the everpresent hand-maiden of God in all His works. It would well repay daily reading and meditation.

She freely offers to men ALL peace, ALL happiness, ALL well-being, ALL joy.

She crieth everywhere, seeking men's attention, seeking to turn them from death to life, and from sorrow to joy, from natural poverty to true spiritual wealth.

Why must wisdom and life cry in vain, while all the world flocks after folly and emptiness and death?

What a sad commentary on mankind! Are we so foolish as to join in these meaningless, juvenile pursuits of entertainment, pleasures, acquiring of wealth, and constant childish time-wasting play—rushing headlong to the eternal oblivion of the grave?

Let us be men in understanding, and recognize the true divine, eternal values of life.

* * *

Wisdom says in this 8th chapter—Receive my instruction, and not silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold.

“For wisdom is better than rubies, and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it” (v. 11).

“By me kings reign” (v. 15).

“I love them that love me, and those that SEEK ME EARLY SHALL find me” (v. 17).

Here is an intimation that many leave the search for wisdom until too late. God is not mocked. When He decides we have had ample opportunity, He often closes the door and sends strong delusion. We never know when the door will suddenly be closed. Wisdom continues—

“I cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures . . .” (v. 21).

“Substance” here is surely a well-chosen word. “Substance” implies permanence, solidity, reality, durability.

Substance is what we want—not the vapor and froth and bubble of the passing world.

“The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old.

“I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was” (v. 22-23).

Here, perhaps, is wisdom’s greatest characteristic. It is eternal. It is divine. In the great scope of infinity, folly is but for a fleeting moment, but wisdom gives life for ever and ever and ever.

* * *

In every scriptural subject, we are finally led to the same point. All points forward and finds its fulfilment in one man—the only REAL man—the only COMPLETE man that ever lived—the embodiment and perfect fulfilment of the divine wisdom of the ages. Isaiah declares (11:2)—

“The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.”

Here are "The seven spirits"—the seven-fold Spirit of the Deity before the throne—

The spirit of the Lord, of wisdom, of understanding, of counsel, of might, of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord.

The seven pillars of Wisdom's temple—all the aspects of Wisdom—understanding, counsel, knowledge, the fear of the Lord and might.

And Paul says, in the chapters in Corinthians on wisdom to which we have referred (1 Cor. 1:30)—

"Christ Jesus is of God made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption."

Here is the true life-giving Wisdom before which all the wisdom of the world stands as naked foolishness.

"Wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

Christ is our wisdom, and our wisdom is Christ—

"In him, and through him, and because of him, are all things" (Rom. 11:36).

"In him," declared Paul to the Colossians (2:3)—

"Are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

Let us therefore live in him and for him—grow up into him in the wisdom of God through the Word, for *"Wisdom is the principal thing."*

Sorrow Is Better Than Laughter

"The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth" (Ecc. 7:4).

Paul gives us much to think about when he speaks of foolish talking and jesting as incompatible with holiness. Not because such things are purposely sinful, but they are fleshly and animal, outside the narrow and exalted scope of the sanctification of holiness, and therefore corrupt and unclean. He couples them in equal condemnation with what natural man considers much graver sins (Eph. 5:3-4)—

"But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you";

"Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting."

It is prostitution of the mind to the panderings of the flesh, and the mind is more important than the body.

It has been pointed out that the one great and remarkable omission from the Bible as the portrayal of humanity is the complete absence of humor. It has no place there. There is joy, and laughter, and happiness, and rejoicing, and merriness (in its true sense), and lightheartedness (in its true sense), and good fellowship. But no humor—

"As the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool" (Ecc. 7:6)

—no warmth, no lasting light: a brief flash, a harsh, grating sound, then cold black ashes.

This fact (the absence of humor), with Paul's and other inspired writers' remarks upon the same subject, is matter for deep thought for those who aspire to the holy reverence of sainthood.

In the first place, humor, however gentle, is rarely without a sting. The basis of every joke is the discomfiture of someone. Minor troubles and difficulties of others always appear humorous, and even major troubles have elements of humor to those who are not affected, often when the seriousness of the trouble makes them ashamed of the impulse. Humor is basically malicious; it's the natural, undisciplined mind of the flesh.

Then again, humor is false. It is evanescent, counterfeit happiness. It creates briefly and shallowly the same sensations; it calls into play the same expressions of the face, although usually contorted and exaggerated. But it creates no bond of friendship. It has no depth or permanence. It is not

conducive to intimacy or confidence. In fact, it speaks sadly of a lack of depth, a shallow emptiness, an absence of consideration, a stunted immaturity, a deficiency of experience and understanding. It is sounding brass, and clanging cymbal. It has no warmth. It leaves the heart cold and cheated and uncheered.

Life isn't funny. We realize this when we face its realities—when we consider its hospitals and asylums; its lonely, cheerless homes for the cast-off aged, sitting around waiting to die; its unnumbered hosts of blind and crippled and suffering and bereaved; its multitude of pitiful, frightened, malformed unwanted children, twisted in mind and body; its endless, hopeless, plodding, stumbling parade toward the inevitable last common receptacle of all mortal flesh.

Who can joke and jest if they keep a full and sober realization of these things before their minds?

Life is no joke: it is grimly tragic. But still even amid its tragedy it can be happy and joyful with the quiet happiness of the assurance of the goodness of God, and the knowledge that all this will pass away and be forgotten when it has at last served its divine purpose, and the tried and perfected family of God is complete.

And then again, humor is often so cruelly out of place. Who has not bitten their tongue in shame and confusion after having stirred up a hidden sorrow by a thoughtless word of folly? Solomon says (Prov. 25:20)—

*"As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather,
so is he that singeth songs to an heavy heart."*

And Proverbs 14:13—

*"Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end
of that mirth is heaviness."*

And again (Ecc. 2:1-2)—

*"I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with
mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure. And, behold, this also
is vanity. I said of laughter, It is mad. And of mirth,
What doeth it?"*

Wisdom's verdict is (Ecc. 7:2-4)—

*"It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go
to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men;
and the living will lay it to his heart."*

*"Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of
the countenance the heart is made better. The heart of
the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of
fools is in the house of mirth."*

There was no humor in the life of our Great Example, and his life was perfect in the sight of God. He was a man of sorrows and deep, intimate acquaintance with grief. With the knowledge and discernment and spiritual depth of sympathy and fellowfeeling that he possessed, it would be impossible to be otherwise than sorrowful in a world like this.

Nothing would have been more jarringly out of place, or more destructive of the power of his influence for good, than shallow, jangling humor. His mission was to those who had bitterly experienced the sorrow and tragedy of life. With them he had a fellowfeeling born of the same experiences. And to them he said—

"Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh."

"Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep."

A mutual sorrow is a far stronger bond of affection than a mutual pleasure, and the consolation of the mutual communion that is born of sorrow is often adequate compensation for it—

"By the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better" (Ecc. 7:3).

"Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Psa. 30:5).

The Prince of Peace

ISAIAH CHAPTERS SEVEN, EIGHT, AND NINE TO VERSE SEVEN

These chapters are very much about Christ—

7: *"A virgin shall conceive, and bear a son . . ."*

8: *"I and the children Yahweh hath given me . . ."*

9: *"Unto us a child is born . . ."*

It was in the time of king Ahaz of Judah, son of the good Jotham, father of the good Hezekiah. Ahaz himself is pictured as the worst king Judah ever had, even worse over-all than Manasseh—

"He made molten images for Baalim . . . He burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom . . . HE BURNT HIS CHILDREN IN THE FIRE after the abominations of the heathen whom the Lord had cast out"

(2 Chr. 28:2-3).

Yet it was to him that these marvelous prophecies were given.

It was about 730 BC: three hundred years after David's day. Under Uzziah and Jotham (who preceded him), Judah had been very strong. But under Ahaz, God brought it very low. Syria defeated him and carried away a great multitude of captives, and took much territory. Israel fought him, and slew 120,000 in one day. Edom smote him and carried away captives. The Philistines took away much of his land (2 Kgs. 16:6; 2 Chr. 28:5-6, 17-20).

As Isaiah chapter 7 opens, Syria and Israel (v. 1) have combined to finally crush Judah and set up their own king there, and it appears many in Judah itself were sympathetic to this design. Ahaz and all the people are deathly afraid (v. 2). At this point, God sends Isaiah to tell Ahaz not to fear (v. 3). God had used Israel and Syria to punish wicked Judah, but when they plan to destroy the House of David and set up their own king (v. 6), they went too far. Even heathen rulers, when in their conquests they appointed kings of Judah, kept to the royal line of the House of David. This would be God's over-ruling Providence, because of His promise.

Ahaz is assured (v. 8) that within sixty-five years, Ephraim (Israel) would be completely blotted out. Actually the nation was destroyed as such, and much of the people carried captive to Assyria within fifteen years, in the early years of Ahaz's son Hezekiah, but many were left, who later mocked the appeals of Hezekiah (2 Chr. 30:10). The sixty-five years include later

attritions by Assyria, and the bringing in by the Assyrian king Esarhaddon of an alien people to fill the land (who became known as the Samaritans).

"If ye (Ahaz) will not believe (this promise of protection and deliverance), surely ye shall not be established" (v. 9).

Judah was in terrible straits: powerless, greatly diminished, and threatened with extinction. Faith at such a time was difficult, especially for a wicked and faithless man like Ahaz: so God made him a tremendous offer never made to anyone else, before or since—

"Ask ANY SIGN YOU WISH: in the depth, or in the height" (v. 11).

But Ahaz said: *"I will not tempt the Lord"* (v. 12). This was absolute hypocrisy. He did not *want* the sign. He did not want to believe. He did not want to submit to God, which accepting the offer would involve. He wanted to go his own way. God was very angry (v. 13). Then, surprisingly, comes one of the major prophecies of the entire Scriptures—

"Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name IMMANUEL" (v. 14).

It is notable (v. 13) that God had addressed Ahaz as the "House of David." As an individual he was a miserable nothing, but officially he comprised in his day the House of David, which is great in God's Purpose. This sign was the sign of all signs to that House. Hezekiah would be about ten years old at this time, and would very likely be present. It was a Sign for all generations: especially those since its fulfillment in Christ.

This unique event of all history—the central Key to the Divine Plan—was hinted at from the very beginning, in the Promise to Eve that the Savior of mankind should be the Seed of the *Woman*, rather than of the *Man*. But it had never before been plainly expressed.

And not only was he to be the child of a virgin (a special creation, outside the course of nature): he was to be more—his Name was to be Immanuel: *"God With Us"*: the Divine Mystery of God-Manifestation, first in Christ, then in a multitude of his brethren.

"Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good" (v. 15).

It is notable that the Child of the virgin had to go through a *process of learning* to enable him to refuse evil and choose good. It is also notable that he was potentially able to choose the evil.

Neither of this could possibly be true of an eternal, omnipotent "trinitarian" god pretending to be a man. God knows all things eternally; God cannot be tempted.

The meaning of "butter and honey" is clear from the fact that they are what gave Christ the knowledge to choose the way of right. That can only be the Word of God. There are many references in Scripture to eating, digesting, assimilating and ruminating upon the Word, so the figure is both clear and familiar. Honey is the sweetness, butter is the richness, of the Word. The Spirit of Christ in the Psalms says—

"Thy words are sweeter than honey to my mouth"
(119:103).

We are familiar with the expression: "*The sincere (pure) milk of the Word.*" Butter, of course, is the best and richness of the milk. In the Song of Songs, the Bridegroom says to the Bride—

"Honey and milk are under thy tongue" (4:11).

—referring to speaking in pure harmony with the Word and mind of God. Christ alone perfectly fulfilled this choosing of good and refusing of evil. *That perfection* was the heart and essence of his power and his victory: his outstanding characteristic and qualification. No one has ever approached near to him in this respect.

"Before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings" (v. 16).

What land and what kings? It might appear to refer to Syria and Israel, the then combined enemy. And doubtless it did refer to them in an immediate sense. But their two separate kingdoms did not constitute a "land" or "nation." And clearly, in speaking of Christ, and of events seven hundred years distant, God is speaking on a larger scale. The land "abhorred" or despised by the faithless Ahaz was *the Land*: and before the infancy of Christ, both the kingdoms of Israel and Judah should be terminated, and so they were. In the Divine Purpose, Syria was a non-entity. The two wicked kings were those of Israel and Judah: including Ahaz himself. This would appear clear from the next verse—

"The Lord shall bring upon THEE, and THY people, and THY house" (v. 17).

And what was the Lord to bring? "*The king of Assyria.*" At this time, about 730 BC, under the mighty Tiglath-pileser, or Pul, Assyria's last great period of power began, until it declined about 650 BC, and Babylon destroyed Nineveh in 612 BC. This

immediate period contains the first scriptural reference to Assyria since Genesis (except Balaam's prophecy in Numbers 24:22-24).

In rejection of the Immanuel Sign was the beginning of the end of the nation's entity, just as the rejection of Immanuel himself was the culmination of that end. Ahaz, faced with the greatest offer of evidence ever made by God, chose to reject God and rely on man. He called on Assyria to help him (2 Kgs. 16:7). This was a fatal step. Judah never again was truly free from the dark shadow of foreign domination (though under Josiah, when Assyria weakened, there was practical independence, for a twilight period, in the closing mercies of God on the nation).

But for Ahaz, the helper immediately became the master. The call for help was an offer of submission and vassalage. It is possible Ahaz had already made contact with Assyria, when Isaiah brought the Divine message. It appears certain that the course was at least in his mind and determination. So it was decreed that his sin should be his downfall, and his unholy alliance should become his bondage—

"The Lord shall bring upon thee . . . the king of Assyria" (v. 17).

Little did Ahaz realize the dreadful scourge he had called forth.

God refers (v. 18) to the Assyrian and Egyptian armies He would bring, as bees and flies. Not the mild flies as we know them, but a voracious devouring insect that constituted one of the deadly plagues, and is to this day a terrible scourge in Africa. And not our relatively mild bees, but the lethal wild killer bees of Africa and the Mideast, which attack without provocation anything that moves, and that are today an imported and growing plague in South America. There is clearly an interesting relation of thought between the famed honey of the Holy Land—both temporal and spiritual—and the fierce, God-sent Assyrian bees which would take it all away.

"The Lord shall shave with a hired razor, even the king of Assyria" (v. 20).

To shave is to make absolutely bare, to utterly remove the glory, for hair and beard are symbols of beauty and dignity. To shave is to purify, as the Nazarite and leper (Num. 6:18; Lev. 14:8).

Ahaz himself had hired the razor, robbing the Temple to raise the tribute (2 Kgs. 16:8), so this was the instrument God used for his and Judah's punishment. There is a powerful lesson for all here. In perfect justice God allows our own wilfulness and

folly to chasten us, and (hopefully) to teach us the wisdom that *exactly* as we sow, we reap.

The rest of this chapter (Isa. 7:21-25) is both interesting and obscure. Clearly it speaks of the desolation of the land, and the coming of invaders. But it also obviously speaks in veiled language of spiritual things: promise as well as judgment—a remnant that prospers in a certain way amid the general desolation; a fruitfulness amid a barrenness.

"It shall come to pass in that day (the day of heathen oppression), that a man shall nourish a young cow, and two sheep" (v. 21).

"Young cow" is "heifer" elsewhere, and our minds go to the "red heifer" whose sacrificial ashes cleansed from defilement: clearly a type of Jesus. "And two sheep": the two folds of the faithful that make up the one true flock.

The "*butter and honey*" (v. 22) that all the remnant eat who remain "*in the land*" must be the same butter and honey that guided and nourished Immanuel in verse 15.

The "*briars and thorns*" are the wicked nation, reverted to its fierce and useless and destructive natural animal state. "*Briars and thorns*" is a common scriptural symbol of wild and unfruitful people, especially those upon whom cultivation has been expended without result (v. 23).

The "*arrows and bows*" (v. 24) are the invaders God sends upon the land because of the briar-and-thorn condition.

But still (v. 25) *above* the lower level of briars and thorns that cover the land in general, "*hills*" arise that are diligently cultivated and productive, and where the briars and thorns cannot come and are not feared. These little hills of faithful fruitfulness in the general barrenness of the nation, are for the "*sending forth of oxen*," the zealously laboring apostles and preachers of the Gospel. And the "*lesser cattle*" (Revised Version: sheep) are the flock of the redeemed—

"Feed my sheep" (Jn. 21:16).

Chapter 8 begins a new but related matter. It deals with the birth of Isaiah's second son (another sign), which is both a type of, and contrast with, the virgin's son Immanuel.

"Take thee a great roll, and write in it with a man's pen" (v. 1).

Actually, it should be "tablet," as in Revised Version, and not "roll." And it should be "graving tool," as it is translated in Exodus 32:4, not "pen." It is a "*great*" tablet: it is important, and it must be clear and prominent.

"*AMAN'S* *graving tool*." This is a direct contrast with Immanuel, whose *graving* was of God, and not man—

"Upon one stone shall be seven eyes. Behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the Lord of hosts. And I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day" (Zech. 3:9).

No "*man's* *graving tool*" could be used on God's Altar (Ex. 20:25).

"Write concerning Maher-shalal-hash-baz" (the son's name: "Speed the spoil: hasten the prey.") (v. 1).

And (v. 2) he took "*faithful*" (sure, dependable) witnesses, Ahaz's own men, Uriah (2 Kgs. 16:10) and Zechariah (2 Chr. 29:1), for this was a sign to Ahaz. He went in unto the prophetess (v. 3), and she bore him a son, to be named Maher-shalal-hash-baz. In less than two years (v. 4), before this child could say "Mother" or "Father," the king of Assyria would subdue and plunder both Syria and Israel. This would be of God, *without* Ahaz making himself dependent on Assyria. Ahaz need but trust and wait. But he did not. He trusted on the cruel and treacherous Assyrians, the power of the world, rather than on the living and faithful God. So God continues—

"Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly . . . the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river (the Euphrates) . . . even the king of Assyria" (vs. 6-7).

The "*waters of Shiloah*" were Jerusalem's water supply, arising from never-failing springs in the rock under the Temple area, between Mts. Zion and Moriah: the Royal mount and the Priestly mount. Shiloah means "Sent." There is much significance and fitting type here. Clearly these gentle, steady, life-giving waters of the Holy City portray the Word—both written and incarnate. And the Name Shiloh or Shiloah is appropriately applied to Christ, who was "Sent" for Salvation and Life by the love of God to man. These waters, used exactly as instructed, in believing obedience to Christ, gave sight to the blind (Jn. 9:7).

The Euphrates goes back to the beginning of the Bible story. It was part of the life-giving waters of the Garden of Eden, and will be part of that Garden again. But in Isaiah's day it was the enemy, the mighty Assyrian nation at crest-flood: a rushing, overflowing torrent, drowning all the surrounding nations.

The Assyrian was a military, plundering desolator, who boasted of his plundering (Isa. 10:13-14). In more recent times the overflowing Euphrates stood for another plundering deso-

lator, the once-fearsome Turk now dried up and impotent, according to the infallible divine fiat.

Isaiah plainly told Ahaz (v. 8) what his newly-bought "friend" would do: overflow Judah *"even to the neck,"* and *"fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel."* This he did in Ahaz's son Hezekiah's day, up to the neck, but the head was saved by the miraculous destruction of the Assyrian army. This was typical of the victory of Messiah's day, when the latter-day Assyrian would again overflow the land even to the neck. And the prophet looks forward to that time (v. 9), challenging the whole Assyrian world, in the spirit of Psalm 2, to associate against God's King on His holy Zion hill, and declaring their utter destruction.

*"Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought.
Speak the word, and it shall not stand: for IMMANUEL—
GOD IS WITH US!"* (v. 10).

The struggle between the Assyrian and the Holy City has raged from that day to this, with the Assyrian always in the ascendancy. But Immanuel will at last prevail. It is the picture we find so often, as Micah 5—

"This Man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land. And when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds, and eight princes of men. And they shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword" (Mic. 5:5-6).

Beginning at verse 11, the chapter goes into spiritual things, and has largely to do with the mission of Christ, past and future—

"Walk not in the way of this people" (v. 11).

That is, Come out, be separate. The nation would reject Immanuel, as we see in the next few verses, but the faithful remnant is called out.

"Say ye not, A confederacy: neither fear ye their fear" (v. 12).

Heed no calls for defensive or apprehensive union with the worldly and ungodly; nor even fear the fears that motivate these moves. The flesh fears, and associates for strength. The people of God fear nothing, and have calm confidence; *"Perfect love casteth out fear"* (1 Jn. 4:18).

Keep separate, and (v. 13) *"Sanctify"* (that is, promote the holiness on earth of) the Lord, by *your* separateness and holiness, and make Him alone your (reverential and circum-spect) fear.

Clearly Isaiah is looking forward prophetically to the time under Christ when the Covenant will not be national but individual: a great change for Israel, so rooted in their national privilege.

"And he shall be for a sanctuary" (v. 14).

A Sanctuary is a place of God's appointment where He is manifested, and can be approached in worship. Here is the Mystery of God-Manifestation. The Sanctuary, or Dwelling-place, of God is Christ; first personal, then multitudinous. Isaiah is foretelling the Word made flesh.

"A sanctuary—but a stone of stumbling to both the houses of Israel" (v. 14).

And so he was, and has been ever since. It is the tragedy of Israel. The rejected Cornerstone (Psa. 118:22), the Precious Stone of God's engraving (Zech. 3:9) to which the cries of "Grace!" will ascend (Zech. 4:7).

"And many shall stumble, and fall, and be broken" (v. 15).

—even the whole nation, unto this day.

"Bind up the testimony; seal the law among my disciples" (v. 16).

To bind up and seal is to guard and preserve, to defend and maintain, to keep from change or corruption or loss. The nation would be lost, but not the Law and the Testimony, nor the eternal Divine Purpose. In Messiah's day, as the nation was cast aside, the Law and Testimony were especially "*bound up and sealed*" by the Holy Spirit: guiding the apostles in all truth in their preaching and writing, and causing to be completed—and sealed as complete (Rev. 22:19)—the whole "Volume of the Book" which is our inestimable treasure unto this day.

"I will WAIT upon the Lord, Who hath hiden His face from the house of Jacob, and I will look (or watch) for Him" (v. 17).

As the great majority turn from God, and God in retribution hides His face from them, this is the faithful remnant, represented by the prophet, *waiting* in patience, and *watching* in faithfulness, regardless of what others do, or of how many broaden the path, or fall away.

"Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts" (v. 18).

In the first instance, this applies to Isaiah and his day. His two sons, Shear-jashub and Maher-shalal-hash-baz, were signs to Israel, in their names and in the events surrounding

them. Their names mean "A remnant shall return" and "Speed the spoil, haste the prey." Here is both promise and judgment. The spoil is the riches taken; the prey are the people overcome. Even in this name of judgment there is promise, for these sons represent the mighty ones who will take the spoil and prey.

Isaiah includes himself in the sign: "*I and.*" His own name means "Salvation of God" or "God Saves," and is simply another form of the elements of "Jesus" or "Joshua." Isaiah held forth salvation to Israel, both temporal and eternal. They *could* be of the faithful returning remnant; they *could* share the glorious spoil of a world brought to submission to God.

Paul (Heb. 2:13) applies this verse directly to Christ and his brethren: "*I and the children whom God hath given me.*" They are the waiting and watching disciples, preserving the Testimony. And they are the "Sons" who shall be Signs and Wonders in Israel in the great coming Day of glory and manifestation as "Sons of God"—

"He shall see his seed (his sons brought forth in righteousness, born of baptism, then of the Spirit), he shall prolong his days" (Isa. 53:10).

Established in power in Jerusalem—the remnant returned, the spoil taken—they will be Signs and Wonders that neither scattered Israel nor the heathen Gentile world can then miss or ignore.

"He shall divide the SPOIL with the strong, because he hath poured out his soul unto death" (Isa. 53:12).

So saith the Spirit of the suffering, dying, and then glorified Servant of Yahweh. And God through Zephaniah addresses the meek of the earth—

"Wait upon Me until the day that I rise up to the PREY, for My determination is to gather the nations, to pour on them My fierce anger" (Zeph. 3:8).

In verse 18, Isaiah and his sons were Signs and Wonders from God to Judah: evidence of God's hand, and guidance from Him in the Way of right. In verse 19, Isaiah appeals to Judah not to listen to any other voice, to any of the wisdom of man, to any who claimed to have supernatural powers, or communications with the dead.

Ahaz was a pre-eminent sinner in this respect. He served other gods in abundance, and did all the superstitious abominations of the heathen. But the warning is for all time. To pretend special powers and/or to communicate with the dead is the stock in trade of all *man's* religions. We see it particularly

in Catholicism, with its professed priestly powers, and the dead guides they seek to and call "saints." But it is not *just* Catholicism. It is universal, based on the superstition of dead "saints" and the immortality of the soul.

Verse 20 is one of the bulwarks of the Truth—

"To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

There are various translations of the latter part, but they signify the same, and, as usual, the Authorized Version expresses it best. We have the Word of God, and it is an inestimable treasure. It is our wisdom to use every opportunity we have to learn more of it, and to test *everyone* and *everything* by it.

It is easy to slip into the conceit that because we are Christadelphians, we are automatically on our way to life—a few accepted doctrines our painless privileged passport to perpetuity—and we do not need to *constantly* study and learn and check our course and conduct.

We must keep the Word pre-eminent. The scriptural picture is that the Word is essential *daily* food for the spiritual man within us, without which he will inevitably weaken and die. If God guides us in answer to our prayers, it will be through the Word. He has appointed *that* as the meeting-place with Him, and if we neglect that, we shall find Him nowhere.

"They shall pass through it hardly bestead (distressed) and hungry: and they shall curse their King and their God" (v. 21).

Isaiah is clearly speaking of those mentioned throughout the chapter as rejecting the Word and stumbling at the Stumbling-stone. But to what time or occasion does it apply? In the first instance to the terrible calamities inflicted by Assyria, warned of in verse 8. Though Hezekiah and Jerusalem were saved, and the few chosen in the city, the whole country was devastated and thoroughly looted. Sennacherib claims to have carried off 200,000 captives from Judah on just one occasion, and incalculable amounts of cattle and spoil. Doubtless cursing their King and their God, and vainly "*looking upward*" for deliverance occurred many times over in these dark times, and those that followed.

But its ultimate and major fulfillment was in the rejecting and cursing of their Messiah, who was their God-appointed King, and *Immanuel*: "God with us"—"*God manifest in the flesh*" (1 Tim. 3:16). The chapter ends—

“ . . . *dimness of anguish; and they shall be driven to darkness* (v. 22).

Darkness fell over the land at the coming of the gentile destroyers and the complete obliteration of the Kingdom of God: darkness in many ways for: “*The sun went down over the prophets, and it was dark unto them*”—as Micah (3:6) (who prophesied at this same time) foretells. For over four hundred years there was no word at all from God.

* * *

Chapter 9 is a new beginning: a wonderful new beginning: *the new beginning*. Verse 1: Zebulun and Naphtali—the land of Galilee—suffered the most and the longest in the heathen invasions. They were the gateway to the land, and took the full brunt of the invader every time. The darkness struck them first and hardest, but it was to them that the Light most especially came.

Immanuel’s home and headquarters were in Galilee. Most of his labors were there. Most of his followers were Galileans, and to speak with Galilean accent was to identify one as associated with him, as we see in the case of Peter (Mk. 14:70). And the angel addressed the up-gazing disciples who watched him ascend, as “*Ye men of Galilee*” (Acts 1:11).

Galilee was known as “*Galilee of the Gentiles*” (Matt. 4:15), because of its mixed and cosmopolitan character, so different from the rigid and legalistic Jerusalem. Jesus’ seeming origin in, and association with, Galilee was a great stumbling-block to the Jewish leaders—

“*Search and see: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet*” (Jn. 7:52).

* * *

“*The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light*” (v. 2).

Matthew leaves no doubt of the meaning in telling us (4:16) that this Light was Immanuel in their midst.

“*Thou hast multiplied the nation, and NOT increased the joy*” (v. 3).

The margin give “to him” for “not,” and Revised Version follows this, though “not” is best supported textually, and it’s hard to see how “not” could creep in, if it were not the original, but the change the other way is easy.

If we accept the “not,” then it’s clearly a contrast of the *past* with the new joyful Light of righteousness. The nation had been “increased” in the past, as in the splendid days of Solomon, but

without real and lasting joy, which can only be founded on righteousness. But *this* new Light of "God with us," and what *he* accomplished, guarantees eternal joy: for the nation of Israel, and for the whole world.

"For Thou hast broken the yoke of his burden . . . the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian" (v. 4).

The "*days of Midian*" refer back to the marvelous and typical victory of Gideon and his little band of three hundred (Jdgs. 7). "*Thou hast broken*" is certainly prophetic: the prophetic past speaking of the future, because of its surety in the Purpose of God. When the Great Light Immanuel had completed his mission in his first advent, and his death had been swallowed up in victory, the oppressor's yoke was indeed broken. But this will not be consummated in its fulness until the last enemy, death, is destroyed at the millennium's end (1 Cor. 15:26).

This verse refers, too, to the final destruction of the Assyrian on the mountains of Israel by Immanuel returned: the man who shall be the Peace when the Assyrian comes into the land for the last time (Mic. 5:5), for the next verses lead on into the glory of his Throne and Kingdom.

"For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood, but THIS shall be with burning and fuel of fire" (v. 5).

Here again, the detailed translations are various, and the Revised Version varies considerably, but the basic picture is clear. Here is the final worldwide conflict, when God sets His King upon His holy hill of Zion (Psa. 2), when Christ descends from heaven in flaming fire taking vengeance (2 Thess. 1:8), and when the King of kings and Lord of lords treads the winepress of the wrath of God (Rev. 19:15-16).

The Revised Version translation, which seems here to get closer to the sense, emphasizes the *result* of this climactic battle in the burning up of all the instruments of war: the removal of war from the earth.

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given" (v. 6).

Here is the Hope of mankind—*from among* mankind, but by the special initiative of God, the special control and guidance of God, the special personal manifestation of God in a unique, chosen vessel from Adam's fallen race. This is the great "Mystery of Godliness"—*Immanuel*—"God with us." This appears in the wonderful names he bears.

"The government shall be upon his shoulder" (v. 6).

Here is the Son of David, to sit upon his regal throne, ruling from the River to the ends of the earth (Psa. 72:8). Here is the Seed of Abraham, to have universal dominion over his enemies, to possess their gates, and bring blessing to all the nations (Gen. 22:17-18).

"His name shall be called WONDERFUL" (v. 6).

No more fitting term could begin the description of him: his "Name" or character or identification. All God's works are wonderful, and we do well to revel constantly in the glory of their wonderfulness. But of all the wonders of Creation, Christ is the most wonderful of all. Using the same word, the Psalmist prays (119:18)—

"Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold WONDROUS THINGS out of Thy law."

Let that be our constant search and desire. It is wholesome, and purifying, and beautifying, and productive of great joy.

" . . . COUNSELLOR . . ." (v. 6).

That is, Guide, Teacher, Instructor, Advisor. How great is this need! And how perfectly he fills it!—not only the Perfect Teacher, but the Perfect Example of his own teaching. Let us realize how *much* we need teaching in everything: how little we know at very best, how little we are able alone to direct our own way in wisdom and well-being.

His being Counsellor is inseparably related to his being the Word made flesh. All the Word is about him, and centers wholly around him. We find him in a multitude of ways on all its pages. Here is where we learn of him, and get to know him, and are "counselled" by him.

" . . . THE MIGHTY GOD . . ." (v. 6).

We need have no difficulty with this title. It is the essential foundation. His Name would be incomplete without this aspect. There are two considerations that explain it—

1. The term "God" (Ail or El in the original) is applied by God to others than Christ, as Christ himself pointed out from the Psalms in defending its application to himself (Psa. 82:1, 6)

"God (Elohim) judgeth among the gods (elohim) . . . I (God) have said that ye (Israel) are gods (elohim), and all of you are children of the Most High."

2. But the second consideration (actually related to the first, but of specific and unique application to Christ) is the most relevant here: he was *Immanuel*—"God with us"—

"God was manifest in the flesh . . . God was IN Christ . . . He that hath seen me hath seen the Father"

(1 Tim. 3:16; 2 Cor. 5:19; Jn. 14:9).

This manifestation is an essential part of his glorious Name.

“ . . . *THE EVERLASTING FATHER* . . . ” (v. 6).

This should be “Father of the Future,” or “Father of Eternity.” The Hebrew is *Abi-Ad*. He is Father of all Future Eternity in that all springs from him. He laid the foundation in his perfect life and death, and so opened the way for the future. He alone was worthy and able to open the Seals of the Divine Plan of the Ages (Rev. 5:5). Without him, there could have been no future. And *individually*, without him *no one* has any future. He is the “Beginning of the (New) Creation” (Rev. 3:14; Col. 1:15).

“*THE PRINCE OF PEACE* . . . ” (v. 6).

His culminating title. He is Prince of Peace in every sense, truly. External, universal, calm, tranquil peace on earth: all nature and all mankind in perfect harmonious accord. But far more than that, he is Prince of the Peace of God that passeth all understanding, the inner Peace, the Perfect Peace—

“*Great peace have they which love Thy law . . . Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee*” (Psa. 119:165; Isa. 26:3).

“*Be careful—concerned, anxious, worried, troubled—for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, SHALL keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus*” (Phil. 4:6-7).

—for he is the Prince of Peace.

“*The zeal of Yahweh of hosts WILL perform this*” (v. 7).

Lift Up Your Eyes On High!

Look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. The things seen are temporal: the things not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18).

Isaiah in chapter forty, urges upon us a conception of God and the purpose of life that is overwhelming in its immensity. If we can by supreme effort, get in tune with his viewpoint, present things shrink into their true insignificance—

"Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand and meted out heaven with a span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure?" (v. 12).

"Behold the nations are as the small dust of the balance" (v. 15).

"Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of His understanding" (v. 28).

"Lift up your eyes on high and behold Who hath created these things . . . by the greatness of His might, for He is strong in power" (v. 26).

This is the scale of conception that it is wholesome to dwell upon, and get away from the pettiness of our present surroundings. It is strengthening. It is uplifting. It engenders a sober, Godly frame of mind.

This is the *true* state of affairs. The world is but a handful of dust—its troubled history an insignificant fraction of eternity—the seemingly real and actual present but a brief interlude that will pass like shadows before the rising sun.

This is the sphere of thought that is comforting and worthwhile. Keeping our minds in *this* channel will result in a course of action in harmony with these things and will fit us for a place in them.

We are told by well-meaning but worldly-minded counselors that if we want a better position we must fit ourselves for it. We must fill our thoughts with its responsibilities and requirements. We must, as it were, mentally live in that sphere and accustom ourselves to it.

Now of course, this is entirely out of the question for those whose minds, in obedience to the counsel of the apostle, are wholly given to *better* things—they just haven't the time for it. But it illustrates the effort we must make on a higher and more satisfying scale. Often, sadly enough, the children of this world

show more wisdom and initiative and energy in their aspirations than the children of light do in those things which are eternal.

* * *

The human mind is not bound to its immediate surroundings. If it were so, life would often become unbearable. But consciousness is largely made up of memory and anticipation, beside that which is present to the senses.

Many people choose their solace by living in the past, comforting themselves with reminiscence and recollection, escaping monotonous or unpleasant reality by an absorption in what has gone.

Most are wrapped up in the immediate present and the very limited future which comes within the scope of present undertakings. But such a course does not satisfy the contemplative mind.

"Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die," is the universal doctrine, but only the shallowest, dullest minds can find merriment satisfying under such circumstances. Such an attitude requires the cruelest, bitterest form of self-deception and wilful blindness.

But, in the mercy of God, there is a third alternative for those who feel the need. How is one brought to feel the need? By a recognition of the sadness and perversions of the present dispensation, due to the incapability and inhumanity of man.

Is this brought home to us easily or quickly? Usually not. At first the world is a place of bright promise, of comradeship and love, a gay and thoughtless adventure. This is the common first impression in the innocence and buoyancy of inexperience.

How do we learn differently? What prompts us to turn for comfort and satisfaction elsewhere? Usually it requires the rough hand of misfortune and disillusionment to make us fully appreciative of the vanity of present things. We are aware, it is true, in a vague, theoretic way, of the vast preponderance of sorrow over joy in the world, but we feel nobody's troubles as keenly as we do our own. This is in the very nature of things. Our minds can only work on what is being continually presented to them in some form or another. Unless constantly reminded either by circumstances or direct efforts of our own will, we soon forget and our attention is taken by other things.

This, too, demonstrates why we must constantly supply our minds with material for thought from the Word of God. If we do

not, our minds will feed on other and unwholesome things that so easily present themselves to them.

What is the course of mental satisfaction that is offered to counteract the depressing effect of present considerations?—

“Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished and her iniquity is pardoned.”

Such are the opening words of the reading from Isaiah 40.

“Her warfare IS accomplished and her iniquity IS pardoned.”

These things have been recorded for over twenty-six hundred years and the end is not yet. Some may be reminded, perhaps a little bitterly, of the statement by Paul to the Romans (4:17) that—

“God calleth those things which be not as though they were already.”

Clearly there could be no more striking example.

To speak assuringly of warfare being over when it still had a cruel course of over 2,000 years to run may seem poor and misleading comfort—but is this the truth of the matter? A thoughtful consideration will show that this is but a narrow and unreasonable viewpoint.

Comfort depends upon the state of the mind.

The comfort offered by the Scriptures is not dependent upon immediate fulfillment. It is the assurance of an ultimate reign of peace and good, that is separated from no individual by more than the brief span of a human life-time. Its comfort is not that distress is *finished*, but that distress is a controlled and necessary ingredient of the final result.

This is the viewpoint that prophet and apostle exhort us to maintain. We must live in patience and godliness, buoyed up by hope. We must center our minds resolutely upon that which is to come and face all present trouble in the confidence of this expectation.

“Sorrow endureth for the night,” says the Psalmist (30:5)—and the night may be long—*“but joy cometh in the morning.”* The course of wisdom is not to ignore or belittle the sorrow, but to balance the whole picture. We shall not be overwhelmed by the one if the other is kept rightly in mind.

Thus we can enter into the spirit of these words of Isaiah and reap the comfort intended. We are not to regard the delay with skeptical impatience or lagging faith, but we are to build our

lives and hopes upon these things in the quiet and calm confidence that they represent the realities and that in God's good time all will be accomplished. Verse 6—

"The voice said, 'Cry'. And he said, 'What shall I cry?'"

What good tidings are there?

"All flesh is grass . . . the grass withereth . . . surely the people is grass."

Where is hope?

This is the thoughtful but purely natural view. It sees things only as they appear and leaves out the most important feature.

Verse 8 answers: Truly "*the grass withereth*"—truly present things are a shadow—

"But the word of our God shall stand forever . . . Lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid!"

"Say, Behold your God! . . . Behold the Lord God will come with strong hand . . . and His reward is with Him."

Then the chapter breaks into the long, exalted eulogy to the power and greatness and unchangeableness of God, of which we have spoken. What is its purpose?

To raise and broaden the mortal conception of the meaning and purpose of life. To train the mind into channels that give a balanced, proportioned, spiritual outlook.

The human mind can be engrossed in the meanest and most trivial matters, or it can be devoted to the highest and loftiest considerations of divinity and holiness. The natural tendency of gravity pulls it downward, but the mighty divine magnetism of the Spirit draws it upward.

As the mind thinks, so it becomes. A man is but the aggregation of his own thoughts.

Every spiritual thought is an ingredient of the new creature—a strengthening of the spirit—a step towards life. Therefore, says Paul (Phil. 4:8):

"Whatsoever things are true, lovely, gracious and just, THINK on these things."

—and thereby become gradually like them.

The Living Creatures and the Bow

"The four living creatures rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come" (Rev. 4:8).

EZEKIEL CHAPTER ONE

The two deepest and most beautiful symbols of the Scriptures are the Cherubim and the Rainbow—God-Manifestation and the Everlasting Covenant. Both appear in the first chapter of Ezekiel. The Rainbow occurs three times only in the whole Bible: Genesis, here, and in Revelation. The Cherubim are mentioned many times, from Genesis to Revelation, but this first chapter of Ezekiel is by far the fullest and most detailed reference.

We must have a clear picture of the eternal purpose of God as revealed in the plain and literal portions of Scripture to understand these symbols and to appreciate and enjoy their deep beauties and lessons. Viewed in the light of the Yahweh-Name and the Gospel of the Kingdom, these symbols fall marvelously into place.

God-Manifestation—the Yahweh-Elohim Name—"*He who shall be Mighty Ones*"—is the true and beautiful Bible picture of which the Trinity is the confused and ugly counterpart. The Trinity is an attempt by Greek philosophers to define the relationship of Christ to God. The Cherubim and the Multitudinous Son of Man symbols are the BIBLE representation of that relationship, and of the Eternal purpose of God with mankind.

God's purpose is to manifest Himself through a multitude of redeemed, perfected, immortalized and glorified men and women whose Head is Christ, and this community is symbolized by the Cherubim. Paul, writing to the Hebrews, calls this community the "*Cherubim of Glory*"—the vehicle and medium of the manifestation of God's glory, and the instrumentality by which the earth will be filled with that glory.

The Cherubim are the ruling powers of the Age to Come: the four-square Camp of Spiritual Israel. Ezekiel 1, like Revelation 4, portrays the Messiah of Israel in glory upon his throne, surrounded by his saints, and all energized and made glorious by the Spirit of God.

The opening visions of Ezekiel and Revelation are very similar. Both Ezekiel and John were captives and exiles. In

both visions appear the throne, the One sitting on it, the brightness, lightning, Rainbow, fire, lamps, crystal, voice, four living Creatures full of eyes: man, lion, ox and eagle, feet of burnished brass. Both had wings (but John's, like Isaiah's, had six: Ezekiel's had four). Both prophet and apostle fell on their faces, a symbol of death and resurrection.

Ezekiel's prophecy opens with "*visions of God*" (E1). It ends with the magnificent Millennial Temple of the Age to Come, the center of world worship. Its closing verse names the new world capital of Jerusalem, Yahweh-Shammah, "THE LORD IS THERE."

Chapter 1 is clearly the beginning of Ezekiel's prophetic ministry. He prophesied for twenty years, from the fifth to the twenty fifth of the captivity (chapters 1 and 4).

"Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year" (v. 1).

The thirtieth year of what? It would seem most probable that it was the thirtieth year of his life. Christ and John began their ministries at thirty, and Ezekiel, the "*Son of Man*" of the Old Testament, was typical of both. His last vision, that of the Millennial Temple, would then be in his fiftieth year. This was the period of priestly service, thirty to fifty, and Ezekiel was of the Priesthood. It would be very fitting, too, that he had the vision of the new Millennial Temple at the end of his period of Mosaic service.

Isaiah 6 is similar. This depicts the beginning of Isaiah's ministry. He sees the Seraphim, or "*Burning Ones*," (a variant symbol of the Cherubim multitude), who sing "*Holy, Holy, Holy*," as do the Cherubim or four Living Creatures in Revelation 4. John applies this vision to Christ when he says (12:41) that Isaiah—"Saw his glory, and spake of him."

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"In the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity" (v. 2).

This was, of course, the fifth year of Zedekiah's reign, the year after Jeremiah wrote to the captives in Babylon to build houses, for the captivity would be long. Ezekiel prophesied at a time when the Temple, the City, and the Nation were to be destroyed. He was the one to make the announcement to the wicked house of David—

"Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: . . . I will overturn, overturn, overturn it, and it shall be no more, till he come whose right it is" (21:26-27).

Ezekiel prophesied in a time of trouble and captivity and darkness and fear. God's Kingdom was being eclipsed and

scattered and possessed by the heathen. The long 2,520 year Gentile night of "seven times" was beginning.

But shining above and through all is the eternal reality—the glorious, divine, eternal, unfailing purpose—

"As surely as I live, all the earth SHALL be filled with My glory!" (Num. 14:21)

—and all who are steadfast and faithful in present, passing adversity will share the glories of that endless day. The Cherubim are the instruments and the result of filling the earth with God's glory. All the divine purpose with man is compressed into this chapter, but its principal aspect is the final phase—the latter days—the establishment of the Kingdom (v. 9)—

"They turned not as they went: they went every one straight forward."

And finally, at the end of the chapter, they stood still, and let down their wings and the glory of the Lord appears encircled by the Covenant Rainbow, signifying that the storm of conflict is over and, as Zechariah shows in a different symbol of the same time (1:11)—

"All the earth is quiet, and is at rest."

The Cherubim have a warlike aspect: they are a "host" or an army. They manifest thunder and lightning. From them the avenging angel gets coals to scatter on Jerusalem for its destruction. In the Revelation they direct angelic judgments on Babylon and the nations.

The Cherubim are the conflict between good and evil: they are the victory and glorification of good. This is a ceaseless, deadly conflict, from the Garden of Eden to the Paradise of God, and in our every act, word and thought, we are on one side or the other.

The world's man-oriented religions fail to realize that God MUST be justified and vindicated, and evil MUST be punished and destroyed, before good can be enthroned and the nations blessed. Many prophets and apostles speak of the coming of Christ and the setting up of the Kingdom as a time of worldwide judgment and display of divine power and wrath—

"Behold what desolations He hath made in the earth!"
(Psa. 46:8)

"To execute vengeance on the nations, and punishment on the people" (Psa. 149:7).

"When thy judgments are in the earth, THEN will the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness"
(Isa. 26:9).

"By fire and sword will the Lord plead with all flesh: and the slain of the Lord shall be many" (Isa. 66:16).

"The slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other" (Jer. 25:33).

"The Beast was slain, and his body given to the burning flame" (Dan. 7:11).

"A time of trouble such as never was" (Dan. 12:1).

"Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals: He drove asunder the nations: He threshed the nations in anger" (Hab. 3:5-6, 12).

"I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle. Then shall the Lord go forth and fight" (Zech. 14:2-3).

"The Lord shall be revealed from heaven, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those that know not God" (2 Thess. 1:7-8).

"In righteousness he doth make war, and smite the nations: he treadeth the winepress of the wrath of God" (Rev. 19:11, 15).

But the fiery, flashing, irresistible Cherubim symbol is not just war and destruction. That is but a minor, necessary, preliminary aspect of their glory. They are God manifest in the flesh: God's eternal, joyful family.

The broad picture is clear and beautiful, though many details are very difficult to fathom. This is as we would expect and desire: the basis clear, but always more depths to plumb and explore. The Cherubim represent the glorified saints, doing God's will and worshipping Him. They are Yahweh Elohim—God manifest in the flesh—partakers of the divine nature.

How do we know they represent the redeemed? It is clear in many ways: they are connected with man, their general form is human, they share Christ's throne, they are holy, they are glorious, they worship and serve God, God inhabits—or dwells in—them, their faces connect them with the camp of Israel, their principal characteristic is life, their voice is both the voice of God and the voice of a multitude.

But perhaps the clearest indication of their identity is when they sing to Christ (Rev. 5:9)—

"Thou hast redeemed us out of every nation, and hast made us kings and priests, and we shall reign upon the earth."

The Cherubim symbolize mankind in perfection: fullness of life, holiness, glory, unity, worship, service, knowledge, unchangeableness and power.

Whenever the Cherubim occur—usually in times of great change and tribulation for the people of God—they are symbols of hope and promise and future glory for faithful men. They proclaim the Everlasting Covenant (Rev. 21:3)—

“Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.”

The Cherubim occur in the Garden of Eden, the Mosaic Tabernacle, the Psalms, Solomon’s Temple, Isaiah, Ezekiel’s visions and Temple, and in Revelation.

They always appear in the nearest relationship to God: in the Garden of Eden, excluding natural man; in the Most Holy, where men could not enter; in Isaiah and Ezekiel they execute the judgments of God. God rides on them and dwells in them. In Revelation 4, they are about the throne and also in the MIDST of the throne.

Christ is the Mercy Seat: the solid gold cover-lid of the Ark of the Covenant. The Cherubim, standing upon the foundations of the Mercy Seat, are solid gold also, and of one piece with him.

They are IN the Most Holy; they have access thereto by sacrifice and prayer and unity with Christ, and in their future solid gold state they will be there with him forever.

“And this was their appearance: they had the likeness of a man” (v. 5).

—of One Man, THE Man. This is the basic key to their identity: they are the “*Man of One*”—the Multitudinous Man.

They are described in this their first mention by Ezekiel as “*LIVING Creatures*.” Their fundamental characteristic is LIFE (just as natural man’s fundamental characteristic is death).

And life not just as passive existence, but intense, endless, tireless activity and motion—never stopping, never resting. To our weak, mortal constitutions, even contemplation of this is tiring. This helps us to realize in a faint way the glories and joys of immortality. We are so used to mortality that we tend to project its frailties and limitations into the eternal future. In Ezekiel’s vision, the Cherubim are always in flashing, lightning-like motion, and in the Revelation they—

“Rest not day and night” (4:8).

—from rejoicing and worshipping God.

* * *

The meaning of the word “*Cherubim*” is uncertain. Several meanings have been suggested. Actually in this chapter they

are not spoken of as Cherubim, but in chapter 10 he speaks of them at length again, and says at the end of the chapter—

“This is the living creature that I saw under the God of Israel by the river of Chebar, and I knew that they were the cherubim” (v. 20).

The simplest and most fitting explanation of Cherubim (singular, Cherub, with a hard “ch” sound in the Hebrew) seems to be from Che-rab, “like the Head” (compare Mi-cha-el, “Who like God”). Certainly the basic idea of the Cherubim is likeness to the Head—no meaning could possibly be more fitting or significant.

And Rab, “Head,” means greatness, especially numerical greatness. It is translated “great” one hundred twenty-eight times, “many” one hundred ninety times, “multitude” seven times. They are a *“great multitude that no man can number.”*

This matter of likeness to the Head is indeed the very heart of the Truth. The Redeemed who form the Glorious Cherubim figure will be so constituted SOLELY on the basis of their LIKENESS to God and to Christ. Only such as have spent their lifetime endeavoring to develop this likeness will form part of the heavenly host. Those who have spent their energies on other things will not be there.

The Ark and the Cherubim were the heart and center of the whole Mosaic system. This was the only object in the Most Holy Place, and God’s glory as it dwelt in the midst of Israel was manifested *“between the Cherubim.”* The Mosaic Cherubim were of *“beaten gold.”* Gold is Faith, and beaten gold is tried, proved, adversity-tested Faith. In Exodus 25:20 we are told—

“Their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall their faces be.”

The Cherubim looked perpetually toward each other and toward the Mercy Seat. They looked nowhere else: their interest was nowhere else. Only such as do likewise will become part of them. In like manner, Ezekiel’s Cherubim *“turned not”* (1:12)—

“They went every one straight forward: whither the Spirit was to go, they went.”

* * *

Natural Israel never saw the glorious golden Cherubim: the veil was in the way—the *“veil of the flesh.”* The priests who served in the Holy Place continually looked on representations of the Cherubim, for they were woven on the inner veil and the ten inner curtains.

The Mosaic Tabernacle represents the wilderness journey; the Solomon Temple represents the Millennial state. So we find the Cherubim more prominent and visible in Solomon's Temple. Representations of them are there found in the outward Appointments of the Temple, so they can be seen by all the worshippers and not just by the priest. The Cherubim multitude will in that day have been manifested to the world.

In addition to the two golden Cherubim on the Mercy Seat, Solomon's Most Holy Place had two great Cherubim fifteen to twenty feet high, of olive-wood covered with gold. These are the two glorified Olive-trees, or "Sons of Oil"—the golden Spirit-oil (Zech. 4:14). This makes four Cherubim in the Most Holy: the complete Cherubim number.

Likewise the outer doors of the Temple are four-fold: two double-doors, and on them Cherubim are represented. And again we find them portrayed on the ten lavers in the court.

The first item David prepared for the Temple was gold for the covering of the two giant olivewood Cherubim, and in the reference recording this (1 Chr. 28:18), the Cherubim are called the "*Chariot of the Cherubim*"—so-called because they are God's vehicle of war and majesty.

This connects them both with Zechariah's Chariots (6:1) and Ezekiel's four-square wheeled representation. In Zechariah 6, horses and chariots go forth from between two mountains of brass. They are called the "*four spirits of the heavens*" which subdue and quiet the earth. These four Chariots are the "Cherubim of glory" which constitute the "Chariot of Yahweh." Psa. 104:3 says—

"He maketh the clouds His chariot."

These are the Clouds of glory that accompany Christ: another symbol of the Redeemed. This was the symbolic Chariot of God-Manifestation that Elisha saw when Elijah was taken up. Habakkuk speaks (3:8) of God's wrath poured out on the sea—the great, churning, mire-and-dirt sea of nations—by God's "*Chariots of salvation.*" In Exodus 25:22 God says—

"There I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from between the two cherubim."

In 1 Sam. 4:4, God is spoken of as "*dwelling between*" the Cherubim, or, more correctly and meaningfully, as "*inhabiting*" the Cherubim. God "*inhabits*" the righteous. Jesus said of his faithful and obedient friends (John 14:23)—

"We (God and Jesus) will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

Paul told the Ephesian brethren (2:22)—

"Ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

"Ye are the Temple of God" (2 Cor. 6:16).

—God's holy dwelling-place. The Cherubim were at the very center of the Tabernacle and Temple symbol: the dwelling and manifestation of God's glory. The basic significance of "Tabernacle" or "Temple" is the dwellingplace of God. The idea of a place of mediation or reconciliation is a secondary meaning—a means to an end. The end itself is DWELLING.

The Hebrew word for Tabernacle is *Mishkan*, meaning "dwelling place, residence, abiding place." It is related, in meaning, to *Shekinah*, the "indwelling"—the Hebrew name for the glory of God that rested on the Cherubim.

The Hebrew word for "Temple" has a similar meaning, but goes further in the sense of size, spaciousness and splendor. It is often translated "palace"—the dwellingplace of a King. Both the Tabernacle and the Temple are frequently spoken of in Scripture as the "house of God," using the general, basic word for "house."

We are told the Edenic Cherubim were "placed" at the east of the Garden. The word for "placed" is *shakan*, "caused to dwell" (from the same root word as *Mishkan* and *Shekinah*). The Edenic Cherubim represented a promise, not a punishment. Cain said (Gen. 4:14)—

"Behold, thou hast driven me out this day . . . and from Thy face shall I be hid."

The Edenic Cherubim were God's throne, presence, meeting-place, place of sacrifice and mercy.

"And, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud."

Ezekiel's "visions of God" came from the north (v. 4), and the first thing he sees is a whirlwind and a cloud. In chapter 38, Ezekiel speaks of Gog as "coming like a cloud" to cover the land, and Daniel speaks of the King of the North as "coming like a whirlwind."

This is the dark and troublous background of the vision. The cloud and whirlwind from the north were the judgments of God embodied in the Northern invader both of that day and of the latter-days, but they were judgments heralding and leading up to a manifestation of deliverance and glory.

The Northern invader, for all his power and pride, is but an incidental aspect of the glorious and unfailing divine purpose

of self-manifestation. The major, permanent aspect is the coming of Christ in the glory of his Father, with his saints and this we MUST see in every step of the development of Russia's position and power.

Russia is nothing in the picture: a mere blind instrument; a mere brief and passing phase. The more bitter and evil and threatening Russia gets against Israel, the closer the end is.

It is out of this whirlwind of judgment that the glory of the Cherubim, and the Everlasting Rainbow, and the Eternal Throne, appear. And so it will be when the latter-day Assyrian comes in fury against God's land.

And out of the cloud a —

“ . . . fire infolding itself . . . ” (v. 4).

—or revolving with flashing brilliance—

“And out of the midst thereof as the color of amber”

(v. 4).

This is not amber as we know it: all authorities agree upon that. What it is, is not positively known, but most agree that it is electrum—a mixture of gold and silver, which was much used and highly prized in ancient times, and which has greater brilliance and beauty than either gold or silver alone. The Hebrew word is *“chashmal,”* of which a Bible dictionary says—

“Supposed by Gesenius and most to be a brilliant amalgam of gold and silver.”

And International Standard Bible Encyclopedia says—

“Thothmes III is represented as standing in his chariot of electrum.”

This is very fitting. Gold and silver combined are more glorious than either alone. A refined golden Faith, tried and perfected in the fire, is very glorious. But it is not glorious enough for salvation. It must be combined with silver, for silver is Ransom and Redemption.

Silver is the original word wherever we read “money” in the Old Testament. Literally translated, therefore, we have—

“The atonement silver” (Ex. 30:16).

“The redemption silver” (Num. 3:49).

“The trespass silver, the sin silver” (2 Kgs. 12:16).

Every male Israelite gave Moses a shekel of silver as a ransom for his life, and this silver was made into the foundation sockets of the Tabernacle. The brilliant electrum glory of the Cherubim was a combination of Christ's atonement and men's faith.

Why four Cherubim? It would seem primarily because the Cherubim are a dwellingplace and a vehicle, both of which

typically have four sides. The plan of the Camp of Israel, God's abiding place on earth, naturally formed a square; the Cherubim are an encampment, an Israelitish encampment. Four-square is a feature of many aspects of both the Tabernacle and Temple. Four denotes universal dominion: the four winds, the four corners of the earth.

Four-square is perfection and completion of the *plan*. The Holy City goes a step farther: the length and the breadth *and the height* were equal—a perfect cube. This was the shape of the Most Holy Place: perfection and completion of *building*.

"As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord" (v. 28).

"And their feet were straight feet" (v. 7).

"Straight" is "*jasher*." This Hebrew word is never applied to shape but always moral condition. It is almost always translated "right" or "upright."

"Like a calf's foot: and they sparkled like the color of burnished brass" (v. 7).

Brass represents the flesh, and burnished (or refined) brass is purified flesh. These calves' feet are hooves of judgment, a symbol of the Jews, God's appointed weapon of war in the last days (Mic. 4:13)—

"Arise and thresh, daughter of Zion: I will make thy hoofs brass, and thou shalt beat in pieces many people."

Malachi uses the same symbol (4:2-3) and John's multitudinous "Man of One" has burnished brass feet (Rev. 1:15).

"And they had the hands of a man under their wings" (v. 8).

Here is the human agency: man's place in the divine purpose—the human hands UNDER the Spirit wings.

"As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, of a lion, of an ox, and of an eagle" (v. 10).

These are the heads of the four divisions of animate creation: man over all; lion, wild beasts; ox, domestic animals; eagle, birds. These, too, were the four standards of Israel's camp. Israel was God's son—

"Israel is My son" . . . "Out of Egypt I called My son."

It seems strange that we are not told in Scripture that the four standards of Israel's camp were the same as the four faces of the Cherubim. We have to glean this important link from Josephus who is notoriously inaccurate and undependable. But in this case it seems strongly confirmed in these ways—

1. It fits the picture exactly: just what we would have to assume if not told.

2. The arrangement is identical, viewed looking north, as Ezekiel was—

LION	—	Judah	—	right	—	East
MAN	—	Reuben	—	front	—	South
OX	—	Ephraim	—	left	—	West
EAGLE	—	Dan	—	back	—	North

3. Judah is elsewhere identified by the lion, and Ephraim by the ox. These are the two principal tribes or encampments.

In this use of the Israelitish encampment as the natural basis of the spiritual Cherubim symbol, we have emphasized the Jewish foundation of the Way of Life—

"Salvation is of the Jews" (Jn. 4:22).

"Though I make a full end of all nations, yet will I not make a full end of thee" (Jer. 30:11).

"The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish" (Isa. 60:12).

These four faces or aspects of the Cherubim symbol of God Manifestation primarily refer to Christ—the phases of his work and character—

MAN: He was THE MAN; the one and only true Man; the "Man made strong"; the "Man of God's right hand." To him in its fullness Paul (in Heb. 2) applies Psalm 8—

"What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" (v. 6)

"Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thine hands" (v. 7).

LION: On the right side; majesty and dominion; the Lion of the tribe of Judah; the side of honor.

OX: On the left side; labor, service, sacrifice. The left side is rejection: as a servant and a sacrifice, Jesus was rejected (Isa. 53). But (Psa. 110:2) his people shall be willing in the day of his power: the day of lion-majesty.

EAGLE: The back: not seen from the front; the last face, contrasted with the first (man), as the lion on the right side is contrasted with the ox on the left: first the natural, then the spiritual. The eagle is the symbol of the endless youth and strength and freedom of the Spirit-body—

"They shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary" (Isa. 40:31).

"Thy youth is renewed like the eagle's" (Psa. 103:5).

The eagle, too, is a symbol of God's Spirit-care for his children—

"I bare you on eagles' wings" (Ex. 19:4).

"As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young . . . so the LORD alone did lead him"
(Deut. 32:11-12).

These four Cherubim faces, in the order that they appear in Rev. 4:7, fit very beautifully into the pattern of the four gospels, as emphasizing the respective phases of Christ's mission—

MATTHEW: The lion, the King of Israel, addressed to Israel, tracing the line from Abraham and David.

MARK: The ox; the servant; the gospel of work and activity, no genealogy.

LUKE: The man, tracing the line from Adam; addressed to mankind.

JOHN: The eagle; the spiritual presentation, the spiritual discourses; again, as fitting, no genealogy.

"And every one had four wings" (v. 6).

We are told several things about their wings:—Each had four; two covered their bodies; two were spread upward and joined the wings of other Cherubim; the noise of their wings was like the noise of great waters, like the voice of the Almighty, the noise of a host; when they stood, they let down their wings.

Wings represent the spiritual aspect (as the eagle does), and they symbolize four things; overshadowing, dominion, exaltation, and swift, free movement.

OVERSHADOWING AND CARE—

"Under whose wings thou art come to trust"
(Ruth 2:12).

DOMINION—The word for "wing" is also translated "uttermost part," "end (of earth)." The Cherubim have four wings—universal dominion.

EXALTATION—

"They shall mount up with wings as eagles"
(Isa. 40:31).

The Cherubim were joined together into one by the union of their wings above them; that is, they were spiritually united, and this was the basis of their unity.

Two wings covered their bodies, and two were spread abroad: the necessary inner and outer aspects—inward covering, spirituality, holiness, perfection; outward glory, overshadowing and dominion.

"Whither the spirit was to go, they went" (v. 12).

They were wholly and exclusively the Spirit's instruments, vehicles of divine power. They were in complete unity and

harmony with God. There was nothing about them contrary to or disharmonious with God.

"They went every one straight forward: they turned not when they went" (v. 12).

There was no deviation nor wavering. And they were irresistible: they could not be stopped, diverted, or delayed.

"Their appearance was like burning coals of fire" (v. 13).

"Coals of fire" are to purge and cleanse and purify (Isa. 6:6-7). Fire is judgment and destruction, but *"coals of fire"* carry the idea of controlled, purposeful, constructive and ultimately beneficial burning. *"Coals of fire,"* as in the natural, represent fire under control and put to a good use.

"And like the appearance of lamps" (v. 13).

These are the seven Spirits of God, as we see in a parallel passage (Rev. 4:5)—

"And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God."

While coals of fire indicate judgment, lamps indicate guidance and illumination and instruction. These are the twin and inseparable duties of the Living Creatures in the Age to Come: they must discipline men and guide them in the Way of God.

"It went up and down among the living creatures."

We are immediately reminded of the angels of God going up and down upon the Christ-ladder that Jacob saw (Gen. 28:12; Jn. 1:51). Here is communication between heaven and earth, another aspect of the work of the Living Creatures. The Cherubim are the Zadok priesthood, the communication and mediation between God and man. The Spirit of God is in constant living motion among and within them—continuous direction and guidance and energizing.

"The living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning" (v. 14).

Lightning is brilliance and power and rapidity of motion: undeviating, irresistible. Lightning, the most stupendous and awesome of all the manifestations of the powers of nature, travels at the speed of light and electricity: 186,000 miles per second—the maximum speed in the universe.

Electricity is the most elementary form of the manifestations of the Spirit of God. All matter and all energy are forms of electricity. This—in striking confirmation of the Scriptures—is one of the most significant and stupendous facts that man in his little scratchings of nature, has stumbled upon.

The atom bomb is the result of disturbing the electrical composition of the basic elements. A simple handful of common dust is in reality a vast storehouse of locked-in and incalculable power. In light, and lightning, and electricity, we are on the borders of the Spirit-world.

"Behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures" (v. 15).

In this context, what is the wheel symbol?—the "rolling, whirling thing"—as the word means, "so great they were dreadful" (v. 18)? This is perhaps the strangest and most difficult part of the picture. The wheel, the circle, is a symbol of perfection, endlessness, eternity, and it is also the CHARIOT aspect—the "Chariot of the Cherubim" (1 Chr. 28:18), God's chariot of royalty, God's chariot of war—that in which and with which He crushes and threshes His enemies.

Daniel 7:9 records of the Ancient of Days (and here again we are in the same time and events as the Cherubim portray)—

"His throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire."

A forward movement in the accomplishment of purpose: especially judicial and administrative purpose. In the same context in Daniel we have the thrones cast down and the four Beasts—the nations of the earth—judged.

There are two words in Hebrew for wheel: "ophan," meaning "circle"; and "galgal," meaning "roll." (The word for "roll of a book" is from the same root as this latter). Both words are used by Ezekiel for "wheel," and apparently interchangeably, though there must be a significance in the difference of use. Both are used in Eze. 10:13—

"As for the wheels (ophan-circles), it was cried unto them in my hearing, O wheel! (galgal— Roll on!)."

Wheels indicate going forward, progression, unfolding, movement, mobility. The laver of the Tabernacle was singular and stationary; but the lavers of the Temple were ten-fold, and had wheels. The former was for the cleansing of Israel alone, the latter symbolized the going forth of the Gospel of purification to all the world in the Age to Come.

To "bring the wheel over" someone is to crush and subdue them, as the millennial promise in Proverbs 20:26—

"A wise king scattereth the wicked, and bringeth the wheel over them."

This is the wheel of threshing, as in Isaiah 28:27-28 (where again we find both words for wheel used.)

But “wheel” in this vision symbolize much more than rolling and motion. The Cherubim fly, the wheels are lifted up with them, and they whirl even when the Cherubim are standing still. The Spirit of life is in the wheels, and the wheels are full of eyes.

There is something that adds great power and fittingness to the wheel symbol of the Spirit, that has only become known in our own day. Man, in his little scratchings on the surface of the limitless depths of the glories of creation, has discovered that all creation is made up of wheels; that all the infinite varieties of Creation—from the rose to the hippopotamus, from the ant to the glorious sun—are simply varieties of the arrangement of wheels within wheels: atoms, neutrons, protons, electrons, etc.—an inconceivable variety of arrangement of a few simple basic things.

And these in turn break down to one basic thing—electricity. And the life and power of all these “wheels within wheels” is the Spirit of God. Each infinitesimal atom is a tremendous concentration of pure divine power, so that a handful of dust could easily send a rocket to the moon. Every atom is a miniature universe, whirling at astronomical speeds.

“The noise of their wings was like the noise of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech, as the noise of an host” (v. 24).

The same symbol of the roar of mighty rushing waters as the noise of an invincible host occurs throughout Revelation—

“I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, as the voice of many waters, as the voice of mighty thunderings” (19:6).

“When they stood, they let down their wings” (v. 24).

Then, when the Cherubim have completed their work of subduing the earth, and have let down their wings, vs. 25-28 give us the final vision of the chapter: the Voice, the Throne, the Man, and finally, the Bow in the cloud.

The Rainbow is the Everlasting Covenant of God to man. There are two essentials for a rainbow: water and the sun. Water is life. The cycle of water is the cycle of life for the earth: drawn up by the sun, formed into clouds, poured down on the earth in rain, running into rivers, then down to the sea, and then up again into the clouds to begin its joyful and beneficent cycle over and over again.

Water—joyful, flowing, cascading, glistening, living water—is the dominant aspect of Ezekiel’s Millennial Temple. Water is

everywhere around. Water flows in abundant profusion from its central and holiest point, the up-raised Altar on the top of the mount. It cascades down the slopes and pours forth out of every entrance. Without water, the beauty of the Temple would be but the beauty of a tomb: bare dead stone, and bare dead sand.

The Rainbow reveals the whole range of colors that make up light. The Covenant Rainbow is spoken of as emerald green in the Revelation (4:3). Green is the central color of the natural rainbow. The word for "green" in Hebrew means moist, fruitful, flourishing, LIFE.

With it, the whole Temple swarms with life and greenness. The vast and beautiful masonry of the Temple structure is but the underlying form and foundation of a great flourishing canopy of lush and verdant flowering greenery that transforms it into one huge and glorious arbor of most delightful shade and atmosphere and perfume.

Here, indeed is the *HOLY CITY*—not a "city" as the horrible, crime-laden, corruption-filled, rat-infested ant hills of man's creation have given us a picture, but a true, beautiful divine polity—

"The wood of life in the midst of the paradise of the Deity" (Rev. 2:7).

The Rainbow manifests to us all colors. Color is prominent in the symbols of Scripture; red, purple, blue, green, and the yellow-gold of faith. Where does color come from? What is color? Why do we see red, purple, green, etc.?

THE COLOR IS IN THE LIGHT. Light contains all color. Objects of themselves have no color. They just have the capacity to reflect color that shines upon them. In the dark they are all the same. They are all NOTHING.

There is a great lesson here. In our natural darkness we are all the same—all nothing. There is no royal purple, no spiritual heavenly healing blue, no fruitful, verdant, living green, no yellow-gold of faith. In any active, meaningful accountable sense, there is even no red of sin for (Rom. 4:15)—

"Where there is no law, there is no transgression."

"The times of this ignorance God winked at."

"Man that is in honor and understandeth not is like the beasts that perish" (Psa. 49:12).

There is just the solid black darkness of death. Black is the absence of all color, as white is all colors combined. Let us always remember that—

THE COLOR IS IN THE LIGHT.

We must come to the light to be anything. We must keep the light shining on us to continue to be anything. As soon as we step, even for a moment, out of the light into the darkness, we immediately become nothing again. We have nothing in ourselves, no matter how long we have been in the Truth. Cut off from the Vine, we are useless and dead.

"God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."

—John declares (1 Jn. 1:5). All is of God. The light of God for us is manifested through the Sun. The sun represents Christ—the *"Sun of Righteousness"*—*"God with us."*

In the Rainbow the glory of the light of God is manifested in a multitude. The Rainbow is the Covenant, the symbol of the Eternal Purpose. In it we see revealed all the colors that together make up the Divine Light for man.

How does the Rainbow separate the light and manifest the different features of the Divine Plan? The rainbow is the Sun's light reflected from multitudes of tiny drops of water in the air. These drops are a very fitting symbol of the Redeemed. They are from the great ocean of nations—the *"waters of the Great Sea."* But they have been called out, separated, drawn up into the heavenlies by the mighty attracting power of the sun. In this process they have been purified.

We hear much today about polluted waters. Man has suddenly been jolted by discovering that in the stupidity of his cleverness he is destroying the earth and himself. Even under the curse that man brought upon himself by disobedience, God has given man a beautiful earth, a beautiful habitation, and has in infinite wisdom and love established thereon a beautiful, balanced self-purifying natural cycle of life. But man in his godless ignorance and greed and violence is rapidly destroying all the beauty and balance, and bringing death and desolation to whatever he touches.

But these tiny drops of water have been purified from all this as they have been drawn up by the power of the sun.

As they are being drawn up, they are invisible to the world. But suddenly, at the proper time, they will be manifested in clouds which will cover the earth, streaming down in floods and torrents: God's long pent-up wrath and judgments against the universal wickedness of man. Then the sky clears, the Sun is revealed, the Rainbow appears, and the glory of God is manifested to the world in all the marvelous details of the Divine plan for mankind.

Each of these drawn-up drops of water is a sphere—a circle or wheel in three dimensions. The different colors are the different wave lengths of which light is composed. Each separate color is reflected in the raindrop at a slightly different angle—so each ray of white light is thus spread out in all its range of colors, and the glorious beauty of the rainbow appears.

To us, a Rainbow is an arc. How can an arc, a part of a circle, represent the fullness and completeness and endlessness of the Divine Glory? Here, by deeper examination, we find a beautiful hidden fitness. If we ascend high enough, we discover that the Rainbow is a complete and perfect circle. It is only the earth and our low viewpoint that obscures this fact for us. The higher we ascend, the more of the circle we see.

Viewed from a mountain top under the right circumstances, the whole circle of the Rainbow would be revealed. The lesson for us is that we must constantly be ascending the mountain of the Lord, never satisfied with the present limits of our understanding or our spiritual accomplishments.

“As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD.

“And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake” (v. 28).

This is the culmination of the vision of the manifestation of Yahweh—Christ and the Saints ruling a peaceful and purified earth. The Cherubim of Glory have let down their wings. Their work of destroying the wicked and subduing the earth is ended.

“The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power.

“And no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled” (Rev. 15:8).

But now the plagues are over, and all the smoke of judgment and destruction has cleared away. The horsemen among the myrtle trees have accomplished their work, and—

“All the earth sitteth still, and is at rest” (Zech. 1:11).

This final verse of Ezekiel 1 is the glory of God now revealed in full and unrestrained effulgence. The Tabernacle of God is with men, and God is all in all—

“As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain.”

I Did As I Was Commanded

"Son of man, the place of My throne, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel FOR EVER. And My holy name shall the house of Israel no more defile" (Eze. 43:7).

EZEKIEL: SON OF MAN

Ezekiel (*God Strengthens*) was one of the three great pillars who carried the purpose of God through the terrible epoch of the destruction of God's Kingdom, and the beginning of the dark Gentile night of Nebuchadnezzar's Image that has lasted two thousand five hundred years, and is only now coming to an end.

Ezekiel's name occurs just twice in the whole Bible, both in his own book (chs. 1 and 24). He is addressed by God ninety-two times as "Son of Man," a few more times than this term is applied to Christ himself. Ezekiel clearly was a man of sign. Neither Ezekiel nor his book are mentioned in the New Testament, but Revelation is obviously linked to his prophecies in very many aspects.

When he began his ministry to and among the captives in Babylon, Jeremiah had already been prophesying at Jerusalem for over thirty years, and Daniel had been prominent for seven or eight years at the court of Babylon. Ezekiel and Jeremiah were priestly prophets; Daniel was of the royal line of David.

Ezekiel was carried captive to Babylon at the same time as king Jehoiachin. This is usually dated 597 BC*. Daniel had been carried captive about nine years earlier in 606 BC—the first deportation, from which the basic seventy years captivity dates, to Cyrus' proclamation in 536 BC.

Each of these three men had a vital function to perform: Jeremiah in the land, Ezekiel with the captives in Babylon**, and Daniel in the Babylonian court and government. All was clearly under God's control, though it looked to the natural man like the total collapse of God's power and purpose. Certainly with Daniel in favor and authority the Jews would be well treated. And even more importantly, we see in both

* Dates are not exact. "Authorities" differ. Man's dating and knowledge of the period is confused.

** Apparently about two hundred miles north of the city of Babylon.

Daniel's and Ezekiel's books the controlling *angelic* hand openly revealed.

We are told the captives with Ezekiel were the better part of the nation: the "*good figs*" (Jer. 24), as contrasted with those left behind in the land. Like Jeremiah, Ezekiel—in a dark day of destruction and scattering—revealed the divine explanation of why it was all happening, and foretold for Israel a final day of regathering and righteousness and glorious worship, the center of a purified earth in prosperity and at rest.

Ezekiel was of the priesthood (1:3), and it appears to have been his mission to be the center of divine approach and intercession for the exiles. God said through him (11:16) that He (God) would be a "*little sanctuary*"—or Holy Place—to them in their captivity. It is very fitting, therefore, that Ezekiel was the one to reveal the pattern of the great House of Prayer for All Nations hinted at by several of the prophets.

Ezekiel's prophecies are all dated, and the whole book is in strict chronological order, except in one group for the obvious purpose of association*. Ezekiel's recorded prophecies were made over a period of twenty-two years (5th to 27th of his captivity). That is, from six years before until sixteen years after the destruction of Jerusalem. His prophecies are all dated from the year Jehoiachin (and Ezekiel) was taken to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. This is the great dividing line.

His book contains forty-eight chapters. It pivots around one central event—the final siege and destruction of Jerusalem. This comes in chapter 24 and divides the book exactly in half. Everything before that point is denunciation and condemnation for the wickedness and abominations that made the destruction of the Kingdom inevitable—the *glory removed*. Everything after that point is consolation and promise—the *glory returned*.

The last half is subdivided again: eight chapters of judgment on Israel's enemies; sixteen chapters of promise concerning Israel's reestablishment. These figures are all too regular and significant to be chance: forty-eight is twelve fours. The last sixteen chapters for Israel are subdivided chapters 7 and 9: chapter 7 (33-39) the latter days; chapter 9 (40-48) the glorious House of Prayer.

* Chapters 26-28 (about Tyre) are in the eleventh year of the captivity (26:1); chapters 29-32 (on Egypt) are in tenth (29:1), twenty-seventh (29:17), eleventh (30:20, 31:1), and twelfth (32:1), obviously grouped by subject.

Chapters 1-24 (of judgment) were before the siege of Jerusalem; chapters 25-33 (against Gentiles) at time of the siege; chapters 34-48 (of comfort) after the siege.

The great dividing point at chapter 24 is also marked by a great personal tragedy for Ezekiel: a staggering trial of affection and faith, in which—as “*Son of Man*”—he faithfully symbolizes both God and the nation.

PROPHECIES IN 5TH YEAR OF CAPTIVITY— 592 BC—CHAPTERS 1-7

Chapter 1: Ezekiel's mission opens in the fifth year of his captivity with the vision of the Cherubim and glory of God: the most spectacular and detailed revelation of divine manifestation in all Scripture. Nothing approaches it for splendor except the closing chapters of Revelation: the New Jerusalem, the Lamb's Bride, and the dwelling of God with man—to all of which it is closely related. It is a picture of the New Creation of Deity, and thus counterbalances Genesis 1, and parallels the first chapters of John's Gospel and First Epistle.

It was fitting and merciful that such a picture should be revealed at such a time. Though perhaps little understood, to the faithful it would be an assurance that the glory, though departing, was not forgetful of the true seed of Abraham. The four-fold Cherubim of Glory—the Living Creature—is a pictorial representation of the Redeemed of God in their glorified state: resplendent in divine power and wisdom, and vibrant with ceaseless activity and joy. This is the Yahweh-Elohim manifestation: *He Who Shall Be Mighty Ones*. This vision also closely parallels Revelation 1—John's Son of Man, Multitudinous Christ, symbol.

Chapter 2: In the midst of the vision, Ezekiel is addressed. He is called to his mission, and warned that he will be among briars, thorns, and scorpions. Clearly the “*good figs*” were a small minority, even of those carried away, but there would always be a faithful few.

Chapter 3: He was told from the beginning Israel would not hear. Like Jeremiah, his mission was doomed to failure before it began. And yet, in a larger sense, it was a complete and eternal success, as shall all the works be of those who work with God. None can ever fail who by faith and wisdom, drop everything in this life, and give all their efforts to making themselves part of the Cherubim of Glory. *It demands full time.*

A short time before Ezekiel's ministry began, Jeremiah had written to the exiles (Jer. 29) telling them the captivity would

be seventy years long, and to settle constructively in Babylon, and not believe the false prophets promising an early return. This laid the foundation for Ezekiel's work.

Doubtless he would describe the vision of the Cherubim to those who had ears to hear, for he was a prophet to them, and its purpose was comfort and encouragement. But his first specific message was—

Chapter 4: The enacted parable of the siege. He is to draw the city of Jerusalem on a tile, and lay siege to it. Then he is to lay bound on his left side three hundred ninety days, and on his right side forty days. These, he is told, are the years of the iniquity of Israel and Judah.

The three hundred ninety clearly refers back to the years since the division of the Kingdom at the beginning of Rehoboam's reign. The forty appears to be the previous period, from the fourth of Solomon, when the Temple was begun, to the fourth of Rehoboam, when Judah turned aside from God, or perhaps it was the whole of Solomon's reign. The general application is clear: three hundred ninety plus forty years of wickedness to be atoned for by desolation.

Now Jeremiah says the captivity should be for seventy years; and Leviticus 26:43 says the land shall "enjoy her sabbaths" while she lieth desolate. It is a remarkable fact that *the sabbath years in four hundred thirty years come to exactly seventy*. It is all the more remarkable because it means adding two irregular fractions. One year in seven were to be sabbaths of rest for the land (Lev. 25:4), plus one year in every fifty, the jubilee (Lev. 25:11).

One-seventh of 430=61.4; $1/50$ of 430=8.6; $61.4+8.6=70$ years.

And carrying the four hundred thirty *forward* from the carrying-away period, 606-586 BC, comes just to the period of re-establishing of independence under the Maccabees, 176-156 BC. In fact, the year of the Maccabean revolt (168 BC) was just four hundred thirty years from the year of Ezekiel's captivity (597 BC): the year he dates everything in his book by.

Chapter 5: Another enacted parable of judgment. Ezekiel is to shave off his hair and beard with a *sword* (Revised Version is clearer: Authorised Version has "razor"). It would be *all* his hair and beard, to fit the symbol, and it would be a matter of personal shame and embarrassment (and doubtless ridicule) to Ezekiel, just as Isaiah's going "naked and barefoot" (20:2)

would be. They typified the nation's shame and degradation. Shaving the head was a sign of mourning (Deut. 21:12; Job 1:20; Isa. 15:2, etc.), but it also implied a process of cleansing from defilement (Lev. 14:8).

The hair represents the people of Jerusalem: its living glory and ornament. One-third he burns: those who died by famine and pestilence in the city in the siege. One-third he smites with the sword: those killed in the taking of the city. One-third he scatters to the winds: those who survived and were driven away captive. A few of these last he puts in a fold in his garment, for protection and preservation: those assembled under Gedaliah. But these are taken out again and burned, for Gedaliah was slain and the survivors killed and scattered.

Chapter 6: The mountains of Israel shall be desolate. Between this prophecy and that of chapter 36—the repopulation of these same mountains—is twenty-five centuries of weary retribution because Israel was unfaithful.

Chapter 7: *The end is come!* God would bring the worst of the heathen upon them, because of their disobedience and worldliness.

PROPHECIES IN THE 6TH YEAR OF CAPTIVITY— 591 BC—CHAPTERS 8-19

In chapters 8-11 Ezekiel is taken in vision to the Temple at Jerusalem.

Chapter 8: The vile abominations and corruptions that have taken the place of the true, appointed worship of God. This vision is dated just three years before Nebuchadnezzar's final siege of the city. These are the conditions that make its destruction inevitable.

Chapter 9: The destruction of Jerusalem symbolically begins: six men with slaughter-weapons come from the north. Six is the number of man. There were six generals of the Babylonian army (Jer. 39:3). Ezekiel's six men were God's supervising angels, and their slaughter-weapons were the Babylonian generals and their armies.

The six are directed by a seventh man in linen with an inkhorn, who puts a mark on all in the city who mourn for the abominations being committed. Then the six are directed to slay all the rest.

We cannot take from this the absolute guarantee that everyone who died in this siege was wicked, and everyone who lived was righteous, for the record shows differently. But it does

comfortingly manifest God's complete control and supervision of every detail. God watches and marks every one. There are no mistakes; no oversights. All sin will be punished: all righteousness at last rewarded.

Chapter 10: In the midst of the judgment, the glorious Cherubim—the Redeemed—of chapter 1 appear again. This may seem out of place, but it is not. The Cherubim are the end-product of all God's works. As a purpose and a conception, they are *always* present: always in the background. *All things are for their sakes* (2 Cor. 4:15). Their presence gives purpose and meaning, and even hope, to these terrible times, assuring that all is working together for eventual, eternal good for those who love and serve God—the Cherubim of Glory being prepared.

In chapter 9: verse 3, the Shekinah-Glory of God's presence begins to leave the doomed Temple. In chapter 10: verse 18 it departs further, completely leaving the Temple and going to the Cherubim. The Cherubim are the eternal *reality* of the divine purpose. The Mosaic Temple was but a *temporary* manifestation of that reality. The Cherubim were originally in the Tabernacle and the Temple because God's purpose was for the time being centered in those buildings. But because of the continual accumulation of wickedness, the Glory was being taken away.

And it did not return, even when Israel returned, and the nation was re-established, and the Temple rebuilt. The Law continued another six hundred years, but it was an empty form. The living heart was gone. There was no Priest with Urim and Thummim. It was just a marking time until Christ should come. We shall see this aspect again in chapter 21.

Chapter 11: Further abominations revealed, and further judgments, but there is promise (vs. 17-20) of eventual regathering and purification. Then (v. 21-23) the Glory completely departs—and the vision ends.

Chapter 12: The carrying away enacted, and the attempt of Zedekiah to flee in the night from the victorious Babylonians. But he should be caught and taken in chains to Babylon: but still he should not see Babylon. We know the terrible way that puzzle was solved.

Chapter 13 is against the false prophets and lying diviners. "Peace!"—and there is no peace. The tottery wall whitewashed to make it look strong.

Chapter 14: The elders come to Ezekiel, pretending to seek God, but not with a complete heart for Him alone, which He

demands. They served Him superficially, but they had idols of self-will in their hearts, to do with their time and wealth as *they* wished. Noah, Daniel and Job together—men of outstanding righteousness—couldn't save the land now.

Chapter 15: The barren, leafy, self-luxuriating Vine. Nothing is more useless. Ordinary trees are at least good for wood and construction if they have no fruit, but a fruitless vine is good for nothing but a brief fire.

So with God's people. They do not help the world's work. They are called to be separate from that. They are God's Vine, designed only for spiritual fruit. They are useless for the world's ordinary building. If they do not fulfil their *one* purpose—fruit to God and light to the world—they are parasites: of less value to God than the people of the world.

Chapter 16: A long, detailed allegory portraying Israel as a cast-off, abandoned baby girl, whom God rescued and nourished, and showered love upon, and raised to adulthood, and at last made His wife.

But she turned from all His love and kindness, to friendship and corruption with the world and His enemies, in spite of all His patience and entreaties, and repeated forgivenesses. But still at last, after long and bitter separation and tribulation, He will receive her back to Him.

How little did the Jews of Jerusalem realize that within three years, all that seemed so permanent would be destroyed, and they would have begun their long dark centuries of endless, restless wandering.

Chapter 17: The riddle of the foreign eagles and the Israel cedar. The top twig Jehoiachin plucked off, and carried off by the Babylon-eagle; and Zedekiah set up in his place. The warning is against Zedekiah's treachery and folly in rebelling against Babylon and plotting with the Egypt-eagle.

Then again the bright ray at the end: using the same figure of tree and twig, the glorious Kingdom of Christ is promised. Even in their direst portends, the prophets never go far without promise of blessing.

Chapter 18 deals with divine principles of justice. Israel complained they were being punished for their fathers' sins, and they could quote certain statements of God Himself that *seemed* to support them, as that He was destroying Jerusalem because of the blood that Manasseh had shed fifty years before (2 Kgs. 24:3); and that He would—

“Visit the sins of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations” (Ex. 20:5).

The answer is two-fold. First, the nation was being judged as a nation because it *continued* such sins as Manasseh's. A nation is like an individual. If it continues to sin, it is finally punished for all its *past* sins. If it repents, those past sins will be forgotten. Similarly, the rest of the quotation about the “sins of the fathers” changes it from injustice to mercy and patience: it is the *“third and fourth generation OF THEM THAT HATE ME”* that at last receives God's deferred wrath.

Second, *national* judgments were one thing, and the just suffered in them like the unjust. But in the ultimate eternal judgment—which is the only one that really matters—each individual stands alone, and is rewarded or punished according to his own record.

A righteous Jeremiah or Ezekiel may necessarily suffer in the general calamities with the wicked nation he ministered to, but that was just a passing aspect of the development and training for God's eternal glory. We—

“Must through much tribulation enter the Kingdom”
(Acts 14:22),

and that tribulation will be doubly welcomed and accepted with joyful patience, if it is incurred in ministering to God's people.

Chapter 19: The Judah-lioness and her cubs. A lamentation for Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin, Judah's last two home-appointed rulers, trapped and carried away. A warning to then-reigning Zedekiah, Babylon's appointee.

PROPHECIES IN 7TH YEAR OF CAPTIVITY— 590 BC—CHAPTERS 20-23

Chapter 20 catalogs Israel's long, continuous history of disobedience, right from the beginning; leading at last to this casting off of the Kingdom. In Jerusalem, Jeremiah was saying the same to them (32:30-31)—

“The children of Israel and the children of Judah have only done evil before Me from their youth . . . This city hath been to Me as a provocation of Mine anger and fury from the day they built it even unto this day.”

Ezekiel (vs. 33-38) adds important details of the final regathering we don't get elsewhere. God will gather the Jews out of the nations, but no rebels shall enter the land. Somewhere in between they are assembled and the wicked are purged out. Probably but a small remnant will actually reach the land. The purging process could take many years.

Chapters 21-23 are the final culminating indictment of wicked Israel, in seven distinct sections, each beginning—

“And the word of the Lord came unto me.”

The terrible sword of the Lord has been drawn, and it cannot be re-sheathed. It must now do its work relentlessly unto the end. As God said at the same time to Jeremiah: *“Pray not for this people”* (Jer. 7:16; 11:14; 14:11).

Chapter 21: The king of Babylon stands at the crossroads, casting lots on whom he should attack, and the lot fell on Jerusalem. Then follow those well-known words of doom to both Zedekiah and the nation (v. 25)—

“Profane wicked prince . . . whose day is come when iniquity shall have an end!”

“Crown” of verse 26 is the royal crown, but *“diadem”* is the word used *only and always* for the High Priest’s mitre. Christ is the Heir of both the throne and the highpriesthood. Both are now suspended until he comes.

This is important. There was a restoration under Cyrus, but it was just an empty shell, like the Ark-less Tabernacle in the days of Saul. God was with them in a degree, and required the Temple to be rebuilt, as we see from the prophecies of Haggai in the days of Zerubbabel.

But it was never again the same. The Shekinah-glory never returned to the golden cherubim above the Mercyseat. There never arose a High Priest with Urim and Thummim. The “tabernacle of David” remained fallen; though the nation must continue as such in some form till the true Heir to both crown and mitre should come and be presented to them.

These verses are another interesting link in the chain of evidence showing Christ to be the Heir of both the Kingship and the Priesthood.

Chapter 22: *“Judge the bloody city!”*—priests, prince, prophets and people all alike in wickedness and abominations.

Chapter 23: The climax of condemnation. The two lewd women: Aholah (Israel) and Aholibah (Judah). “Aholah” means *Her Own Tabernacle*. That was the ten-tribed Israel and their manmade worship. “Aholibah” means *My Tabernacle Is in Her*: Judah, supposed seat of true divine worship.

The whole chapter is the presentation of their relationships with the world under the vivid and striking figure of sexual corruption and abomination. This is how God views any mixture of His holy separated people with the dead and corrupt

world that knows Him not. It is the same vital lesson that James emphasizes in the same bold figure—

“Ye adulterers and adulteresses: know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?” (4:4).

Friendship with the world is so easy and so seemingly pleasant and harmless, but let us never forget that it is not so to God. In His sight,

“The whole world lieth in wickedness” (1 Jn. 5:19), and any relationship with it and its institutions that is not necessary and in the service of God is utter abomination in His sight.

Let us ever bear Ezekiel 23 in mind. We, if we really *are* God's people, are the only *living* (it is a very high calling), and all the rest of the world are *dead*—all outside the covenant-relationship, no matter how close to us in the flesh. And contact is defiling, unless it be contact whose motive, like Christ, is to give the leper cleansing (Matt. 8:3) and the dead life (Lk. 7:14).

Chapter 24: *We now have reached the end.* The chapter begins—

“In the ninth year, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying: Son of man, write thee the name of the day, even of THIS SAME DAY. The king of Babylon set himself against Jerusalem THIS SAME DAY.”

The final siege had begun. In the parable of verses 3-14, the city is the caldron, the people are the flesh in it, and the roaring fire shall burn, not only until the contents are destroyed, but until the caldron itself is utterly melted and disappears, for there is no other way to cleanse its corruption. *What God cannot cleanse, He must destroy.*

And now, simply to enforce the lesson on wicked Israel, a terrible thing happens to Ezekiel. God suddenly—and without warning, without any time for preparation or farewells—tells him (v. 16) that his wife, the desire of his eyes, his most precious treasure, will die *that day*.

And all that day while he is expecting it, and all the next day after it has happened, he must not pause in his duties, but go right ahead with his work for God, and give absolutely *no sign of grief or mourning*.

And he simply says, *“I did as I was commanded.”* Was ever man more bitterly tried? It is one of those things which natural man finds so hard to understand of the ways of God, for *His*

thoughts are so much higher than man's. God's thoughts are on eternal good. Man's are so limited to the passing present.

Both Ezekiel's mortal life and his wife's were at best but brief flashes in the broad sweep of history. Parting must come, sooner or later, in the deepest and sweetest of human relationships. But if they are for God's Kingdom, then the brief separation is nothing: just a merciful taking away from the evil to come—

"He giveth His beloved sleep" (Psa. 127:2).

If they are *not* for God's Kingdom, then their present life is utterly meaningless and purposeless anyway, like the passing buzz of an insect.

"At even my wife died: and I did in the morning as I was commanded" (v. 18).

Obedience: that is all that mattered, or had any meaning and purpose.

The lesson was to shock and awake wicked Israel, and we can only hope some were saved by it. God would take away everything they considered precious and worthwhile, and they would be in such misery and distress that they would be unable to mourn or weep. How often has that been repeated in their long sad history!

They asked what it all meant—and he explained it to them. Then his mouth was closed, and his testimony to them was cut off—completely silenced for three years, all through the siege and beyond, until the news of the city's destruction reached them in Babylon.

So ends the first half of the book.

* * *

The next eight chapters (25-32) are prophecies of punishments on Israel's enemies. Seven people are mentioned, but five of them just briefly: Ammon, Moab, Edom and Philistia in chapter 25; Sidon a few verses in chapter 28. The bulk of the eight chapters concerns only two: Tyre and Egypt: three chapters for Tyre (26-28) and four for Egypt (29-32).

PROPHECIES (against Tyre) IN 11th YEAR OF CAPTIVITY—
586 BC—CHAPTERS 26-28

Chapter 26: Because Tyre rejoiced against Jerusalem, she should be leveled to the ground and scraped clean, like the top of a rock (*Tyre*="Rock"). Tyre was on an island stronghold, boasting in her insular security, as Britain did for many centuries.

Chapter 27: A detailed and interesting catalog of the goods wherein she traded with all the earth, accurately naming and identifying the products of many geographical localities: all sound fact and history. But, like modern Babylon—papal Rome—all was to be cast into the sea.

Why so much about Tyre, of whom we hear relatively little in the history of Israel? We have no record of them fighting Israel: relations were usually very friendly. The answer is that there are several factors that brought special judgment on Tyre: pride, responsibility, corruption, vindictiveness, and religious presumption.

God hates pride. Whatever is exalted must be brought to shame, that man may learn wisdom. Tyre was very proud and prosperous, the great central world mart of nations. It claimed, with a certain amount of truth, that—

"I am of perfect beauty" (27:3).

Tyre was more responsible than most nations, because of its close contact and relationship with Israel. In the days of David and Solomon it was highly privileged to be a key factor in the building of God's Temple, as to both material and workmanship. There appears evidence that its religious beliefs were influenced by Israel: at least it was very intimately exposed to the Law of God. Its king Hiram, the *"lover of David,"* speaks with a reverence for Yahweh indicating intelligent belief.

But later, through Ahab and Jezebel, it became a source of dreadful corruption and abomination, enforced from the throne and threatening to obliterate the worship of God. This was the great issue and showdown that Elijah forced at Carmel: Tyre's Baal or Israel's Yahweh.

Chapter 28: The prince (king) of Tyre says—*"I am a god: I sit in the seat of God" (v. 2).*

Most oriental monarchs made such claims; but this chapter seems to intimate—with its reference to cherubs, and Eden, and the precious stones of his garments (like the High Priest's breastplate) that the king of Tyre came much closer and more wickedly to aping the true God and His worship (with which he would be familiar).

Israel was being destroyed. Tyre was prosperous, seemingly secure in its island bastion and with its strong fleets, from Babylon's power. Tyre seems to have been trading on and abusing the privilege of its close relationship to Israel and Israel's God and claiming to be the inheritor of now-rejected Israel's blessings and position. This would give more force and

meaning to the very unusual language of chapter 28. Certainly she rejoiced vindictively at Israel's fall, seeing therein the removal of a rival—

"Tyrus hath said against Jerusalem, Aha, she is broken that was the GATES of the people. She is turned unto me: I shall be replenished, now SHE is laid waste" (26:2).

It is clear from the history that the rivalry was both commercial *and* religious. For her arrogance, she was to be completely obliterated. She was destroyed several times, and she lost her world prominence, and commercial power and wealth, but it was many centuries before the prophecies of her permanent destruction were completely fulfilled.

PROPHECIES (against Egypt) IN 10th, 11th, 12th and 27th YEARS—CHAPTERS 29-32

Chapters 29-32 contain the judgments on Egypt. These prophecies began in the tenth year, about the time Hophra, king of Egypt, was marching to the relief of Israel. He forced Nebuchadnezzar to raise the siege of Jerusalem, but was soon driven back to Egypt and did not try again.

Chapter 29: After two thousand previous years of prominent world power, Egypt should become a base nation, and not lift itself again.

Chapter 30: The rivers (canals) should be dry, the land waste, the cities desolate, the idols destroyed: no more a prince of Egypt. (Isa. 19 adds other details: papyrus and linen to cease; land to be ruled by strangers).

Chapter 31: As Assyria fell, suddenly crushed from mighty power to utter powerlessness, so Egypt should be brought down.

Chapter 32: A lamentation for Egypt: her heaven darkened; her sun obscured. She shall make her grave with the mighty who had gone before.

These prophecies have been fulfilled: overall, and in remarkable detail. This exact time, under Nebuchadnezzar, was the turning point for Egypt. She plunged down, never to rise. None of her ancient great cities remain: the present large cities have all been built by foreigners. Papyrus, which supplied the world's paper for over three thousand years, down to the tenth century AD, and was Egypt's chief article of commerce, no longer even exists there. For centuries it was world renowned for the exquisite fineness of its linen. Samples have been found

of finer weave than anything produced today. All that vanished under God's judgments, though some of it took many centuries.

But, like Israel, there was to be a latter-day restoration. Though still a very weak and inconsequential country, dependent on foreign help, as the prophecy requires, Egypt has, within our own times—the "Latter Days"—like Israel achieved independence for the first time in two thousand years.

PROPHECIES IN 12th YEAR OF CAPTIVITY—
585 BC—CHAPTERS 33-39

Chapter 33: Now, for the final sixteen chapters, Ezekiel turns back to Israel. God says to him (v. 2),

"SPEAK to the children of thy people."

His long silence toward them, which began when the siege of Jerusalem started, is to be ended. This was the occasion of the news arriving of the city's fall:

"In the twelfth year of our captivity, tenth month, fifth day one came saying, The city is smitten . . . And my mouth was opened, and I was no more dumb"
(vs. 21-22).

Verses 31-32 present much food for thought and self-examination—

"They sit before thee as My people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them. For with their MOUTH they show MUCH LOVE, but their HEART goeth after their covetousness (worldly interests).

"Thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they HEAR thy words, but they DO them not."

We tend to picture Israel as openly rejecting God and neglecting His services, but this clearly was not the case. They made *every* pretence and profession and appearance of obedience and acceptance. They went through *all* the motions and fulfilled *all* the outward forms.

They just didn't bother to give Him their *lives*, or to let His service interfere with their own desires and interests. They were wonderful Sunday morning believers, and maybe even Sunday evening and mid-week class attenders (translating it into our own terms), and they no doubt spoke up loyally for God against the heathen.

It was just in strict *obedience* to His commands that they fell short, and for which they were so terribly punished. When He said, Keep separate, they didn't. When He said, Don't marry into the world, they did. When He said, Give Me your whole life

and service, they wouldn't. Isaiah and Jeremiah record the same divine complaint—

"This people draw nigh unto Me with their mouth, but have removed their heart far from Me . . ." (Isa. 29:13).

"Thou (God) art near in their mouth, and far from their reins (affections, heart)" (Jer. 12:2).

But in Ezekiel's message, God is about finished with judgment and condemnation. Jerusalem has been destroyed, and the land desolated. Instead of the captives going home, as the false prophets had promised, thousands more are being driven off into captivity, in herds like cattle.

It looked like the end of everything, but Ezekiel's message hereafter is full of marvelous revelation, promise and hope.

Chapter 34: He has just a few more words of condemnation first (1-10), not against the people, but against the wicked rulers who exploited them for their own profit, and simply as an introduction to the promise of a perfectly just, righteous, and loving Ruler to come (23-29)—

"I will set up one shepherd, even My servant David ('THE BELOVED'). And I will make with them a covenant of peace . . . They shall no more be a prey to the heathen . . . And I will raise up for them a plant of renown."

Chapter 35: The judgment of Mt. Seir, or Edom. This seems out of place. Why is it not in the previous section: the prophecies against the heathen? This is something different and deeper. This is the ancient enmity between flesh and spirit.

Truly, the *natural* Edom is involved, but only as the foundation of the *spiritual* type and lesson that is carried through into the Millennium, for it is millennial things that Ezekiel is dealing with now—

"When the WHOLE EARTH rejoiceth, I will make THEE (Edom) desolate" (v. 14).

Isaiah says the same thing (34:5-10)—

"My sword shall come down upon Idumea . . . The Lord hath a sacrifice in Bozrah . . . It is the day of the Lord's vengeance . . . The smoke thereof shall go up FOR EVER . . . none shall pass through it FOR EVER"

It is from *Bozrah in Edom* that Christ comes with dyed garments. Here is the first encounter with the arch-enemy of the last days. It is very fitting, then, that as a solemn memorial for the instruction of mankind, that first battlefield should be preserved through the Millennium in the state of desolation, like the memorial Gehenna of Isaiah's last verse.

Chapter 36 is a comforting message of rebirth and rebuilding of the land in peopled fruitfulness and prosperity. Several times we are told that *this time* it is *for ever*—no more to suffer any sorrow or oppression.

Verse 22 begins an important message that makes it clear *natural* Israel is the subject, and that these things cannot be “spiritualized” away—

“I do this not for your sakes, but for Mine holy name’s sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went.”

This is clearly the same people who were scattered: national Israel. Spiritual Israel cannot be so addressed. Then note the order of events—

“I will take you from among the heathen, and bring you into your own land. THEN will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness” (vs. 24-25).

This does not contradict the purging out of the rebels *before* Israel is taken into the land (ch. 20). Many will be regathered, as today, in blindness and by apparent natural means. And purging out the rebels will still leave Israel as a nation with much cleansing to do, in national mourning, and submission to their rejected Messiah (Zech. 12:10-14; 13:6-9).

Chapter 37: The Valley of Dry Bones: Israel’s national rebirth. What generation has ever been so privileged as ours: to see age-old prophecy of the Last Days so dramatically fulfilled and confirmed before our eyes? We dare not allow our awe and wonder to be dulled by the now familiarity of these stupendous events. Remember fifty years ago, when we excitedly counted the Jews going back one by one? This long-foretold rebirth is one of the greatest witnesses God has ever given.

Chapters 38-39 tell the familiar story of the descent and destruction of Gog, to manifest God’s glory and power *to all the earth*. Not only is the rebirth of Israel a guarantee of the fulfillment of this next step, but we actually see Gog himself devoting all his resources to building the greatest military and naval power the world has ever known, and openly and avowedly dedicated to bringing the earth under his system.

And even further: his enmity is specifically and especially directed toward that one little land: that little Mordecai who dares oppose him. And with him in enmity stand the red-handed papal power, and Libya and Ethiopia and Assyria, just

as prophecy requires. When a recent Pope visited the Middle East, he fawned effusively on the Arabs who want to destroy Israel, but he walked gingerly around the borders of Israel as if he were walking around a deep black hole.

The glorious consummation is described at the end of chapter 39—

"Then shall they know that I am the Lord their God, which caused them to be led into captivity (spiritual Israel?) among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there. Neither will I hide My face any more from them, for I have poured out My spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord."

This ended Ezekiel's message to them in the twelfth year of the captivity, when the news of the city's destruction had come, and all *present* hope had been utterly destroyed.

PROPHECIES IN 25th YEAR OF CAPTIVITY—
572 BC—CHAPTERS 40-49

Chapters 40-48 came thirteen years later, in the twenty-fifth year of captivity. Ezekiel was now fifty, if the "thirtieth year" of chapter 1: verse 1 is his age, as seems likely. He has now been prophesying for twenty years. God had said through him—

"I will set MY SANCTUARY in the midst of them for ever more" (37:26).

Isaiah had said that the "*mountain of the LORD'S HOUSE*" should be established at Jerusalem, and all nations should go there to learn God's ways (2:2-3), and that there should be a "*HOUSE OF PRAYER for all nations*" (56:7).

And Zechariah was later to say, when the captives returned under Zerubbabel, that the nations should go up yearly to worship the Lord and keep the Feast of Tabernacles at Jerusalem (14:16).

In his final chapters, Ezekiel is shown a huge building—a Temple—that had the appearance of the "*frame of a city*," in the midst of a "*Holy Oblation*" of land about forty-five miles square in the midst of Palestine.

To this huge structure—apparently a magnificent open framework of masonry and arches densely covered by living greenery, and in the open center of which is a great elevated Altar—Ezekiel sees (43:2) God's glory returning, and :

"The glory of the Lord filled the house" (v. 5).

And to him God said (v. 7)—

"Son of man, the place of My throne, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel FOR EVER. And My holy name, shall the house of Israel NO MORE DEFILE."

The whole purpose is summed up in 44:23—

"They shall teach My people the difference between the holy and profane; and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean."

This is the whole purpose of life and learning. There is unclean, and *death*; and there is clean, and *life*. True knowledge consists of knowing the difference; true wisdom consists of choosing the clean. Everything falls into one category or the other.

God tells Ezekiel to show Israel the pattern of the House, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities (43:10). How would it make them ashamed? How would it make *us* ashamed?

By its glory and greatness and *goodness*. It is a beautiful center of goodness and joy and mercy and forgiveness, and of learning to choose the good and eschew the evil. It is a glorious provision and manifestation of God's love and care for Israel and the world. It is such a wonderful contrast to man's present evil condition and ways.

It is the heart of the Divine Promise and Purpose from the beginning that—

"All nations of the earth shall be blessed"

(Gen. 12:3),

And—

"All the earth shall be full of the glory of God"

(Num. 14:21).

The old Temple was gone. It had been desecrated beyond the possibility of redemption. It had been filled with blood and corruption.

But in a new day to come, there would be a new House of Prayer, far more spacious and splendid, not just for Israel but for the whole world—the center of an earth at rest in holiness and peace.

And, best of all, the name of the City from that day and forward shall be *"THE LORD IS THERE."*

The Hand of Our God Is Upon Us

"His windows being open to his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and gave thanks before his God, as aforetime" (Dan. 6:10).

Daniel 3 is an inspiring record of men who chose the narrow way and who were prepared to follow it wherever it led—men who went forward from strength to strength, building for the future with purpose and determination upon a firm basis of light and reality.

Nebuchadnezzar, the personification of human pride and power, sets up an image of gold that all are commanded to worship. All through history it has been the same image in various forms, and it is the same today.

It is the image of man—sixty cubits high and six wide. Six is the number of man and the measure of his dominion on earth.

And, from time to time, man has demanded that the children of God worship his image. In early Christian times, all that was required to secure a believer's release from death was to throw a little incense into the sacred fires of Jupiter. A small, harmless concession, it might seem, easy to do with mental reservations, but *the whole vital principal of allegiance to God or man was involved.*

We are repeatedly faced with the same subtle and fatal choice in many ways today.

Daniel himself does not appear at this crisis, when his three companions are cast into the furnace. Apparently he was elsewhere.

But seventy years later he was faced with the same issue, and in a far more subtle form. This is recorded in chapter 6, and occurred under the Persian king Darius. This time no open act at all was demanded. All that was required was a refraining from prayer to any but the king for thirty days. And so (v. 10)—

"Now when Daniel KNEW THAT THE WRITING WAS SIGNED, he went into his house;

"And his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and gave thanks before his God as he did aforetime."

He knew the penalty. Was he foolhardy? Why couldn't he have taken care not to be seen? Why couldn't he have closed the lattice window which is so pointedly mentioned as being open?

Wouldn't common prudence have demanded at least that? God could hear just as well with it shut.

But why SHOULD he hide? Why should he be ashamed or afraid? Who has supreme power, God or man? Naaman the Syrian said (2 Kgs. 5:18)—

"When I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy servant this thing."

But Daniel was a man of different stamp. Why should he temporize and interrupt his communion with God at the whim of a heathen monarch? It was no sin to pray, it was his duty. And if he intended to pray, why should he hide it?

He could not have faithfully followed any other course. His allegiance to God was on trial, and he faced the issue squarely.

He did not go out of his way to flout the king's commandment. He merely ignored it, and followed his usual custom of worship, scorning subterfuge.

Our minds are turned to an action of somewhat similar nature on the part of Ezra—an action which to the eyes of cold common sense was foolhardy and rash, but which was well-pleasing to God (Ezra 8:21-23)—

"Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of Him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance."

"For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way; because we had spoken unto the king saying,

"The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek Him, but His power and His wrath is against all them that forsake Him."

"So we fasted and besought our God for this: and He was entreated of us."

Ezra was not overconfident or boastful. He did not presume upon the providence of God. But he did not feel he could consistently ask the help of man when he had spoken of the limitless power of his God. Others may have regarded the matter differently, but to him, the situation raised again the same issue of allegiance and dependence—God or man—and whenever that issue arises in whatever form, the answer of faith must be the same.

He well realized the responsibility he had assumed in leading his unprotected company through wild and hostile country. It is clear that this weighed heavily upon him. There were many other lives besides his own involved—many who trusted him

and depended upon him, and who were prepared to make the journey with him relying on his judgment and wisdom.

It would have been far easier to have asked for an armed guard, but he felt that the honor of his God was at stake, and so in prayerful hope, and with no armor but faith, they ventured forth.

And no harm befell them.

* * *

These examples of individual courage and faith shine forth during some of Israel's darkest years. Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Daniel, his three companions, Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah. Out of the deep shadow of the captivity period, these names appear as scattered beacons of faithful endurance.

For the most part, these men worked out their course alone, surrounded by bitter hostility. The support and comfort of companionship was denied them.

Daniel's intense devotion to the land and people of God is evident from his prolonged prayers on their behalf, yet in the inscrutable wisdom of God it was decreed that he should endure a long and weary lifetime in exile, with Jerusalem desolate, the sanctuary in ruins, and the people of God a derision and reproach.

And to Ezra and Nehemiah fell the thankless task of welding a few forlorn and factious remnants into a surface semblance of national unity, while the enemy derided the pitifully small results and those who remembered the former things wept at the comparison.

Discouragement at times must have assailed these men at the hopelessness of their task in their "*day of small things*," but a broader view of their position would carry them on.

At all times, the issue is an individual one, and the personal relation to God is the important factor. This does not change, though outward circumstances may vary greatly, and therefore true satisfaction and confidence lies not in our material circumstances or visible accomplishments, but in our proper adjustment to them according to the expressed wisdom of God.

Though destined to live during times of national collapse and humiliation, this conviction of the passing and secondary nature of present things would provide all these men alike with a basic consolation. Truly they grieved sincerely over the unhappy state of affairs, and labored heroically to alleviate it, but they realized that behind all temporary and surface calami-

ties the eternal purpose was moving forward, unaffected by the failures of men.

This did not, of course, relieve them from doing their part in their day and generation, but it softened the bitterness and despondency that external conditions would generate.

In their day, their heaven and earth were being shaken. Things which had appeared stable were collapsing. And with the collapse of the external things went the collapse of the faith of many.

It was a time for determining what things were passing and incidental, and what things were fixed and eternal. Those whose faith had related to temporal prosperity and safety in the land were cast adrift. Only those held firm who saw deeper, and realized that faith in God means more than merely expecting His favor and protection, and must carry through times of darkness as well as times of light.

Of such was Daniel. Beholding his people's misery, his faith was not shaken in the power of the God Who had chosen them, but he looked to the spiritual condition of the people for the answer to their woes.

So with Jeremiah and Ezekiel. While others lamented God's departure from them, these men proclaimed the real cause, and the only remedy. We, too, live in times of upheaval—

*"Once again I shake both the heaven and the earth . . .
that those things that cannot be shaken may remain"*
(Heb. 12:26-27).

Whether we are shaken away or whether we remain depends upon the things to which we cling. If we cling to the things that cannot be shaken, then we can say with David—

*"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help
in trouble. The Lord of hosts is with us.*

*"Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be
removed, and though the mountains be carried into the
midst of the sea" (Psa. 46:1-2).*

Destroyed for Lack of Knowledge

"Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he" (Prov. 29:18).

The two books of Chronicles are a brief resumé of God's dealings with men from the Creation to the destruction of the Kingdom. Today we are brought to the final chapter in that history—a tragic history of wasted opportunity and unfilled expectations.

What glorious possibilities were open to Israel!—a holy nation, a chosen people, a sanctified vessel, to whom God had drawn marvelously near, and through whom He had condescended to reveal Himself to mankind.

But how miserably they failed! What prolonged distress and wretchedness could have been avoided if they had only hearkened to the gentle voice of divine instruction, speaking to them as a Father to His children. What useless sorrow, just because they would not learn!

Is it indeed true that we can only learn wisdom by the path of bitter experience?—only learn it when it is too late? Does man lack entirely the faculty of avoiding evil by timely self-discipline? Must human experience always be one endless cycle of heedless folly and hopeless regret?

Fortunately, we have the assurance that this is not the whole picture, although the broad course of Scripture and experience indicate that it is almost universally true.

But there have always been the exceptions. Our hope lies in discovering and applying that hidden source of divine power by which these exceptions succeeded in breaking the strong downward gravity of the natural, and drawing themselves upward toward God.

From both the successes of the few, and the failure of the many, we must take lessons that will enable us to succeed.

* * *

What happened to Israel? What went wrong with their bright beginnings—their eager enthusiasm for God? *And how could it have been avoided?* Did they voluntarily and consciously choose the path of self-destruction, or did it overtake them without warning from behind as the accumulated consequence of deeper and deeper self-deception and neglect?

To the very last moment they did not see the blow falling. Each increasingly ominous portent of disaster found them

further blinded by the perverted fleshly exhilaration of a still lower descent into abomination and rebellion against God.

If they could have seen to the end the consequences of their course—if they had fully realized what was in store—if they could have *clearly perceived things in their true light*—would they have acted differently, before it was too late? Unquestionably, unless they were entirely devoid of reason.

So, in the final analysis, the whole trouble lay in their perception. True, what led them astray were the natural motions of their flesh, but everyone has them. A man is not a helpless slave to his flesh in any respect, *unless he chooses to be*. There is always available an inexhaustible supply of divine power, if man will only accept it to help fight himself.

But sometimes we are not very anxious to get rid of our idols, and after a few halfhearted attempts as a concession to our conscience, we find it easy to convince ourselves that it cannot be done.

THE PLEA OF WEAKNESS WILL NOT BEAR THE LIGHT OF DAY. God delights to make the weak strong, if they will unreservedly give themselves to Him. Most do not really WANT to put away their enjoyable little "weaknesses."

The trouble with Israel lay in their perception. They could not see. Darkness enveloped them, and they stumbled on to destruction, fighting against the light, mocking the messengers of God, twisting themselves tighter and tighter in the net of their own blind obstinacy, till the wrath of God rose like a flood, and there was no remedy.

Now all this is recorded for our admonition. There is something here for us. Something we must have. Each chapter adds its particular ray to that light which alone can deliver us from the same sad end.

Israel illustrates the *almost* inevitable course—the course which can be escaped only by constant, tireless effort and application, and by being very *different from the majority*.

God only proposes to save a very small remnant of the countless millions that come and go. And God is no respecter of persons. It follows then that those whom He selects must be exceptional to a very marked degree, and they must be constantly on guard to maintain this distinction.

Of what must this necessary distinctiveness consist? Not in accomplishments, or ability, or intellectual preeminence—but just one thing: putting God FIRST.

Putting God first consists primarily in keeping Him constantly in the forefront of our current consciousness. Remembering and not forgetting.

Many things fill our minds and come and go as memory is provoked, but it is what occupies our heart and interest and attention that counts. What or who is it to whom our mind irresistibly turns whenever the pressure of the immediate present is relaxed? *That is the acid test of our affections.* Here we stand face to face with our real selves.

What or who occupies the secret, inner sanctum of our heart where at every opportunity we delight to retire and muse? This is where God looks in making up His jewels, and if He does not find Himself there, He passes on. We may have lots of other things laid out to show Him, but He will not be interested in them. David said—

"Thy testimonies are my delight and the rejoicing of my heart" (Psa. 119: 24).

"I have longed after Thy precepts. I have loved Thy commandments" (Psa. 119: 40).

"Thy statutes have been my songs in my pilgrimage" (Psa. 119: 54).

"O how love I Thy law! It is my meditation all the day" (Psa. 119: 97).

Extreme? Overstated? Too highly colored? Poetic exaggeration? Not at all, though it may seem so to the crude, common, animal outlook. Here lies the difference between death and life.

David realized what the Scriptures are—not a book of ordinances for the regulation of servants, but a divinely-provided medium of intimate communion between a Father and His children.

Many express regret that the Bible is not more simple and precise. They complain because it does not give a clear-cut, straight-forward list of just what we must and must not do, and a convenient, orderly catalog of just what we must believe.

But such people entirely miss its purpose. God has made it as little like a legal document, and as much like an affectionate personal message, as possible.

In the Old Testament, employing every shade of literary style, He tells us a story filled with vital and living characters, and in telling this story He skilfully weaves in all the lessons He wants us to learn.

In the New Testament He partly follows the same plan but much of what He has to say does not lend itself to this, so He

writes us a series of very personal letters and sends them by a man who wins our heart by his simple humility and unconcealed affection. Paul does not dictate—he beseeches and entreats—pleads that he may be spared the sorrow of having to exercise his authority.

This method of presenting the Scriptures to us necessitates much application to draw out its treasures. But this is not a disadvantage. God has a reasonable right to assume that a message from Him will be eagerly received by His true children—that they will delight to dwell upon it day after day and search patiently for its hidden mysteries.

The Bible is circulated in uncounted millions. It is found everywhere—this personal message from a Father to His children. But, written as it is, there is no danger that rude and unsympathetic intruders will pry into intimacies and confidences that are not for them. To all such it is a sealed book—an incomprehensible mystery.

* * *

Wherein did Israel fail? What lessons are we to take from their failure? They lost their grip on the one thing that could save them. It gradually and fatally seeped away all unnoticed, because they neglected it. It is so natural to say:

“How utterly depraved they were! At least we do not do THOSE things—murder, violence, every conceivable form of wickedness! We ourselves must be doing quite well, considering how bad the flesh can be!”

But such a view misses the point. These things did not begin in this form. They started to slip very gradually and imperceptibly.

They are recorded to show, not how good we are in comparison, but how far it is possible to go, once the foundation is undermined.

They did not realize that the only safeguard was to keep a vision of God and His law bright in the forefront of their consciousness. Lose this, and there is no solid ground left. The full descent is just a matter of time.

Hosea, in chapter 4, continues the same theme—

“Hear the word of the Lord ye children of Israel; for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land” (v. 1).

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (v. 6).

"They did not like to retain God in their knowledge: therefore He gave them over to a reprobate mind and vile affections" (Rom. 1:28).

—so Paul sums it up in writing to the Romans.

They would have preferred, perhaps, just to go part way. The depths to which they ultimately descended would have appalled them at first. *But there was no part way.* God did not allow it. When once they had chosen forbidden fruit, God saw to it that they had their fill.

"MY PEOPLE ARE DESTROYED FOR LACK OF KNOWLEDGE."

Transgression is just ignorance—trying to battle the inevitable—taking issue with the omnipotence of God—a persistent delusion that we are different from everyone else and that somehow we will escape the consequences of our folly.

Sin is obstinate and childish refusal to face the facts. God is the central fact of the universe. God's will, His power, His purpose—these are the basic facts which dominate eternity. They are inescapable. Sin consists in acting in a way that ignores these facts. Sin therefore is ignorance; often wilful, intentional ignorance. Peter says of the ungodly (2 Pet. 3:5)—

"For this they are WILLINGLY ignorant of."

To transgress divine law, we must either not know, or else not give full weight to, all the facts of the case. The cure is fuller knowledge. Paul says—

"No man ever yet hated his own flesh" (Eph. 5:29).

Yet sin is self-destruction. If a man holds his head under water, he will drown. He transgresses against the laws of nature, and nature is stronger than he, and he cannot escape from it.

This is far more true if he transgresses against the laws of God. He will perish. He is setting himself up against irresistible forces. He is making himself an obstacle in the way of an unalterable purpose. God has declared (Isa. 11:9)—

"The earth SHALL be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

This leaves no room for ignorance, for the purpose is that knowledge shall be universal. Knowledge is light (Jn. 11:9)—

"If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not."

Here is the safeguard: keep out in the open daylight—away from the hidden things of darkness. Keep in the safe narrow beam of revealed light, accepting it in simple faith and holding to the center of the beam.

There are always myriads of unanswered questions along the edges on either side where the light only half shines and fades off into the darkness. It is very easy to become preoccupied with these—to spend precious time elaborating theories regarding partially-perceived shapes, or to halt stubbornly in the half light demanding answers where none are given.

“Fear God and keep His commandments” (Ecc. 12:13).

*“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge”
(Prov. 1:7).*

Sin is lack of knowledge—natural darkness and ignorance—the blind groping of the thinking of the flesh.

The remedy is knowledge, divine knowledge, constantly increased by study. A gradual building up of enlightenment and education—line upon line, precept upon precept—gradually displacing the shifting chaos of ignorance and undisciplined natural feeling with a solid framework of knowledge and clear perception of eternal fact.

The textbook is the Scriptures. It has often been said by prominent men that a knowledge of the Scriptures is better than a college education—that is, even from a natural and worldly point of view and for natural ends. It gives a fuller and more rounded view of life and background of experience. But its real purpose is to prepare us—not for the pre-eminence in the life that now is—but for that which is to come; to school us in the knowledge of God; to give us a proportioned groundwork for balanced and constructive self-development.

Its peculiar suitability in this respect is occasionally brought vividly to our attention by our conversations with others who have no knowledge of it.

The average individual, for example, appears singularly ignorant of history—even of the little uncertain light on the past that secular history offers.

The reason is quite obvious—the average natural man has no incentive to investigate history. Apart from a knowledge of the plan of God, history is uninteresting, purposeless, and depressing to the mind.

The natural man, like an animal, lives within the restricted sphere of his own personal activities, absorbed in himself, ignorant and heedless of either the future or the past.

But the student of Scripture finds his view extended boundlessly in every direction. The world around him, and the long colorful cavalcade of history is invested with intense interest

and purpose. He is like a man suddenly released from a dungeon and placed on a mountaintop.

The alphabet of Scriptural education is the historical detail of the Old Testament. This sketches, often in the briefest terms but always sufficiently, the general background upon which the inner significance of the play is developed.

This background is essential to a proper knowledge of the whole. Not, of course, every detail of it, but at least the general outline in its proper proportions.

We learn, and sometimes it seems that this is more important than anything else, that *there is nothing particularly unique about ourselves, our lives, our problems.*

An endless procession of humanity has preceded us. Every phase and shade of human experience and emotion has come, and gone, and come again, time without number. We are no different. We are no exception.

The rules of life and death were written long before we came. Every situation that confronts us is a well-trod path in which, of those who have passed, a few have succeeded by accepting divine guidance and the rest have failed.

And now it is our turn. The rules will not be changed on our account. We must write a record to put beside the rest. Life is complex, but the rules of life are simple—

“FEAR GOD, AND KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS.”

Not asking for special favors and consideration, just because it happens to be us, but asking instead for the wisdom and strength and courage to take our place with the rest and fill our part as it comes to us.

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.”

The great, consuming pity was that the knowledge had been there—but it had slipped through their fingers. Gradually they forgot all about it. Once or twice they ran across it by accident, as in the days of Josiah, and there was a great scurry of self-searching for a while, but it soon slipped away again, and the old self-satisfied slumber returned.

How strenuously Paul labored against this deadly tendency to relax and fall asleep! His constant keynote is, *“Watch and remember!”* In the chapter read this morning (Acts 20) as he takes his leave of the brethren at Ephesus, we enter perhaps more closely into his inner feelings than anywhere else.

A man of great capabilities, signally honored in the service of God, yet appealingly simple and sincere. He was wholly unre-

served and unashamed in his demonstration of affection for those whom he had begotten and labored over in the Truth, knowing as he left them that many would not be able to hold on to the end—“*Watch, and remember.*”

“Therefore WATCH, and REMEMBER, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears” (v. 31).

Remembrance—

“Have these things always in remembrance”

(2 Pet. 1:15).

“Stir you up by putting you in remembrance”

(2 Pet. 1:13).

“Put the brethren in remembrance of these things”

(1 Tim. 4:6).

And the words of Jesus, the night he was betrayed—

“Do this, in remembrance of me, until I come”

(Lk. 22:19).

Seek the Lord, and Ye Shall Live

"Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3)

THE PROPHECY OF AMOS

Amos was one of the earliest prophets whose writings have come down to us. Only Jonah appears to have been earlier. Jonah prophesied concerning the conquests of Jeroboam II (2 Kgs. 14:25), apparently between the time Jehu lost these territories and Jeroboam regained them. In Amos' time they appear to have been already regained (6:2).

Amos prophesied in the days of Uzziah of Judah and Jeroboam II of Israel: around 780-740 BC. Isaiah and Hosea also prophesied under these kings, but they both continued until the time of Hezekiah, so they in all probability started somewhat later than Amos.

Our principal purpose in studying any portion of Scripture must be for lessons and guidance for *ourselves*. This, says Paul, was why it was recorded (1 Cor. 10:11; Rom. 15:4). We must constantly remember this.

Amos' name appears to mean *Burden or Burden-bearer*. Except for the last few verses of the book, all is judgment, condemnation and punishment. Amos' prophecy is concerned principally with the northern kingdom of Israel. Judah and Israel were both at this time at the summit of prosperity. Uzziah and Jeroboam II were strong and competent rulers. And in both cases we are told the prosperity and strength were of God's mercy and testing. But these kings and their people thought it was of their own cleverness and ability.

Everything outwardly appeared in order, and even especially blessed by God. And truly they were blessed (2 Kgs. 14:26-27)—

"The Lord saw the affliction of Israel . . . and saved them by the hand of Jeroboam."

And concerning Uzziah (2 Chr. 26:5, 15-16)—

"God made him to prosper . . . He was marvelously helped till he was strong. But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction."

Let us note well that just because God blesses us, it does not necessarily mean He approves what we are doing, or is pleased with us. It may be just the final test, the final manifestation of His patience, the final opportunity before a terrible judgment. It was so with Israel.

About 800 BC Assyria had crushed Syria, which had long oppressed Israel. Then followed a period of about fifty years in

which Assyria was weak and inactive, which left Israel without major adversaries. With no strong close neighbor, and with Damascus in decline, Israel controlled the trade routes between Egypt and Mesopotamia, and Samaria became the thriving central market for East-West trade.

A powerful merchant class arose with their "summer houses" and "winter houses" and "ivory houses"—against which worldly corruption and luxury Amos cries in words of simple righteousness. The poor were oppressed: the rich got richer, and accumulated wealth and lands at the expense of the poor. Then by the power of their wickedly-acquired wealth, they bought up and enslaved the debt-ridden poor. The Law of Moses was specifically designed to prevent this, and teach liberality and mercy; just as the Law of Christ is designed to prevent inequity and to teach largehearted sharing and free liberality.

It was in this period that Amos prophesied of judgment to come. Israel was peaceful and prosperous, and very attentive to the external forms of serving and worshiping God. They were well satisfied with themselves: considering themselves to be greatly blessed for their piety and great religious activity.

The shrines and altars and images in Israel had been cleansed of Baal worship. They were now professedly devoted to Yahweh, but it was a man-made form of worship, and therefore an abomination. The only acceptable worship is that which God Himself specifies.

They had a false idea of God, like the heathen. There was no recognition of the necessity of righteousness and holiness. They thought God must protect them as long as they recognized Him and offered sacrifices to Him. It was a religion that was dead to basic inner goodness and fellowfeeling for others. Amos insists from beginning to end on the necessity of a pure, righteous, godly personal life.

All evil comes from one source: separation from and disharmony with God. Union with Him in heart and mind is the solution to everything. The closer the union, the fuller the solution. There must be an ever-increasing harmonizing and uniting of the life with God.

Amos was of Tekoa, in Judah, six miles south of Bethlehem, and twelve miles south of Jerusalem. It was on a high hill, the last outpost overlooking the wilderness of Judea. It was, or had been, a fortified city of defense, a watchtower (Jer. 6:1). Rehoboam built it for defense (2 Chr. 11:6). Bethel, where Amos was sent to prophesy, was the royal sanctuary and religious

center of the northern Kingdom (1 Kgs. 12:29). It was twelve miles north of Jerusalem, on the border of Benjamin and Ephraim. It is interesting that the unnamed "man of God" was sent there from Judah to testify against Jeroboam I, just as Amos was sent there to testify against Jeroboam II nearly two hundred years later.

Amos was a resented intruder: without friends and in danger of his life, but he faithfully proclaimed God's condemnation to the high officials of Israel. The immediate result of Amos' labors was failure, as has been the usual case from Noah onward, but he fulfilled his necessary duty of warning Israel; and he was thus a faithful part of the eternal plan that can never fail.

This, too, has a bearing for us. Indolence, timidity and self-indulgence often hide behind the excuse that there is no use our proclaiming the Word of God, because none will listen. The flesh is always looking for an excuse. Noah could have said the same. If he had, he would have perished with the rest of the ungodly. Our duty is to proclaim the Word in season and out of season, and leave the result to God.

Amos' mission of warning failed. There was no response; and the judgments soon began to fall. Right after Jeroboam's long and strong reign, there was internal strife: three kings in one year: two murdered. The Assyrian invasion began; and within twenty-five years Israel was carried away, and the northern kingdom ceased.

Amos was a simple herdsman and dresser of sycamore trees, a very humble, lowly class in the land. He was in no way trained as a prophet, nor had he chosen that work. God called him directly from his simple labor, and sent him to pronounce ringing judgments against the pious, prosperous, self-satisfied kingdom of Israel. We cannot help but think of bro. Thomas when we think of Amos: personally gentle and sympathetic, but rigidly resolute and unsparing in condemnation of ungodliness and ungodly systems.

We must combine these qualities. There must be deep sympathy and understanding and patience. But at the same time there must be uncompromising insistence on holiness, righteousness and condemnation of evil—but with sadness and affection: never with bitterness or aggressiveness. At Amos' personal plea—and Amos was herein typical of all godly sounders of the Truth—God's judgments that he was sent to proclaim were twice postponed. But at last they fell irrevocably.

Amos had a very vivid comprehension of the greatness and nearness of God. He lived close to God: knew His will: heard His message. He saw all things in nature and in history in a Divine light, and measured them all by Divine standards. He shows God as boundless in dominion, infinite in power, perfect in holiness: controlling the mighty forces of nature and the destiny of nations, and searching each individual heart.

Amos' emphasis throughout is on personal holiness and righteousness, *because of* the eternal holiness and righteousness of God. His is one of the few books of the Bible in which the word "love" does not occur: righteous judgment is the keynote. Amos' message is of obedience, righteousness, judgment: Hosea's is love, mercy, reconciliation. Both are essential: we must have the "whole counsel" of God.

Amos' book is a ringing denunciation of all inhumanity, injustice, oppression, selfishness, luxury, unconcern for others. He emphasizes—

—Justice between man and man: a deep, living, God-fearing, brotherly justice, as portrayed in the holy Law of Moses;

—That privilege and blessing carries great responsibility;

—That failure to rise to that responsibility brings terrible judgment.

His message is (5:1, 24, 6)—

"Hear the word of the Lord: Let judgment roll as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream... SEEK GOD, AND LIVE!"

The whole pattern of salvation is summed up in these four short words: "Seek God—and live!" It could not be put more briefly or more strongly. This is the simple message of the whole Bible, repeated over and over: to impress, and to remind. The book is divided into three parts—

1. Judgment on six surrounding nations, and Judah (1:3-2:4);

2. The bulk of the book: judgments on Israel, the northern kingdom;

3. The promise of final glorious restoration (last seven vs. of the book).

The first part—judgment on surrounding nations—concerns, beside Judah, six nations especially connected with Israel's history. The first three (Syria, Philistia and Tyre) are strictly Gentile. The second three (Edom, Ammon and Moab) are blood relations to Israel.

Of the three Gentile nations, two (Syria in the north and Philistia in the south) were specifically brought by God from

elsewhere in His purpose of developing Israel (9:7). They were both bitter enemies of Israel, and often used by God as judicial oppressors. The third (Tyre) began as a Gentile friend and helper, but became a corrupter, and at last an enemy.

All these surrounding nations were related to David's Kingdom, and were subject to him. They are referred to again in the final verses in connection with the final blessing under the greater David.

The judgments on these other nations are an introduction and buildup to the principal message: the judgment of Israel. If God judged the Gentile nations outside His specific Law, how much more Israel, who had been so specially blessed and privileged! But Israel took just the opposite message: that they could presume on special lenity and mercy. And so with us. We talk glibly about God's terrible judgments on the "wicked" nations: what about our own so much greater obligations and responsibilities? *That* is what our concern should be.

The main part of the book (from the middle of chapter 2 to the middle of chapter 9) again divides naturally into two parts—

1. General judgments and condemnations (to the end of chapter 6);

2. Five special visions of calamity:

Locusts, Fire, Plumbline, Summer fruit, The Smitten Sanctuary.

Amos dates his book (1:1) from "the earthquake." There are eight literal, historical earthquakes in Scripture. The other seven are all obviously miracles, so the great likelihood is that this one was, too. They were—

Sinai Ex. 19:18

Jonathan 1 Sam. 14:15

Uzziah Amos 1:1

Christ's death Matt. 27:51

Korah Num. 16:31

Elijah 1 Kgs. 19:11

Philippi Acts 16:26

Christ's rsrtn. Matt. 28:2

This one made a very deep impression. Zechariah, two hundred fifty years later, refers to the terror it caused (14:5). Both references connect it with Uzziah: it may have been related to his presumptuous sin.

"The Lord will roar from Zion" (1:2).

This word "roar" (*sha'ag*) is the terrifying, paralyzing roar of the lion as he leaps upon his prey. We note man has borrowed this tactic: in the recent Mogadishu hijack rescue, "stun-grenades" were used for momentary paralysis and shock. Here it indicates the judgment is imminent. This roaring from Zion is typical of the last days when—

“Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (Isa. 2:3).

It is, again, the lion-roar of the Rainbow Angel (Rev. 10:3).

“For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four . . .” (1:3).

Why is Syria at the head of the list? It was the worst and most recent enemy. From the days of Saul, it was almost continually at war with Israel. Even at this very moment, it—with Gog—is the most bitter of the foes who desire to destroy God’s people and take their land.

God tells us by Amos (9:7) that He had specially brought the Syrians and the Philistines to the land for His Own purpose, which was to discipline Israel. The movement of the Syrians and Philistines would *appear* very natural and self-determined. Men of “science” in their mole-blindness spin endless learned theories on the supposed causes and purposes of national migrations. But God through Amos gives the simple and all-sufficient answer: *He did it.* We are further told—

“When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel” (Deut. 32:8).

We must get this picture. We must think in these Divine terms. How useless and foolish are the ignorant theories of men!

Verses 6-8 pronounce judgment on the Philistines. These were the people who gave their name to the whole land: Palestine. They were especially brought in God’s purpose from Caphtor (9:7)—most likely, Crete. They were among those left in the land to prove Israel (Jdgs. 3:3). They were the second great enemy of God’s people, during the Judges and later: more especially of Judah, as the Syrians were of Israel. They were a highly developed people, with a strong political organization. They held the best of the land: the fruitful coastal plain.

Tyre is next denounced (vs. 9-10), because they remembered not the “brotherly covenant.” Hiram called Solomon “brother” (1 Kgs. 9:13), and he made a covenant with him (5:12). They were closely associated with Israel in the days of David and Solomon, and helped to build the Temple, but in Israel’s distress they treacherously attacked them.

Edom, too, (vs. 11-12) pursued his brother, and “kept his wrath forever.” This enmity began with Jacob’s deception about the blessing. The effects of actions continue long after: even today we still see the “perpetual hatred” of Arab for Jew.

Edom (*Red*: same root as Adam) typifies the flesh, the natural man. Isaiah and Ezekiel tell us Edom shall be desolate in the Millennium, when all the earth is blessed.

Ammon (vs. 13-15) was a son of Lot. Israel was not allowed to touch them when they came from Egypt. They were always hostile and barbarous. It was Nahash king of the Ammonites who, unprovoked, desired to put out the eyes of the men of Jabesh-Gilead, and make them slaves. This led to the choice of Saul as king (1 Sam. 12:12).

Moab (2:1-3) was the other son of Lot.

Judah (vs. 4-5) despised the law and kept not the commandments: a greater degree of responsibility and of punishment. Their own lies caused them to err. If we abandon the way of truth and righteousness, our own errors cause us to increasingly err: we create our own punishment.

We now come to Israel (2:6), the main subject of the book: from here to the end. The charge against them is injustice, mercilessness, corruption and luxury. God had established an ideal constitution under the Law of Moses: mercy, brotherliness, a simple way of life: constant renewal of the original equity and opportunity. But the flesh in its greed always takes advantage of the less able or fortunate, and is never satisfied.

God reviews His free blessings to them (vs. 9-11): destroying the Canaanites, delivering them from Egyptian bondage, giving them teachers in the prophets and examples in the Nazarites. We see here that the Nazarites were an important aspect in their national life: a blessing from God. But they corrupted the Nazarites: they resented them: wanted to bring them down to their own level.

"I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves" (2:13).

This is a marvelous and touching revelation. God feels. Paul says—

"Grieve not the holy spirit of God" (Eph. 4:30).

Those who love expose themselves to hurt: and God in His marvelous mercy has condescended to love us. What great responsibility is ours!

Chapter 3 contains many well-known passages: some express basic truths more clearly than anywhere else in the Bible—

"You only have I known . . . therefore I will punish you" (3:2).

God has spoken of the punishment of the nations around, as they have related to His purpose and His people. But Israel is very different. They are the *center* of the purpose: infinitely closer and more intimate to God. God says (Rom. 1:20) that because of the obvious manifestation of Himself and His power and divinity in all the works of creation around us, *all mankind* are without excuse for not recognizing Him (how stupid is the folly of Evolution!).

So all are guilty to a degree, and He punishes in various ways, as He sees fit, and as His purposes require. But Israel stands alone as specially chosen and brought near and taught and favored and *loved*. Their sins were against light and love. Here is where the comparison with ourselves enters. We few have been chosen from the earth's teeming and perishing millions to be called near to God, and shown the way of life and joy, and flooded with His personal love.

God does not call all. He calls as he sees fit, for His Own glory and purpose. But when He calls, tremendous responsibilities are involved, and tremendous opportunities. Life can never be the same again. We are no longer of the nameless multitude who live and die like animals, in ignorance. We must stand before Christ, and either be accepted forever into the Divine family, or pay the dread price of the rejection of the love of God. To us, as to Israel, He says—

"You only have I known . . . therefore I will punish you for all your sins."

The way of righteousness is always presented as the only way of happiness and pleasure and true freedom: *"There is no peace to the wicked"*—and God makes sure there will not be. The disobedient may *seem* to prosper, but they never know true peace and joy, and the final bitter reckoning is never far away. This is the great lesson of Amos: the great, simple, eternal lesson of all Scripture—

"Seek God—AND LIVE" (5:4).

How simple, and obvious! But how universally ignored or forgotten, even by those who should know better. Truly, there are apparently attractive and desirable things to be given up, but how small and empty they are compared to the infinite joy offered to those who seek God with all their heart! And how disappointing most greatly desired things turn out to be, when at last we get them in this life. Like Solomon, we find at last that all is vanity, except one thing alone—

"The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. 4:18).

"Can two walk together except they be agreed?" (3:3)

At the beginning, we have no "agreement" or affinity with God. His is the mind of the Spirit, while we are wholly the mind of the flesh, and these two are at enmity, and are foolishness one to the other (Gal. 5:17; 1 Cor. 2:14).

But gradually, by the constant study of and meditation upon His Word, we come to assimilate to the intelligent mind of the Spirit, and lose the stupidity of the natural man. We are, as the Scriptures say—

"Renewed—transformed—in the spirit of our minds"
(Eph. 4:23).

We enter more and more into the boundless, timeless Divine viewpoint. We put off, little by little, the corrupt, narrow pettiness of the flesh, and interest in fleshly things. Spiritual, eternal things become increasingly more important and more real to us.

This is a lifelong process: a constant, daily, *essential* process—if we are to be among the very, very few accepted at Christ's coming. This is the *whole* purpose for which we are given our present lives: to squander them on anything else is to guarantee failure.

"Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it" (3:6)?

Nowhere is this essential principle expounded more clearly than here. All things are of God. He watches and controls all: even to the fall of a sparrow. This is hard for us to comprehend, with our puny mental limitations, but we must *strive* to comprehend it. It is essential to our salvation that we steadily *grow toward* comprehending it. It is not just that God could be everywhere: He *is* everywhere. It is not just that He has power to see everything: He *does* see everything—

"Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings? NOT ONE OF THEM is forgotten before God" (Lk. 12:6).

Let us meditate on this till we begin to understand these things. This is the beginning of wisdom.

God is here speaking to His people. If there is evil, it is of God; and there is a reason. Usually it is a warning against, and a punishment of, sin. It is to make men *think*, and examine themselves: to make them realize that God is all-seeing and all-powerful—that none can successfully ignore His righteous laws, or set themselves against Him. Such evil on God's people

is really a blessing of His love; an evidence of His Fatherhood and care—the chastisement of beloved sons (Heb. 12:6).

Evil is not always an indication of sin, but sometimes of well-doing—

“Every branch that beareth not fruit my Father taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He PURGETH it, that it may bring forth MORE fruit” (Jn. 15: 2).

But its purpose is always the same: to teach something; to bring out inner characteristics; to test and strengthen faith by giving scope to its manifestation and exercise; to reveal to us our weakness and need; to manifest the uncertainty and brevity of present things.

“Surely the Lord will do nothing but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets.” (3:7)

Here again is a basic, oft-quoted scriptural principle for which we are indebted to Amos. It is a broad, comprehensive and comforting assurance that gives us incentive and confidence to study the whole range of the Divine Word of prophecy. It gives us confidence that there is a light to explain today's events, and what will come from them, as there has been for every generation.

Amos is working up to his basic message: his heavy message of condemnation and impending calamity to Israel.

“The lion hath roared, who will not fear? The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?” (3:8).

All fear when the lion roars. It is an ominous, terrifying sound, signifying that he has found and is falling upon his prey. How quick we are to recognize and fear and guard against natural dangers: but how slow to recognize, and even slower to do anything about, the much more terrible *spiritual* dangers that threaten us!

God had roared from Zion in His displeasure. To the ear of faith it was as real and near and terrifying as the nearby roar of the springing lion in the darkness. Would Israel have the wisdom to fear? They were too busy with their present prosperity, which seemed so real and important and lasting. But in less than forty short years the whole nation was cruelly herded away as slaves in a foreign land.

Verse 9 calls for the heathen nations to assemble to view the wickedness of Israel. That is, Israel's sins were such as to shock even the godless Gentiles. This is a strange, and yet sadly familiar phenomenon. Doubtless this too is of God: those who

despise His love He gives over to a "reprobate mind." We remember Paul's words to Corinth—

"Such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles" (1 Cor. 5 :1).

I was deeply impressed in WWII how much more fair and considerate and patient and sympathetic—even under the great stress of national peril— some draft boards were with brethren than some brethren are with each other. Like Israel with the Law, to have the Truth without the spirit of the Truth seems to engender pride, self-satisfaction, and bitterness and contempt for others. The Catholic Church, directly descended (though apostate) from the apostolic Ecclesia, has the most vicious history of cruelty and corruption and wickedness in all human records. The flesh is an evil, deceitful, hateful thing; and men who have been called of God, unless they are transformed to holiness, tend to degenerate to demons. It is so easy, as Paul says, to use the liberty of Christ as a cloak of maliciousness. Doubtless this is Divine judgment upon abused enlightenment and privilege.

Luxury, self-indulgence by abuse of Divine blessings, and lack of consideration for others, are the sins with which Israel is charged—

"Winter houses . . . summer houses . . . ivory houses . . . great houses" (3:15).

How the flesh loves these monuments of unfaithful stewardship! They oppressed the poor, and crushed the needy (4:1). How did they do this? The answer is quite instructive for us, because they did it quite legally and piously and self-justifyingly. Was it their fault or concern that others were less fortunate or less provident or had less ability? Were they their brother's keeper?

The Law of Moses was a divine, compassionate, spiritual dispensation with many provisions and safeguards for the comfort and care of the less fortunate or the less able. Under the Law, everyone *was* his brother's keeper, though not in the foolish modern way of burdening some so as to encourage others to be indolent. Today men do not give: they pass taxes to make others give.

Under the Law, they were not allowed to harvest their fruits efficiently, or reap their fields efficiently. They must deliberately leave some for the poor to glean (Lev. 23:22). They had to forgive debts every seven years, and completely reapportion all

real estate every fifty years (Deut. 15:1; Lev. 25:10). They could not charge the poor interest, nor refuse to lend to them. Every bankrupt, every failure—after six years bond-service to a successful man to teach him wisdom and industry—had to be set up again on his own, and *liberally* supplied with all the material necessities of success so he could try again (Lev. 25:36; Deut. 15:14).

The Law of Moses was all designed to teach that all things are of God, and given for the good of *all*—to teach the fundamental lesson that true living is loving, and true loving is giving. All were commanded to be liberal and open-handed; and to share their blessings freely.

Could it be possible that the Law of Christ requires less? When the people asked John the Baptist what they should do, he gave them the essence of Moses' Law—

"He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none: and he that hath meat, let him do likewise"
(Lk. 3:11).

Very little is recorded of what this "burning light" preached: do we realize the revolutionary significance of what is recorded? And when Christ himself came, he preached the same heavenly gospel—

"Sell what thou hast, and give alms . . . Give, and it shall be given unto you: WITH THE SAME MEASURE YE METE, IT SHALL BE MEASURED UNTO YOU"
(Lk. 12:33; 6:30-38).

All this was the very *opposite* of the flesh, but it was and is God's required Way of Life. Doubtless the Israelites to whom Amos preached did everything legally according to *man's* laws, for they were very pious and proud of themselves. But to God, their way of life was selfishness and wickedness and oppression and greed.

At the same time, there was a tremendous display of religious observance and activity—

"Proclaim and publish the free offerings" (4:5).

Make a big show and boast of all the extra, unrequired sacrifices you bring—

"For this liketh you." Or, margin: *"For so ye love."*

They loved to glory in what they *thought* they were doing for God. It is the same story today: a tremendous show of religion and charity, but an individual self-pleasing and self-glorification, and an ignoring of the holy commandments of God and the welfare of others.

Doubtless it was so in Noah's day, and in Sodom and Gomorrah: very religious, and meticulous in worship. We know it was so in Christ's day, and he said they were worse than Sodom and Gomorrah (Matt. 11:23).

The point for us is that these hypocritical things are not far from any of us. We all have the selfish, wicked, self-justifying heart of the flesh to contend with. Only the daily, prayerful, meditative study of God's Word can save any of us from our subtle self-deceit.

Verses 6-11 speak of the various ways God had already afflicted them: famine, drought, blight, plagues, sword, earthquake. But they were blind and deaf in their self-delusion. We must not make the same fatal error. We must consider every incident in our lives as lessons and disciplines from God: the blessings as tests, the evils as warnings. We must be alert and awake to everything that could teach us something.

Having disciplined them with restrained and limited severity many times, God is at last about to cast them off—

"Therefore . . . prepare to meet thy God, O Israel!" (4:12)

This is another of Amos' sayings that has become proverbial. *"Prepare to meet thy God!"* This should be the over-riding and ever-present thought in the minds of every one of us. This alone, in all the world, is real. All else is passing shadows.

It should be *joyful, eager* anticipation. Surely, what could be more exciting and desirable? *"Prepare to meet thy God."* It is what the righteous have longed for for ages. It is the promise to the pure in heart.

But Israel, like poor stupid animals, took no heed of the glory of the invitation, nor the dreadfulness of the warning: so it has ever been.

Chapter 5 is a prophetic lamentation—

"The virgin of Israel is fallen: she shall no more rise"
(5:2).

But the invitation is still open—

"Seek ye Me, and ye shall live." (5:4).

This is Amos' whole message: the message of all the prophets: *"Seek God, and live."* It is very simple, very elementary: but everything in life at last boils down to this, and this alone: *"Seek God: and live."*

"Seek Him Who maketh the seven stars and Orion"
(5:8).

Surely this alone is wisdom! We marvel of the glories and beauties of Creation—on the earth and in the vast heavens. We

are invited to the intimate companionship of Him Who made them all. Why, then, is it that our poor crawling animal natures cling so blindly to grubby earthy things?

"Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord!" (5:18)

They were so convinced of their acceptability that they *desired* the Day of the Lord: wicked, selfish, luxurious Israel! Is it possible to be so utterly self-deceived? That is the whole point. It is not just possible: it is very easy, very natural. We have the same picture at Laodicea—

"I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing" (Rev. 3:17).

But the all-discerning Spirit's verdict was: *"Poor, blind, miserable, naked."*

The flesh, the natural mind, is no guide. It is only by rigidly testing ourselves by the commands of God in their full strength and import that we can see ourselves truly. Isaiah says of this same people—

"They seek Me daily . . . They take delight in approaching to God. Is this what I have chosen: to bow the head as a bulrush and spread sackcloth under him? . . . Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and bring the poor into thine houses, and clothe the naked?" (Isa. 58:2-7).

And Christ says the same, in condemning the religious hypocrites of his day. The message has not changed; nor has the flesh.

"I despise your feast days . . . I will not accept your offerings . . . Take away the noise of your songs" (5:21-23).

They were truly a very religious nation. God's Name was ever on their lips. But what good is religion without *personal purity and holiness*, or piety without full-hearted love and service of neighbor?

Chapter 6 speaks of the thoughtless and indulgent revellings in Israel, and the terrible sufferings and tremendous death toll of the soon coming three year siege of Samaria by the Assyrians.

The sufferings were indeed terrible, as they were later in Jerusalem. God is loving and merciful, and these were God's Own chosen people; but because they chose to ignore His commands and follow their own thoughts, He gave them over to the most dreadful miseries. His love and mercy were in His constant efforts to persuade them to walk in the way of wisdom and obedience, *before it was too late*. Love and mercy are for *now*: not for the judgment seat, if the now has been wasted.

"Ye say, Have we not taken to us horns by our own strength?" (6:13)

Paul says to the same attitude: "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" (1 Cor. 4:7)

And Moses said: "It is the Lord that giveth thee power to get wealth" (Deut. 8:18).

The most foolish part of all man's foolishness is attributing anything to himself, and depending on and boasting in his own strength or wisdom or ability. God today, as foretold, has given men great knowledge and ability. Like in the last days of Israel, He has greatly blessed the race with opportunity.

But, like Israel, they have used it very wickedly—in rivalry, war, oppression and pride. What God gives, He can take away in a moment, and humble the highest and proudest in the dust. In forty years, proud and prosperous Israel was utterly destroyed. It does not appear that modern man has any where near that long to go.

Chapter 7 begins visions of calamities. First, three visitations of increasing severity: a further warning, in God's mercy. He did not bring the Assyrians all at once to destroy them, but gradually. Still Israel did not heed—

"He formed grasshoppers in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth. Then said I, O Lord God, forgive I beseech Thee: by whom shall Jacob arise, for he is small?" (7:1).

Amos, the prophet of judgment, pleaded for mercy. This must be the attitude, the heartfelt desire, of all who proclaim God's judgments. Otherwise we are but fierce Jehus, with "zeal for the Lord" only for destruction. We must, in faithfulness, point out what we believe to be wrong. But it must always be done in sympathy and compassion and the fellow-feeling of deeply-realized personal unworthiness.

This prophecy of the grasshoppers was fulfilled in 2 Kings 15:19-20, when Tiglath Pileser, king of Assyria, came against Israel about 740 BC. Menahem raised a tribute and bought them off. Israel now had twenty years to go. The second warning judgment followed—

"The Lord God called to contend by fire, and it devoured the great deep, and did eat up a part" (7:4).

The king of Assyria came again about 730 BC, and carried away many captives (2 Kgs. 15:29). Amos, typical of the "salt of the earth" class, pleaded for mercy for wicked Israel, and again final destruction was postponed. Israel now had ten years to go. The specific cause of this second visitation was that the kings of Israel and Syria had united to attack Judah with the purpose

of destroying the House of David and setting up their own choice as king in Judah.

Isaiah promised Judah help from God, and gave the prophecy of the virgin with child, but king Ahaz chose rather to appeal to the Assyrian power, sending them all the treasures of the Temple, and causing them to come against Israel and Syria. To all outward appearances, these were just natural political events, but Amos shows us it was all in the hands of God, and fulfilling His purposes. So by the light of prophecy must we see and realize the hand of God today.

In the third judicial vision (7:7) Amos sees a plumbline, and is told—

“Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of My people Israel: I will not again pass by them any more”
(7:8).

This was to be the end—and so it was. The plumbline is a fitting symbol of the spirit of Amos’ whole prophecy: the searching and undeviating perfect standard of righteousness: that by which all must at last be tried.

This third and final judgment, from which there was no possibility of turning back, is recorded in 2 Kings 17. Typically, and in harmony with God’s ways of retribution, its immediate cause was Israel’s own treachery. Hoshea, the last king, after being supported in the kingdom by Assyria and covenanting to serve them, conspired with Egypt. The king of Assyria came; Samaria was besieged three years with great suffering and loss of life, as Amos had warned; and finally the kingdom was broken up and most of the people carried away to Assyria.

Summing up Israel’s sad history, 2 Kings 17:7-22 gives a long catalog of their persistent and continued disobedience, from the day of their coming out of Egypt, concluding (v. 23)—

“Until the Lord removed Israel out of His sight, as He had said by all His servants the prophets. So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day.”

They had chosen from the beginning to give God lip service, but to do just as they wanted, and cater to their own desires. And this was the inevitable result at last, as it always must be.

Chapter 8 opens with the fourth vision of judgment: the basket of summer fruit. Fruit is a fitting symbol here. The Scriptures say much about fruit: good fruit and bad fruit; selfish fruit for oneself; unselfish fruit for others. Israel was indeed at this time a basket of fruit: beautiful and rich-looking,

but ripe to the harvest—already plucked and soon to be devoured. Their fruit was gathered, and it was evil fruit: by the fruit the tree is known. Hosea said at this same time, and it is God's great indictment of Israel after the flesh, by which Israel after the Spirit would do well to constantly examine itself—

"Israel is an EMPTY vine: he bringeth forth fruit UNTO HIMSELF" (10:1).

This has always been the great weakness and tendency of the flesh, even supposedly enlightened flesh: to spend its energies and efforts on its own interests and desires, forgetting that its whole reason for existence, and hope for the future, is to serve God and not itself. Beyond life's necessities, we have no time for anything except God's work, if we desire to be faithful and accepted stewards of God's grace. Sadly, it was the same in Paul's day, even among "believers." He says—

"I have no man likeminded (except Timothy) who will naturally care for your state, for all seek their own, not the things which are Christ's" (Phil. 2: 20-21).

Speaking of the oppression of the powerful, and their cruel treatment of the poor, God says—

"Shall not the land tremble for this?" (8:8).

This appears to be clearly a reference to the great earthquake that Amos mentions at the beginning, and strengthens the probability that it was a Divine visitation to warn Israel and confirm Amos' words.

"I will cause the sun to go down at noon" (8:9).

As Amos prophesied, to all appearances they were enjoying high noon: strong and prosperous, with much of their day before them. Everything seems stable and secure. Amos' words seemed impossible of fulfillment, but within that generation, all was gone.

"I will send a famine, not of bread and water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. They shall run to and fro to seek the Word of the Lord, and shall not find it" (8: 11).

And truly they did, when it was too late. This time will come at last for us all. We remember the parable of the foolish virgins. Today we have the Word in our hands, with plenty of opportunity to *study* it that we may be "wise unto salvation": not just a ritual twenty minutes a day, and then back as fast as we can to present, passing things. How true for us are the words of the Psalmist we often sing?—

"O how love I Thy law! It is my meditation ALL THE DAY" (Psa. 119:97).

It is only those of such a heart who will stand approved at the last day. Today is the day of opportunity: tomorrow may be too late.

In chapter 9 the thunderings of judgment reach their peak in words of terrible bitterness and severity: there are no stronger in all Scripture. Then at the end, the glorious promise of final restoration and peace.

"I saw the Lord standing upon the altar" (9:1).

This is a very striking figure. The altar is the place of worship and mercy and acceptance. But now God Himself stands upon it in wrath to slay them and drive them away.

"And He said, Smite the lintel of the door, that the posts may shake."

Judgment begins at the House of God: the whole corrupt religious edifice. We cannot help but see here a veiled reference to the nation's smiting of Christ: the culmination of their sins. He is the Lintel of the Door, as faithful Jews and Gentiles are the two Sideposts.

None shall escape the day of judgment, wherever they may flee—

"I will set Mine eye upon them for evil and not for good" (9:4).

"Behold the goodness AND THE SEVERITY of God" (Rom. 11:22) infinite, inconceivable goodness, the boundless treasures of eternity, to those who cast aside everything else and seek Him with all their heart and strength—implacable severity, the deepest of sorrows, to those who are self-willed and disobedient.

As we read these terrible first 8 verses of chapter 9, they may to our fleshly minds seem dreadfully cruel. But they are of God's mercy: warnings to impress Israel and us with the tragic folly of fighting against omnipotent goodness, and ignoring God's holy commands.

"Are ye not as the children of the Ethiopians unto Me?" (9:7).

Israel's great delusion was that they were something special in themselves; and this is the commonest delusion among Christadelphians, too. Somehow we assume that just because we happen to have been called, we are all set, and we can please ourselves as to what we do with our lives: that we can live comfortably and amuse ourselves with goods God has entrusted to us *for His use*—just like the rest of the perishing

world—and still coast into eternal salvation, just because we have memorized the First Principles of the Gospel of God.

If Israel's delusion seems foolish to us, what can be said of *this* delusion! God demands the whole life: the whole heart and strength and devotion. There is never a hint in Scripture that He will be satisfied with less. If the words of Scripture mean anything at all, then He demands a daily, a *continuous* "living sacrifice," a living service, an agonizing for perfection, a hungering and thirsting for righteousness. Is it too much to ask? Do we expect eternal life at bargain basement prices? What do we have *in ourselves*, that millions in the world do not have, and more? God's salvation is only for those who *never feel they have done enough for Him*: who are always striving to do more.

If the terrible calamities foretold by Amos for God's Own chosen and beloved people teach us anything, they should teach us this. Israel had a special place in God's purpose—for His *use and service*. So do we. We should never cease day and night to give thanks that for some reason known only to God we have been called from the world's darkness and ignorance. But it is not because we are arbitrarily favored. It is, like Israel, for *use and service* in His purpose.

If we, like Israel, fail to rise to these great responsibilities for which we have been called, our judgment will be the same as theirs. We are "*not our own*" (1 Cor. 6:19). We are not free just to amuse ourselves and do as we will. We are slaves of a glorious Master for a glorious purpose. We must glorify God in our spirit and in our body (1 Cor. 6:20), and in *everything* we do in our whole lives.

The change to the final message of blessing begins in v. 8. Then a very striking statement follows—

"I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, as corn is sifted in a sieve: yet shall not the least grain fall to the earth. All the sinners of My people shall die" (9:9).

This is another very interesting and important principle of truth for which we are indebted to Amos. In all the long history of Israel's dispersion and suffering, there is nothing haphazard or by chance. There are no mistakes. *Not one true grain is ever lost.*

There is great comfort in this revelation. It gives us the true picture of God's operations among the nations. What may appear to be blanket and indiscriminate pouring out of judgment on a group just as a group, is revealed rather as a very

carefully controlled and supervised operation of God's omniscience. Not one true grain, not one potential saint, is ever lost—

"Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings? Yet not one of them falleth without my Father" (Lk. 12:6).

It is hard for our dull minds to comprehend these marvelous Divine things, but they are recorded for our comfort and our learning. We must dwell upon them till our cramped and sluggish perceptions are refined. We are but a speck in time and space, and God encompasses all time and space. And yet He invites us, for just the tiny, token price of a few brief years of service—which love, if it is love, will be eager and anxious to render—to share eternally His divine nature.

"In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen" (9:11).

What day? This is a new thought. The context hasn't mentioned any day. Clearly it is "that Day" of which Peter says—

"God hath spoken by the mouth of ALL His holy prophets" (Acts 3:21).

In all his heavy burden of judgment, this is Amos' first and only mention of it, but his proclamation of it is one of the most striking and oft-quoted. It would not be fitting, nor complete, nor would it serve the purpose for which the prophecy was given, to close without reference to the final consummation to which the Divine plans tends.

Every one of the sixteen prophetic books ends this way except Jonah and Nahum, who speak of God's judgment on the Assyrian—typical and antitypical: so they cover the consummation with equal comfort from a different perspective.

"That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the Gentiles, which are called by My name" (9:12).

Here again, as so often in the Messianic prophecies, is a reference to the inclusion of all mankind in the purpose. In the great controversy over requiring the Gentiles to keep the Law of Moses, James in Acts 15:13-18 quotes this passage from Amos in reference to the inclusion of the Gentiles in the Divine plan, and having quoted it, he emphasizes its lesson—

"Known unto God are all His works from the beginning."

This is the God in Whom we trust, and there is great comfort in finding one portion of Scripture quoted as divine eight hundred years later in another portion of Scripture. There is no doubt as to how the inspired apostles viewed the inspired Word. To these men, who were guided by God's Spirit, the

Scriptures were in truth God's infallible Word, and so they are and will always be to those who know God in truth.

Amos speaks (vs. 13-14) of the removal of the Adamic curse, and the abundant fruitfulness of the land in the Kingdom of God. And he finally closes (v. 15) with the assurance that this last gathering of Israel will be *for ever*, and they shall never be moved again. Here is the great consummation of the Divine plan of the ages: all the earth at rest and filled with the knowledge and glory of God.

These last few verses give beauty and meaning and purpose and hope to what would otherwise be just a sad catalog of wickedness, judgment and suffering. Truly, as Paul says, the Creation was made subject to vanity *in hope* (Rom. 8:20). And at last, after all the "*groaning and travailing together in pain*," will come the deliverance of the final eternal glorious liberty of the true Sons of God.

Let us then press forward in hope, remembering these key thoughts that Amos contributes to the great prophetic pattern—

"Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"
(3:3)

"Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" (3:6)

"Surely the Lord God will do nothing, except He reveal His secret to His servants the prophets" (3:7).

"Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel!" (4:12)

"Seek the Lord—and live!" (5:6)

"Seek Him that made the Seven Stars and Orion"
(5:8).

"Hate the evil, and love the good" (5:15).

"Let justice roll as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream" (5:24).

"I will sift the house of Israel as corn is sifted in a sieve: yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth"
(9:9).

"In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen" (9:11).

"I will plant them in their own land, and they shall no more be plucked up" (9:15).

What Shall We Have, Therefore?

The Parable of the Penny a Day—Matthew 20.

We must note first the chain of events with which this parable is connected. They begin in Matthew 19:16 when the rich young ruler comes running eagerly to Jesus, asking what he must do to have eternal life. He was clearly what would outwardly be considered a faithful and religious man. We gather this from his statement regarding the commandments—

"All these have I kept from my youth up."

—coupled with the information that Jesus was moved with love toward him. Two interpretations of his question suggest themselves. Either he came with a feeling of gratified self-confidence, seeking and expecting Jesus' commendation and assurance that he was an acceptable servant of God, or else—and this seems more likely—or else he had found that an outward compliance with all the commandments had not brought him peace, that he recognized within himself that he *did* "lack something yet," but knew not what it was. He may even have vaguely realized that as long as his treasure and his heart were divided between earthly and heavenly things, he could never have peace.

Whichever may have been the case, Jesus immediately defined the cause and correction of the basic problem—

"Sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, and follow me" (19:21).

Whether this answer was a surprise to the young man, or whether it was the one thing he expected and feared to hear, he could not then bring himself to face it, and he sadly went away. Jesus, in pity and love for him, remarked to his disciples, "*how hard*"—how, naturally speaking, *impossible*—"it was for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God." Riches—possessing more than the basic necessities—are such a snare and handicap in the way of life. They make it so hard for a man to deny *himself*, and take up the cross and follow Jesus in true and selfless humility.

The disciples had seen the young man come, heard the conversation, and seen him go. Peter, speaking for the rest, said to Jesus—

"Behold we have forsaken all, and followed thee: what shall WE have, therefore?" (v. 27)

It was a natural thought and a natural question. The mind usually turns to oneself and one's own welfare in relation to any

circumstance that confronts them. *Jesus'* mind was filled with selfless pity for the young man who was turning his back on God's greatest treasure because he had the misfortune of being rich, but Peter's mind turned to a comparison with himself, and what he was going to get.

Jesus' reply is Divine and beautiful. First is the warm and comforting assurance that this faithful little band who had left all and followed him would sit on twelve thrones with him in his Kingdom. And he broadens the promise to include all, in whatever age and circumstance they may be, who forsake all worldly things for him. Then he adds, in gentle spirit rebuke of Peter's question, and gentle instruction in the more excellent way—

"But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first" (v. 30).

And then follows this parable, which he closes with the same words with which it opens—

"So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen" (20:16).

The events that follow the parable complete the frame and background of the picture it presents. First, in verses 17-19, Jesus took the disciples privately aside and solemnly informed them of his approaching betrayal and crucifixion. They are at this time on their last journey from Galilee to Jerusalem.

The next incident (vs. 20-28) shows the great need for the lessons the parable teaches. Heedless of the imminent burden and suffering of which he spoke to them, James and John, with their mother, come to ask the highest places of honor in his Kingdom.

This concern over self—how deeply it is ingrained in human nature! Jesus constantly labored to show them the true picture of life's meaning and purpose—*"the first shall be last, and the last first."* Could he have put it any more plainly or forcefully? But still it is so hard for us to get these teachings through our minds, and to adjust our lives to them.

It does not just mean we must choose to be last as a *calculated method of getting to be first*. It goes far deeper than that. *That* is just a higher and more refined form of self-seeking. We must cease completely from any desire for position or importance, realizing that all such desire stands in the way of peace with God.

"Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall have rest unto your souls" (Matt. 11:29).

"What shall WE have, therefore?" must completely cease to be our basic motive. Jesus' final words on the subject, after the incident of the request of James and John, carry the deepest lesson—

"Even as the son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (20:28).

He came to teach the cramped ugliness of the natural way of self-seeking, and the beauty of selfless giving, even unto death.

"What shall WE have, therefore?" does not just apply to possessions and positions. It cuts into the roots of every personal desire—every form of self-satisfaction—every gratification to self and pride. Every instance of hurt feelings or offended pride is an outcropping of this universal disease.

"He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (Matt. 10:39).

In this day of seeing through a glass darkly, we can never fully comprehend the depths of these Divine teachings that reverse all human standards, but we can and *must*, by the heavenly light of the Word, gradually approach closer to a comprehension of their marvellous and unearthly wisdom and beauty.

To the two brothers, eager for glory, faithful and devoted, but having so much to learn of the way of life, Jesus said (v. 22)—

"Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of?"

And how confidently they replied, "*we are able.*" "*Ye shall indeed drink of my cup,*" he said. *He knew what lay before them.*

When the other ten heard of their request, they were indignant at James and John. Would our reaction have been the same? How much they—and we—need to learn about the selfless way of godliness that is illustrated by this Divine parable! Once again Jesus points out that God's ways are entirely different from man's—

"The princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them . . . but it shall not be so among you—whosoever will be chief, let him be your servant" (v. 25).

Obedience to this command is very easy to counterfeit, but very hard to fulfil. There is no dearth of proud humility, but rare indeed is the true servant who serves just for the joy of serving, with no motive of self-gratification or self-esteem. The body of Christ is forbidden the normal human framework of authority and discipline. Therefore if there is not *Divine and superlative* love among its members, all its functions break down in anarchy.

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard" (Matt. 20:1).

"Early in the morning"—"together with the dawn" is the literal translation. So often this thought of early, break-of-day activity occurs in relation to the works of God!

There are many beautiful allusions in Scripture to the vineyard symbol. The Vineyard is the community of the Truth, the Household of God—first as portrayed in natural Israel, then in spiritual (Isa. 5:1)—

"My beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill."

"I am the vine and ye are the branches" (Jn. 15:5).

"My beloved is as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of Engedi" (S. of S. 1:14).

"Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: Thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it" (Psa. 80:8).

"I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed" (Jer. 2:21).

A vineyard is a place of labor and productiveness, where work is required and fruit is expected.

"And when he had agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard" (v. 2).

A penny was the normal wage for a day's work. There has always been discussion as to just what the "penny" in this parable symbolizes. Various things have been suggested—eternal life, resurrection, forgiveness, justification—but none seem to fit completely. Perhaps the conception that fits best is *justice*—though not just bare, *literal* justice, but rather *true, eternal, allwise justice*, tempered with love and mercy, in harmony with the highest conceptions of Divine justice. The householder said—

"Whatsoever is RIGHT, that shall ye receive" (v. 4).

The important point, however, would appear to be that it was a *fair remuneration*, agreed to willingly by the first-hired laborers. It is around that fact that the lesson principally revolves. It was just, fair, and mutually agreeable.

We note that, with the first laborers, the agreement was made *before* the work was begun. It was a *legal* contract. The later ones accepted in *faith* the householder's assurance of fairness.

We may possibly see in this aspect a contrast between law and grace—works and faith—the Mosaic and Christian dispensations. In this sense the parable would teach the Jews that their legal contract and priority of service were no guarantees of pre-eminence—"the last shall be first." And it would be a

warning to them not to murmur at God's gracious gifts to the despised Gentiles who came into the Vineyard later, but rather to forget petty self-interest and expand their hearts in joyfulness that others were so richly blessed.

This aspect is strengthened by two interesting features. First—

It was the *third* hour of the day when the Gospel was first preached in the Name of the risen Christ, on Pentecost (Acts 2).

It was the *sixth* hour of the day when Peter was shown the vision of the great sheet containing the unclean animals—teaching him that God was extending the Gospel call to the Gentiles (Acts 10:9).

It was the *ninth* hour of the day when the angel appeared to Cornelius, the first Gentile convert, to assure him that his prayer had been heard, and to tell him what to do to be saved (Acts 10:3).

(The other feature concerns the word translated “*supposed*” in verse 10, which we can look at when we reach that point.)

Finally the householder goes out at the eleventh hour and finds some laborers standing idle, and he asks them—

“*Why stand ye here all the day idle?*” (v. 6).

The answer is significant—

“*Because no man hath hired us*” (v. 7).

Some have attempted to use this parable to prove that though an individual puts off service to God until the last hour, he may still be accepted equally with the day-long laborers. *But these men had not been given the invitation before.* Their reason was—

“*BECAUSE NO MAN HATH HIRED US.*”

When the day was finished and the work done, the laborers were all called together to be given their hire, beginning with the last.

The last were paid the full amount that had been agreed upon with the first. The instructive aspect of the parable now begins to unfold, and we see its relation to the rich young man and the question of the disciples.

The rewards of God's service are all gifts. No matter how much or how little He may give to any—all is unmerited grace and mercy and more than is deserved. The very best is—at his best—but an unprofitable servant—

“*Say ye, when ye shall have done ALL THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE COMMANDED you, We are unprofitable servants*” (Lk. 17:10).

—and who ever begins to approach to the doing of all things commanded?

"But when the first came, they SUPPOSED that they should have received more, and they likewise received every man a penny" (v. 10).

"They supposed"—the word is *nomizo*, from *nomos*—"law." The thought seems to be, not just that they anticipated more, but that they considered they were *entitled* to more. And, naturally thinking, if we were in the same position we would immediately exclaim that it was not fair and just to give the last, who had only worked one cool hour, the same as those who—as they truly said—had borne the burden and heat of the day. How universal is this spirit in the world! No matter how well anyone is treated, they complain bitterly if another appears to be treated slightly better.

But this thought only betrays the selfishness and envy of the natural mind. Jesus sums it up in the words of the householder—

"Is THINE eye evil, because I am good?" (v. 15).

The first men had had the opportunity of working a day and receiving a day's wages. They had agreed beforehand and had received a full and just recompense. Their ground of objection was solely that someone else had been treated with kindness, and men who had no opportunity to work all day had received a day's wages. Instead of being glad that others had been treated so well, they were envious and bitter.

When we look at it in the light that Jesus, through the words of the householder, presents it, we can see how evil and small was their reaction to his kindness to the others.

But it is when we translate it into *spiritual* things that we perceive the enormity of the evil of this attitude of envy. And let us not think that we are free from this danger. Let us not say that we would never take such a selfish attitude. In the parable it is put in a very obvious and striking way to drive the lesson home, but in the realities of life it is *far more subtle and deceptive*.

Who of us can claim to have learned that one eternal, needful lesson—to forget *ourselves*, and to derive all our joy and comfort from the blessing and happiness of others? Who of us is big enough to spontaneously rejoice when we see others favored at our expense? Jesus says the two basic Divine commands are—

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with ALL THY HEART . . . AND THY NEIGHBOR AS THYSELF"
(Matt. 22:36-40).

If we can accomplish the first part with *all* our heart, then all our own inner needs are satisfied. We then possess within ourselves everything that is worthwhile possessing, for *to love truly and completely is to have*, and if we have God we have everything. One with the inner assurance of possessing everything is freed from selfishness and smallness. He does not say, in anxious self-concern—

"What shall WE have, therefore?"

He has learned to rest content in his glorious heritage—

"ALL THINGS are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's!" (1 Cor.3:23)

He is then ready for the second great half of the way of life—

". . . And thy neighbour AS THYSELF."

He is overwhelmed with the dazzling revelation of the freely available abundance of spiritual wealth—he has no fear that there will not be enough to go around. He does not feel compelled to seek a guarantee of a chief place in the Kingdom (Mk. 10:37)—

"Grant us that we may sit on thy right and left hand."

When Jesus was about to leave his disciples, he said —

"If ye LOVED me, ye would rejoice because I said, I go to the Father" (Jn. 14:28).

They *thought* they loved him, but they did not yet understand the SELFLESSNESS of love—

"IF ye LOVED me, ye would rejoice."

"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

"These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto US, who have borne the burden and the heat."

"These many years do I serve thee, yet thou never gavest ME a kid" (Lk. 15:29).

"What shall WE have, therefore?"

"But he answered one of them and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong . . . Is thine eye evil, because I am good? . . . So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen" (vs. 13-16).

There is the heart of the parable. When the secrets of all hearts are made manifest, then nothing will be counted as anything that was not done for the sake of love. What a tremendous rearranging of all present values and positions there will be, when all inner motives are revealed, and first shall

be *last*, and last *first*, and many of the called *will not be chosen at all*—all because they have not learned the lesson of love and largeness of heart that this parable teaches! To them the goodman of the house says—

"Take that thine is, and GO THY WAY" (v. 14).

"Go thy way"—*Depart from me*. If we selfishly take our stand upon the claims of justice, we are lost. If we question the extension of mercy to others; if we are too small to sincerely rejoice with them when others seem to be more abundantly blessed than ourselves (and perhaps, it seems, for less cause), then we stand with these unlovely murmurers who are told to *take what is theirs and go their way*—paid in full for their ill-humored service—leaving the fruits of love and mercy to those they despised as "*these last*."

There is another gross misconception into which these murmurers fell, which further reveals the smallness and falseness of their outlook. It is illustrated in Jesus' remark at Jacob's well (Jn. 4:34)—

"My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me."

As it was prophetically recorded of him in Psalms—

"I DELIGHT to do Thy will; O my God!" (40:8)

Do we remember the very *first* instruction given by God to Moses when he went to the top of Sinai for forty days and nights?—

"Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring Me an offering: of every man that giveth it WILLINGLY WITH THE HEART ye shall take My offering" (Ex. 25:2).

This was in preparation for the building of the Tabernacle. We know that the Tabernacle symbolized the Household of God in whom He dwells by His Spirit—

"Ye are the temple of the living God" (2 Cor. 6:16).

It had to be "*willingly—with the heart*," to be accepted. They had to realize the *privilege* and *blessing* and *JOY* of service. Those typified by the murmurers in the vineyard missed this point completely, in their self-centered ignorance. They thought they were doing God a favor. They thought they were *earning* something!

They failed entirely to realize that they had been given the greatest blessing of the longest and earliest joy of service in the vineyard. Instead of petty, self-pitying envy, their hearts should have been uplifted and enlarged with a gratitude that would overflow in the joy of seeing unearned blessings showered upon others, regardless of how little their opportunity of service.

As we have seen from the disciples' conduct immediately following the parable, the lessons did not at the time make a very deep impression. But this, too, has an element of comfort in it, both as regards the effect of our efforts in relation to others, and—what is more to the point—our own development in the way of godliness. There is never any justification for discouragement—

"In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand, for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that; or whether they both shall be alike good" (Ecc. 11:6).

Though Jesus was passing through the valley of the shadow of death, his disciples, obsessed with their own desires, were dull of hearing and unimpressed by the weight of impending events.

But the time was to come when all these lessons would be remembered, and pondered, and taught to others. When we read the epistles of Peter and John, we begin to realize how these men grew in grace and knowledge and spiritual stature.

This Jesus would know as he spoke these things to them which were mysteries at the time, for by the wisdom and guidance of the Spirit he had chosen these men for the great work before them.

These parables were the means by which he taught them these deep spiritual lessons, which later bore such beautiful fruit. Where is John, the son of thunder, who pressed to the front with the request that he be given the pre-eminence—where is this John, when we read his marvellous epistles of love?—

"He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God" (1 Jn. 4:16).

What fuller and deeper exposition of life could there be than that? What greater ambition? What higher pre-eminence? And with Peter, it is no longer, "*What shall WE have, therefore?*" but,

"All of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility. Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you" (1 Pet. 5:5-7).

The Purpose of the Law

Our purpose in studying the Scriptures day after day is to extract strength and guidance for an acceptable walk before God, that our course may finally terminate in life, and not death. Let us, above all things, avoid the mistake of the Israelites who performed all the ordinances of God without any perception of their real meaning. God had, in the law of sacrifice, a reason and a purpose. He never acts arbitrarily, or without a definite end in view. The purpose of the Law is as living and active today as it was when first given through Moses over three thousand years ago. That purpose is *to lead us to Christ*.

The Jews, as a nation, failed to derive the benefits from the Law that were intended because they attributed its virtue to its mechanical performance. They went by the letter of the Law, and not by the spirit. The spirit of the Law is not something *contrary* to the letter. The spirit is *contained* in the letter. But though performing the letter, Israel did not comprehend the spirit. As Jesus said to them,

"These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone" (Matt. 23:23).

Both the letter *and* the spirit are necessary. It is by the medium of the letter that we are taught the spirit. As Paul says,

"I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet" (Rom. 7:7).

But we cannot *stop* at the letter. We must get at the *principle behind it*, of which the letter is but the expression. We must, through the letter, make contact with the spirit. If we do not complete this circuit, no power comes to us. The Law, instead of being a conductor *to* life becomes an insulator *from* life.

The Jews offered their sacrifices. They carefully measured out their tenth deal of flour, and their fourth part of an hin of oil. But still, in their case, the Law *failed in its purpose* through the weakness of the flesh.

We must *not* fail. In the slow cycle of events, it is *we* who *now* day after day and year after year read over and over the many ordinances of the Mosaic Law. Do *we* do better than the Jews? "*Understandeth THOU what thou readest?*" We have a much better opportunity. Much more has now been revealed to enable us to see the hidden meaning. Much is now clear history that was then but veiled prophecy. Much is now forced upon

the eye of sight that was then only dimly visible to the straining eye of faith.

With all these advantages, and with the vastly enlarged scope made possible by printing and education, how do *we* stand in the matter of intelligent perception? For the past two months we have been daily reading from this Law. Have we done it mechanically, wondering why a record of all this meaningless, monotonous rigmarole was preserved? Or have we done it eagerly and intelligently, engrossed in the ever-unfolding beauties of type and shadow—constantly impressed by countless evidences of unfathomable wisdom working out a symphony of perfection over the vast range of ages, every detail foreseen and prepared?

"It is the glory of God to conceal a thing; but the honour of kings is to search it out" (Prov. 25:2).

The mind that is seeking closer contact with the spirit will not be content with merely reading these things as a matter of duty.

Of one thing we may be sure! A spiritual perception will not just *happen* through the familiarity of repeated performance. The *natural* result is just the opposite. Each additional performance removes the act further away from conscious purpose into the realm of habit and adds one more layer to the veil that obscures the lesson hidden within.

The long history of the Jews is an outstanding proof that ordinances can be performed with scrupulous care by one generation after another for *thousands of years* without ever stumbling upon the secret concealed inside. Let us exert every effort to avoid a similar failure! Nothing is easier than to drift and fail.

We must deliberately stop and ask, "What is the meaning and purpose? And what is the bearing upon *our* lives and actions?" This requires effort. The natural man does not think any more than he is compelled to. He prefers to live by feeling and sensation. And what thoughts he does have do not run to deep spiritual things. But we must set ourselves to—in the words of Paul—

"MEDITATE upon these things; give thyself wholly to them" (1 Tim. 4:15).

We must establish a strong mental connection with them through which we can derive power. It will *never* come *naturally*, but it *will* gradually come *more easily*, and gradually yield greater power and pleasure.

It is quite easy to read without thinking about what is being read. Such reading is *worse* than useless. It is actually *harmful* because it is deceptive. Our natures are always fighting against the spirit; always devising ways of deceiving us into the belief that we are really accomplishing something when actually we are just going through the motions; always inventing for us motives to soothe our consciences and undermine our resistance.

The central theme of the Law is *sacrifice*. Very early in the revelation of Scripture is sacrifice brought to our attention, and gradually the lesson is broadened until we are led to the conception expressed by Paul—

“Present your bodies a LIVING SACRIFICE . . . which is your reasonable service” (Rom. 12:1).

And by Jesus—

“He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it”
(Matt. 10:39).

How would we define sacrifice? We would be inclined to say that it is the unpleasant process of having to give up something that we would like to keep. But this is a petty, self-centered definition. Sacrifice is a very satisfying process if it is properly comprehended. The dictionary defines sacrifice as—

“The destruction or surrender of anything for the sake of something else; giving up of some desirable thing IN BEHALF OF A HIGHER OBJECT.”

The whole secret is in the PURPOSE. Of Jesus we are told,

“For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross and despised the shame” (Heb. 12:2).

That was sacrifice, giving up of some desirable thing in *behalf of a higher object*, even the *“bringing of many sons to glory.”* Paul expresses the basic principle of sacrifice when he says—

“Yet show I unto you a MORE EXCELLENT WAY”
(1 Cor. 12:31).

Life inevitably consists of a continuous series of sacrifices—a long process of choices. Some truly endeavor to train themselves in sacrificing the lower for the higher, sincerely seeking the better way. These, who appear to sacrifice much, actually sacrifice least. Some sacrifice the better way to the worse—the future to the present. These are the great majority. Some, reluctant to sacrifice anything, attempt to hold both. Theirs is the most pitiful case—they in the end, find they have sacrificed most. Jesus says—

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found

one pearl of great price, went and sold ALL THAT HE HAD, and bought it" (Matt. 13:45-46).

Rather an extreme action, selling ALL that he had. Almost foolhardy, we would think. Only one thing would justify it—the incomparable value of the pearl. What does this mean, translated into our own lives? It means the gradual rounding up and sacrificing of all the non-essential items in our life, steadily working upward, making sure that in each case we are consciously taking advantage of a corresponding spiritual compensation in return. "Giving up a desirable thing *for the sake of something better.*"

We cannot afford to leave little pockets of vacuum. That is fatal. Jesus taught us this when he spoke of the evil spirit which—though once cast out—came back to find his house still empty, whereupon he brought seven more with him more evil than himself, and the last state of that man was worse than the first.

Each lesser item sacrificed must be consciously replaced by a spiritual satisfaction which had been previously hindered by the thing cast out. In this way we leave no opportunity for the evil spirit to return. In this way, too, we avoid the foolishness of self-pity, and the wickedness of self-glorification. We are the gainers every step of the way. We can give nothing to God. We just choose the better way for ourselves as revealed by His beneficial light. The only possible reaction in the case is gratitude that we have been shown the better way to our own greatest well-being.

Let us view sacrifice in its true and attractive light—a continually-repeated process of giving up one thing *for the sake of a better one*—a gradual advancement toward the most glorious of all blessings and most intense of all pleasures, a full living sacrifice to the perfect will of God.

When a man, according to the Law, took the best of his possessions and laid it on God's altar, what did it signify? It was an intelligent, worshipful recognition that *what God had yet to give was vastly greater and more glorious than that He had already given.* That everything a man had, including his own life, he would gladly and eagerly lay upon the altar of his faith in God's plans for his future eternal blessing.

Sacrifice is the joyful recognition that the future is full of promise and the best is yet to come. Sacrifice frees a man from the petty limitation of the poor little present, and relates him to the boundless scope of eternity.

All this shines through the letter of the Law as we read the many divine ordinances which Moses penned so long ago. All this is still but a small fraction of what the Mosaic sacrifices signify to the discerning heart. Sacrifice, with all its little details deep with meaning, taught in picture-story the whole glorious message of the prophets and apostles—the whole history of the divine purpose.

And overshadowing the whole picture is the one great sacrifice for sin, the crowning sacrifice, not a separate feature, but a gathering together of all others in one perfect representation of everything that was embodied in all the rest.

To what extent could the faithful Israelite discern significance in the flour and wine and oil which, in certain prescribed amounts, were associated with the sacrifice? We cannot tell, but for us they set in motion many trains of thought. Nor is each item restricted to a single meaning. An interplay of many meanings gives depth to the picture. These common objects which the spirit uses to construct its symbol-pictures gradually increase in interest as we study their varied significances.

We can neither strive after, nor be satisfied with, a flat, mathematical interpretation—this means this, and that means that. The spirit is always fuller than the letter by which it is expressed. A certain amount of inexpressible feeling must be communicated by, though not actually contained in, the letter. A mathematical interpretation is final and complete, so it ceases to hold the interest.

"Then shall he that offereth his offering unto the Lord bring a meat offering of a tenth deal of flour mingled with the fourth part of an hin of oil. And the fourth part of an hin of wine for a drink offering shalt thou prepare with the burnt offering or sacrifice, for one lamb"
(Num. 15:4-5).

Bread is the symbol of strength, both natural and spiritual. Bread is also the symbol of the body of Christ—many individual grains of seed sown in the act of baptism—springing up to newness of life—gathered in the Lord's harvest—threshed to remove the chaff—ground in the mill to a smooth, fine consistency in which each seed merges with countless others to form one body.

Bread again is that one individual body which is offered for us—the bread which came down from heaven—the Purpose manifested in flesh. Flour is a certain step in the process of making bread. So we discover that the sacrificial ordinances

include a chronological presentation of the Truth, an unfolding of the purpose. The seed, the sheaf, the flour, the baked bread.

Bread again is the fruit of labor; in the joint partaking of it, it is fellowship and covenant relation; it is doctrine; it is protection and security; it is the final basic necessities of life; it is the ministration of charity.

Then the oil with which the flour must be mingled. Even the idea that something must be mingled with the flour is a lesson in itself. It shows that exactly the same thing might be acceptable or not acceptable—*according to that which accompanies it*. Oil is a symbol of spirit. Things must be done *in the right spirit*. Just the bare doing is not enough. The purpose and motive must be right.

In the act of anointing we see the spirit-oil poured out upon a believer, sanctifying and consecrating him—setting him apart—devoting him to a purpose. In the lamp the spirit-oil is guidance and enlightenment and comfort and encouragement.

Mingled with the flour the spirit-oil transforms a loose, powdery mixture which a slight wind would scatter, into one homogenous mass that can be shaped to a desired form. When passed through the fire it will hold that shape and its natural heavy doughiness will be transformed into palatableness and flavor. Oil, again, is gladness and joy.

Wine, in the figures of Isaiah, is the gospel message, offered freely without price. Christ uses it in the same way, and he also employs the contrast between new and old wine to illustrate the relation of his teaching to the Law. It was a *new vintage of the same thing*. The time had come for the new. Wine can also be a mocker and deceiver, false as well as true. As such, it is the cup of false doctrine in the hand of the apostasy.

Again, wine is the blood shed for sin, the life obediently poured out unto death—the life is in the blood. And wine is well-being, prosperity, celebration of good. Wine is grapes trodden in wrath, bitter judgment poured out that the condemned must drink.

Bread and wine are body and soul; they are the necessities and pleasures of life; they are the physical and mental aspects of life. Wine and oil are a soothing and healing ointment. David says (Psa. 104:15) that God gives—

“Wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man’s heart.”

The gladdening gospel wine, the enlightening spirit oil and the strengthening bread of life.

And behind the wine is the multitudinous imagery that surrounds the vine and its branches.

"I am the true vine and ye are the branches . . . without me ye can do nothing" (Jn. 15:5).

Without him, what are we? What incentive would there be to carry on day after day in meaningless plodding toward oblivion? One long struggle, with its inevitable bitter twilight and final extinction. But the bread and the wine are here before us. Here is a point of contact with the eternal. The bread and the wine, each with the wide meaning and association which it has acquired through the long period of the Spirit's teaching and revelation.

There is a strange sense of familiarity when the mysterious figure of Melchizedek brings forth bread and wine in the presence of Abraham. In this gift of long ago by the King of Righteousness to the Father of the Faithful, all the history of God's loving purpose is condensed. The Jew today, as his fathers have done for ages, still brings forth his bread and wine at the solemn passover feast. But the veil is still over their face.

"Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:7).

"Take, eat, this is my body" (1 Cor. 11:24).

"This is the new covenant in my blood" (1 Cor. 11:25).

Each thread we pick up in Scripture leads us to this point. Each thread is *intended* to lead us to this point and *fails in its purpose* if we do not follow it through. Let us not read these things with a veil of blindness or habit or preoccupation upon our minds, so that we, like the Israelites, "cannot look to the end of what is signified." Let us not permit the Law to fail in its purpose through the weakness of the flesh. *The Law must lead us to Christ.* He is the priest, the altar, the sacrifice, the bread, the wine, the oil. All things point to the redeeming love of him whom we have assembled to remember.

Tempted in All Points

"Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being forty days tempted of the devil" (Lk. 4:1-2).

The details of this terrible forty days we do not know, except as Mark records (1:13), he was *"with the wild beasts."* Forty days of danger, privation and exposure, waiting and enduring patiently until God should open the way further.

"Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: Thy rod and Thy staff comfort me" (Psa. 23:4).

How could he find comfort in the rod of God? James says (1:2-4)—

"Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience—let patience have her perfect work."

When the apostles were beaten by the council of the Jews, they *"rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for his name"* (Acts 5:40-41). To the mind of the flesh, this is madness.

"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14).

The wisdom of the world would regard rejoicing at trouble as a perverted and psychopathic condition. Let us not turn to them for help and guidance in our problems. Let us turn to the word of God. The record of the temptation of Jesus is a demonstration, for our learning, of the great contrast between the natural mind of the flesh and the divine mind of the Spirit—how, if life is to be gained, the one must be subdued by the other.

"If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread" (Lk. 4:3).

That was reasonable enough. Jesus had a great work to do. He was given the power of the Spirit to enable him to accomplish it. He could not live without food. Surely then there was no wickedness in using this power to create a little plain bread for himself. Did not the Law clearly say, *"Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn?"* (Deut. 25:4)

But Jesus, through the discerning eyes of the Spirit, saw further and deeper than that. Many things look reasonable and harmless to the flesh, but what was God's view of the matter? There is the safe line of thought.

For forty days Jesus had not eaten. Prolonged fasting reduces all the physical and mental powers. It reduces self-control and resistance and balanced thought, and greatly intensifies the tendency to impatience and irritability. He was hungry and exhausted. The previous forty days must have seemed endless. How much longer would be required to sustain this struggle? Seeking strength and guidance, his mind went back two thousand years to a very similar occasion, and to the inspired words spoken at that time. Moses said to Israel in Deuteronomy 8:2-3—

"Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, and to know what was in thine heart. He suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord."

The great lesson—**BY THE WORD OF GOD ALONE IS LIFE.** Had God, the Giver of this power, directed him to use it to justify his own desires? No. Then he would not betray his stewardship. God was proving him, to know what was in his heart. He would wait for God to provide, as He had provided for Israel. He would wait for, and live by, the words of God.

"And the devil showed him all the kingdoms of the world, and said, 'All this power will I give thee, if thou wilt worship me'" (vs. 5-7).

Again the reply, **"IT IS WRITTEN, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve"** (v. 8).

"Him ONLY shalt thou serve"—that is the point. Serve God—not even just primarily but exclusively. **"Ye CANNOT serve God AND Mammon"** (Matt. 6:24). Whenever there was any temptation to serve and gratify the flesh, Jesus answered, **"Get thee behind me Satan. It is written, thou shalt ONLY serve the Lord thy God."** We are not offered all the kingdoms of the world. It isn't necessary. Much less temptation is plenty to strain our weak faith. But the diabolos continually offers us pleasant and tempting things on the condition that instead of a completely dedicated service to God, we turn in part to the service of the flesh. These two calls, the flesh and the spirit, are always present, seeking our attention. Temptation is a continuous process. Every action is a yielding to either one or the other—either the flesh toward death, or the spirit toward life.

When we read of Jesus' reaction to temptations, we well realize what Paul meant when he said to Timothy, "*The Scriptures are able to make you wise unto salvation*" (2 Tim. 3:15). Jesus met them all with, "*It is written.*" We must sincerely try to do the same.

God's law is not a matter of burden or restriction or imposition. Jesus looked upon it as a light, a help, a deliverance and guide through the perils of darkness.

"I delight to do Thy will, O God" (Psa. 40:8).

"Thy testimonies are my delight and my counsellors"
(Psa. 119:24).

"Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage" (v. 54).

Without this frame of mind, there is no hope of life, because this is the Word of God, and it is only by being filled with the Word of God that men can live. Let us learn who are our enemies and who are our allies. When God wishes to destroy a people, He sets every man's sword against his brother. Instead of fighting the enemy, they blindly fight their friends.

Jesus said, "*The enemy is the devil,*" the flesh, with all its natural thinking, motions and desires. Let us keep that clear. When we fight, let us be sure that alone is what we are fighting. We have a host of allies. They are the testimonies of God's law. Every one is a true and powerful friend, although often in our wilfulness they do not seem so. Sometimes, like the Gadarenes, we impatiently require them to depart from our coasts, because we fear that while they are destroying our evil spirit, they will at the same time destroy our swine. But they are our real friends and defenders. Jesus called three of them to his aid in resisting the subtle enticements of the devil, the devil of lust, greed and pride. Let us not make the fatal mistake of defending and justifying this enemy, just because it happens to be within ourselves, and of turning against our God-given helpers just because they happen to prick us in the process of coming to our aid.

"If thou be the son of God, cast thyself down, for it is written, 'He shall give His angels charge concerning thee' " (vs. 9-10).

How quickly the devil learns to use our own weapons against us! Twice Jesus had said, "*It is written,*" and the theme of his defence was dependence on, and allegiance to, God. So the third temptation was, "*Give evidence of your faith—it is written. He will keep thee from harm.*" This was a clever attack from the

opposite direction, and required to be met with a great balance and self-control.

The first two attacks had caused Jesus to bring forward the forces of his faith and dependence to the limit. The third was a trap to provoke him, in the heat of zeal and enthusiasm, to go just one step too far. This third attack, while apparently a Scripture-backed appeal to faith, was actually an appeal to pride and self-glory. There is no more subtle temptation possible than to give a man an excuse to parade his pride under the guise of virtue. Only from God can we get the discernment to steer a straight, safe course through the wiles of the devil.

And let us doubly beware when the mind of the flesh comes quoting Scripture.

"And the devil departed from him for a season" (Lk. 4:13). *"Resist the devil and he will flee from you"* (Jam. 4:7). The devil will never depart until he is courageously resisted. *There is no peace in appeasement.*

"All the rivers run into the sea, and yet the sea is not full. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing" (Ecc. 1:7-8).

"Hell and destruction are never full—so the eyes of man are never satisfied" (Prov. 27:20).

It is impossible to satisfy the desires of the flesh. To attempt to find satisfaction and happiness in that direction is merely a weary shovelling into a bottomless pit, and finally we drop into the pit ourselves—unsatisfied.

"Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest, and causest to approach unto Thee, that he may dwell in Thy courts: we shall be SATISFIED with the goodness of Thy house, even of Thy holy temple" (Psa. 65:4).

Inside the temple of God alone is satisfaction and peace. *"In Thy presence is FULNESS of joy"* (Psa. 16:11). How could it possibly be any other way? Is there anything good outside of God?

Concerning temptation, Paul says (1 Cor. 10:13)—

"God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

The Spirit declares that, in God's love, no child of His is ever tempted beyond his power to withstand. If we are wise, we will humbly accept the verdict of Scripture, and not attempt to evade the responsibility for our shortcomings. We will not shift the blame to some other person, as Adam did; or to a supernatural devil, as Christendom does; or to God, as we uncon-

sciously do when we say we just can't help sinning because we are made that way.

What Adam said was perfectly true, "*The woman Thou gavest me gave to me, and I did eat.*" But the woman was simply part of the circumstances in which God placed Adam, and the divine principle stated by Paul holds true—the man could have held firm if he had sought *aid and guidance in the right place. Otherwise what a mockery his punishment would be!*

Refuge is sometimes taken in a mistaken application of the words of Paul in Romans 7:17, "*It is no more I that do it but sin that dwelleth in me.*" Those who reason so fail to follow Paul's exposition through to the end. He is here simply laying the foundation of facts. He goes on in the following verses telling how, through the power of God, those facts must be faced and handled in order to gain life. The first thirteen verses of chapter 8 emphasize the vital necessity of the law of God in the mind overcoming the law of sin in the members, reaching its climax in verse 13—

"If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye BY THE SPIRIT do mortify (R. V.: put to death) the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

By the Spirit—that is the secret. Chapter 7 shows the hopelessness of his natural evil condition, desiring to do good but unable to. Chapter 8 shows the power by which this is overcome, and *must be overcome*—"To him that OVERCOMETH will I grant to sit on my throne." The same Paul said—

"I can do all things THROUGH CHRIST WHICH STRENGTHENETH ME" (Phil. 4:13).

"I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (1 Cor. 9:26-27).

Paul clearly recognized that if he did not, by the freely offered and unlimited power of Christ, overcome the law of sin in his members, he would be a castaway. James says: "*Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God*" (Jam. 1:13).

This is a serious warning. This is what Adam said, in effect, when he said, "*The woman THOU gavest me.*" God commands, "*Thou shalt not.*" Man replies, "I cannot help it—it is the way You made me, the circumstances You placed me in."

James continues—

“Do not err, my beloved brethren, lust brings sin, and sin brings death—you MUST overcome—every good and perfect gift is from above—let him ask God in faith for wisdom and power to walk worthily and it shall be given him” (Jam. 1:5-6,15-17).

What did God say to Cain? *“Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? if thou doest well, shalt not thou be accepted? and if thou doest NOT well, SIN LIETH AT THE DOOR”* (Gen. 4:6-7). Whose door? Cain's door. Do not err, my beloved brethren. The command is there. The power is there. The responsibility is there. It can be done, and it *must* be done.

There will be failures, but let us not blame anyone for them but ourselves. They are danger signals—flaws that show up in testing. The failures show that we have failed to prepare ourselves—failed to apply our heart aright—failed to draw upon the great reservoir of power and wisdom offered through the Scriptures and the Spirit of God. Let us humbly recognize our failures, and assume full responsibility for them. Then, and then only, is there any hope of overcoming. In whatever circumstances we are placed, let us remember that God is trying us to prove what is in our hearts.

Temptation can be met as Jesus met it—with a simple, powerful, *“It is written.”* An impregnable armor, *if we will make the effort required to put it on.* And it is effort—long hours of effort and application as long as life continues. Paul told Timothy that the Scriptures were able to make him wise unto salvation. They were able to provide him with a ready *“It is written”* to each of the endless problems, trials and temptation that fill the probationary period. But Paul also made it clear that Timothy must *“Meditate upon these things, and give himself WHOLLY to them”* (1 Tim. 4:15).

In the 119th Psalm which we finished yesterday, the law of God is referred to in each verse—176 times. Why? Clearly to *impress—to impress indelibly with its vital importance—its value, beauty, blessing, protection, pleasures and the glorious eternal purpose it was given to accomplish.* The mind expressed throughout this Psalm is the mind of Christ which David was inspired to record.

Jesus *“magnified the law and made it honorable”* (Isa. 42:21). He showed its power and value, for by it he quenched the fiery darts of the adversary, and achieved eternal life for himself and all who should follow in his steps. We often point out in our

lectures the importance of understanding that Jesus was a representative and not a substitute. This truth is equally important in our exhortations. His obedience and faithful overcoming is no substitute for ours. He opened the way—*we must walk in it.*

Paul says, as he enjoins the solemn ordinance we are about to partake—

“Be ye followers (RV: imitators) of me, even as I am of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1).

Jesus said—

“I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done” (Jn. 13:15).

And Peter records—

“He left us an example, that we should follow in his steps” (1 Pet. 2:21).

The 119th Psalm shows whence he drew his strength. It shows how he *“increased in wisdom and in favor with God.”* He did not do this automatically. He increased in wisdom—

“Thou through Thy commandments hast made me wiser than my enemies. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the aged (RV), because I keep Thy precepts” (Psa. 119:98-100).

He increased in favor with God. *God’s own son increased in favor with Him.* How? Verse 58 of this Psalm—

*“I entreated Thy favor with MY WHOLE HEART.”—
“Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering, and it shall be given him”* (Jam. 1:5-6).

“How much more shall your heavenly Father give good gifts to THEM THAT ASK HIM” (Matt. 7:11).

As we partake of this ordinance, we bear testimony that *“man doth not live by bread alone, but by EVERY WORD that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”* We partake, in faith, of him who was the Word of God, the spiritual bread, who perfectly manifested in his own life the life-giving power of that divine Word.

And we declare in symbol, as we partake, our recognition that unless we faithfully identify ourselves with him in heart and soul, and follow the pattern that he has given, we cannot have life. In the seven promises to the seven ecclesias, it is each time only *“To him that overcometh. TO HIM THAT OVERCOMETH, even as I overcame”* (Rev. 3:21).

“Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness,

IF THOU CONTINUE IN HIS GOODNESS: otherwise thou also shall be cut off” (Rom. 11:22).

“I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove—show, demonstrate, illustrate—what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom. 12:1-2).

What Doth the Lord Require of Thee?

“Let a man deny himself . . . He that loseth his life shall find it . . . He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me” (Mk. 8:34; Matt. 10:38-39).

What does God require of us, in return for His infinite gift of eternity? He very reasonably requires a tremendous amount. He requires *everything*: everything we have, everything we are—our whole being, and every moment of our time. The promise is only to those who love Him enough to give *all*.

God demands a complete transformation of our whole life—from natural to spiritual in every thought and action. But not as a burden: not as a labor: rather as a joy: a welcome release and an ever-thankful escape from natural darkness and corruption and death.

God’s message to man is a call, an invitation, an appeal from a loving Father to choose the more excellent Way of Life: choose it *totally*.

God demands our all and our best. This is the first principle of all first principles. Our service must be total. Eternal life is an infinitely, incomparably greater prize than anything in this life. The present life is but a brief, sad flash in the dark: utterly meaningless at its very best. Eternal life is an endless, everlasting intensity of light and joy.

The issues are so stupendous—eternity in joy with God for the poor little speck-of-dust worm called man—that for God to demand less than all, and for man to be *satisfied* in giving less than all, would be a cheapening and unseemly mockery. It is only for those who realize its greatness, who want it with all their heart and soul, who are totally consumed with the wonder and glory of it.

We must, by study and meditation, rise to the total dedication and devotion portrayed in the Psalms. It does not come easily or naturally. It comes only by long effort and prayer, for the flesh is so coarse and crude and ignorant in us all. We must realize how utterly unclean and ugly we are naturally, as compared to the Beauty of Holiness. It is just a matter of how sincere we really are about it, and how much we really want it: whether we want it enough to give up *everything* for it. There are millions of half-hearted part-way-ers. It is only the very few all-the-way-ers who will reach the goal.

The Bible makes it very clear that while eternal life is *attainable* by all—*well* within the reach of all—still very, very

few will ever attain to it, which is a great tragedy. And *why?* Because they are too wooden and thoughtless and animal: because they do not value it sufficiently to take the trouble to find out, and face up to, what its requirements are; and then to dedicate their whole lives to complying with those requirements. It is not a *part-time* thing—and that is all that most are willing to give to God. They want to spend most of their time on their own affairs.

Let us consider God's requirements under these seven headings:

1. *Learn and believe the Gospel of the Kingdom.*
2. *Reject all teachings of men: search the Scriptures YOURSELF.*
3. *Be baptized by complete immersion in water—a total burial and re-birth.*
4. *Constantly study God's Word for guidance and mental transformation.*
5. *Do everything to the glory of God: eliminate everything that's not to His glory.*
6. *Overcome the flesh: crucify it: put it to death.*
7. *Develop the fruits of the Spirit by constant prayer and study and effort.*

* * *

1. LEARN AND BELIEVE THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

Jesus' parting instruction to his disciples was (Mk. 16:15-16)—

"Go into all the world and preach the GOSPEL to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. He that believeth not shall be condemned."

Here we are clearly told that there is no salvation without belief of the Gospel. Paul likewise told the Corinthians (1:15:1-2) that we are saved by the Gospel ("*Gospel by which ye are saved*") if we "*keep it in memory.*"

He told the Romans (1:16) that the Gospel is the—

"Power of God to SALVATION to every one that BELIEVETH."

And he told the Galatians (1:8-9) that any who preached any other Gospel than the true one would be "cursed." It is vitally important therefore to find out what the true Gospel consists of. Now, in four of the first seven times the Gospel is mentioned (Matt. 4:23; 9:35; 24:14; Mk. 1:14) it is called the "*Gospel of the Kingdom.*"

And in Acts 8:12 where Philip is preaching it, and Acts 28:23, 31 where Paul is preaching it, it is described as—

"The things concerning the KINGDOM OF GOD and the name of Jesus Christ."

The very first recorded preaching of Jesus is about the Kingdom (Matt. 4:17) and in his first major recorded address he said (Matt. 6:10; 5:5)—

“THY KINGDOM COME: Thy will be done ON EARTH as it is in heaven . . . Blessed are the meek, for they shall INHERIT THE EARTH.”

Here is the Kingdom-Gospel, right from the beginning and consistently all through. Remember: the disciples preached the Gospel of the Kingdom long before they even knew Christ was to be crucified, so the crucifixion of Christ was not the Gospel *they* preached (though this later was added to the original Kingdom-Gospel). See Luke 9:6; Matthew 10:7, preceding Matthew 16:22.

So it is inescapably clear that if we do not believe the Gospel *of the Kingdom*—Christ’s coming worldwide Kingdom of righteousness on earth, soon to be established with power—then we do not believe the one true saving Gospel: we have, in fact, *no* Gospel.

There is much warning in Scripture to make sure (by personal prayerful study) that we have the Truth of God. We must find and believe *The Truth*: ignorance or well-meaning error will not save. Jesus said—

“Ye shall know the truth; and the truth shall make you free” (Jn. 8:32).

And he prayed—

“Sanctify them (that is, make them holy and acceptable) through Thy truth. Thy word is truth” (Jn. 17:17).

Paul told the Thessalonians (2:2:13) they were *“saved by belief of the truth,”* and in the same context he said all would be *“damned who believe not the truth”* (v. 12). This is very strong, plain language, to leave no doubt.

Repeatedly Paul exhorted (2 Tim. 1:13) to *“hold fast the form of sound words,”* and (1 Tim. 1:3-4) to *“teach no other doctrine, neither give heed to fables.”* Whatever is not of God’s Truth is fables. And he speaks of some who—

“Concerning the truth have erred, saying the resurrection was past already; and overthrow the faith of some” (2 Tim. 2:18).

So even the time of the resurrection is a part of the Truth that must be believed for salvation. He said (v. 17) these false teachings would eat like a gangrene. Gangrene does not stand still. It declares war on the body, and if not cut out, will inevitably kill the body. Error is deadly.

James strikingly emphasizes the seriousness of error by saying (5:19-20)—

"If any err from the truth, and one shall correct him, he shall save a soul from death."

* * *

2. REJECT ALL TEACHINGS OF MEN. SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES YOURSELF.

It is remarkable how *much* warning there is in Scripture about this. Men are so apt to leave their eternal destiny—the most important thing in their lives—to others: to the "professionals." But salvation is not to be found that way. It is a *personal* search, a *personal* effort. It is not for easy sale at church bazaars. Jesus said in his parting message (Matt. 24:4-5)—

"Take heed that no man deceive you, for many shall come in my name."

Indeed, many *do* come in his Name today, with an infinite variety of teachings. The world is full of differing churches, all claiming to be in his Name. He said further of the days of his absence (same ch., v. 11)—

"MANY false prophets shall arise, and deceive MANY."

Of all the learned and respected religious leaders of his day—all of *them*—he said—

"In vain do they worship, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9).

If that was true then, how much more likely today. They worshiped very zealously, and many of them very sincerely, but, as Paul said—

"They have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge" (Rom. 10:2).

Because of sincere, ignorant zeal for God, the Jews killed the Son of God. Paul himself had been one of them, opposing the Truth and persecuting the believers to prison and to death. He was wholly and intensely sincere. Jesus said—

"Narrow is the way that leads to life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:14).

Therefore it is *impossible* for any large popular church to be right. As soon as Christianity became widespread and popular, it became corrupt, and became the Catholic Apostasy. John warned in his day—

"Try the spirits, because MANY FALSE PROPHETS are gone out" (1 Jn. 4:1).

How must we "try the spirits?" Isaiah gives the answer (8:20)—

"To the law and the testimony. If they speak not according to THIS WORD, there is no light in them."

Paul told Timothy—

"Seducers will become worse and worse: deceiving and being deceived" (2 Tim. 3:13).

And he foretold that—

"The time will come when they [people generally, the professed believers] will not endure sound doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:3).

John declared (2 Jn. 1:9) that anyone who—

"Abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God."

And he warns—

"If any come unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God-speed" (2 Jn. 1:10).

Much more could be quoted along this line, very unpalatable to modern "liberal" and "charitable" thinking, but still the narrow and only Way of Life. The Bible makes it very clear we cannot, dare not, depend on professional clergy, each trained in his own private creed. We must search the Word for ourselves. We must make it our life's interest.

* * *

3. BE BAPTIZED BY A COMPLETE IMMERSION IN WATER: A TOTAL BURIAL AND RE-BIRTH.

We noted Jesus' parting message at the end of Mark (16:16)—

"He that believeth AND IS BAPTIZED shall be saved."

Similarly we find at the end of Matthew (28:19-20)—

"Teach all nations: BAPTIZING THEM . . . Teach them to observe ALL things I have commanded."

On the Day of Pentecost, a few days later, the apostles begin to carry out this command. Peter instructed the inquirers (Acts 2:38)—

"Be baptized every one of you—(note the emphasis)— EVERYONE OF YOU, for the remission of sins."

So again in Acts 10:48, the case of Cornelius—

"He (Peter) commanded them to BE BAPTIZED."

Again in Acts 22:16—

"Be baptized, and wash away your sins."

Let us note well: no baptism, no washing away of sins. Paul makes it clear to the Galatians and the Romans that baptism is the *only way* to union with Christ and relationship to God's Promises. He says—

"As many (note: 'as many,' no more) as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ . . . and IF ye be

Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the Promise" (Gal. 3:27-29).

No baptism: then no union with Christ, no heirship, no Promise. Similarly—

"SO MANY as were baptized INTO JESUS CHRIST were baptized into his death . . . We are BURIED with him by BAPTISM into death" (Rom. 6:3-4).

Then the sequel—

"IF (note well)—IF we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection" (v. 5).

Paul is clearly saying that if we haven't been buried with him in baptism, we shall not partake of his resurrection. Now, there are two further important points to note concerning scriptural baptism—

1. Scriptural baptism is *always preceded by belief*. Jesus' clear instruction was: *"He that BELIEVETH, and is baptized"* (Mk. 16:16). Baptism is always presented as a personal and voluntary act of faith and obedience: an act of *"good conscience."* It is utterly meaningless without faith and understanding. This aspect is strongly emphasized—

"Buried with Christ in baptism: risen THROUGH FAITH" (Col. 2:12).

"Baptism doth now SAVE US: the answer of a GOOD CONSCIENCE" (1 Pet. 3:21).

"When they believed, they were baptized" (Acts 8:12).

"Many Corinthians BELIEVED, and were baptized" (Acts 18:8).

That's the first point: *belief*. And the second point: *Baptism is complete immersion in water*. This is inescapable from several facts—

1. It is spoken of as a burial and a resurrection—

"BURIED with him in baptism . . . RISEN again to newness of life" (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12).

2. The word itself. It is the common Greek word for "immerse, submerge, plunge." If it had been translated properly, there would never have been any doubt concerning the form of baptism. The word never means, or is ever used to mean, "sprinkle" or "pour."

3. When baptism in Scripture is described in detail, we are told they *"went DOWN INTO the water,"* and they *"came UP OUT OF the water."* Read the account of Christ's baptism (Matt. 3:16; Mk. 1:10), and the Ethiopian's (Acts 8:38-39).

4. We are told John baptized his converts "IN the river Jordan" (Matt. 3:6; Mk. 1:5, 9). And we are told he chose to baptize at a certain place "because there was MUCH water there" (Jn. 3:23)—an absolutely meaningless statement if baptism was sprinkling with a few drops of water, as today's churches.

Of baptism's vital *importance*, the Bible leaves no doubt. Jesus said—

"Except a man be born out of water, he CANNOT ENTER THE KINGDOM" (Jn. 3:5).

What did he mean? One thing is certain: we have to find out what he meant, because we *cannot enter the Kingdom* unless we have been "born out of water," and we cannot do it without knowing what it is. Baptism—true *scriptural* baptism: a complete burial in water and a rebirth up out of it to newness of life—gives the beautiful answer.

Will anything else called "baptism" do, or must it be the one true water-burial baptism the Scriptures command and describe? Does any other, different act become "baptism" just by giving it that name? If God says, "Do *this*," can we safely give some other act the same name, and do *that* instead? Surely there can be but one answer!

Paul says (Eph. 4:3-6) that there is "*One Baptism*." He is describing the seven-fold unity of the Truth: One God, One Lord, One Hope, etc. This manifests the great and central importance of baptism, and also the importance of it being the One true Baptism. As there are many so-called "gods," but only One true scriptural God; so there are many so-called "baptisms," but just One *true* scriptural Baptism.

Baptism is a very beautiful and fitting provision of the love and wisdom of God: a loving act of submission and obedience, and of thankful union with Christ in his death; a going down into a watery grave; a complete death to the old man of the flesh with all his past sins, and a glorious rising again to the inspiration and joy of newness of life—a *New Man* in Christ Jesus: a complete new beginning: a complete purification: a completely new slate—standing perfect before God.

* * *

4. CONSTANTLY STUDY GOD'S WORD FOR GUIDANCE AND MENTAL TRANSFORMATION

This is absolutely essential if we hope for life, and it doesn't mean just fifteen or twenty rushed minutes a day. This is the means that God has lovingly provided that we may be totally

renewed in knowledge: transformed in the spirit of our mind, from ignorance to wisdom, and from natural ugliness to Godly beauty. The Bible is the only true education. This is the essential daily food for the new man of the Spirit. Jesus said—

“Man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word—EVERY WORD—that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4).

He was being tempted, and he answered every temptation with *“It is written.”* That was his strength, and secret of victory.

The Psalms, which give the mind of Christ in all his struggles and trials and temptations, are *full* of testimonies concerning the mighty transforming power of God's Word, and the need to study it constantly. *Psa. 1:2—*

“His delight (the man of God, the blessed man) is in the law of the Lord, and in His law doth he meditate DAY AND NIGHT.”

There is *no other way* to blessedness. The man of God has no time for anything not related to life's one great and glorious purpose. *Psalm 19—*

“The law of the Lord converts the soul, makes wise the simple, enlightens the eyes . . . in keeping of it there is great reward” (vs. 7-11).

And the long Psalm 119: every one of its one hundred and seventy-six verses is a *command*—in a great variety of forms—to constantly study and meditate on the Word—

“O how love I Thy law! It is my meditation ALL THE DAY” (v. 97).

Is it? We sing this, and words like it, in our hymns so often! Are we telling the truth, or lying to God? Do we *think* of the words, and *mean* them? We shall never totally achieve this, in the present weakness of the flesh, but are we at least trying with all our might? If not, whom are we deceiving? Certainly not God. To the Romans, the Corinthians, and Timothy, Paul emphasizes this vital necessity—

“Whatever was written aforetime was written for our LEARNING” (Rom. 15:4).

“ALL these things . . . are written for our ADMONITION” (1 Cor. 10:11).

God will expect us to have done our lessons, when the final exam comes.

“The holy scriptures are able to make thee wise unto salvation . . .”

—we have to be *made* wise: naturally we are foolish. He continues—

“ . . . ALL scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for INSTRUCTION IN RIGHTEOUSNESS, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto ALL good works” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

That is what God has given us the large volume called the Bible for, and that is why He tells us to study it constantly, and that is what *must* happen if we are to attain to life. These verses are the key to life. Let us read them over and over. Unless we feel we are already perfect, we have no time to waste. Again to Timothy (1 Tim. 4:13-16)—

“Give attendance to reading . . . meditate on these things: GIVE THYSELF WHOLLY TO THEM: continue in them, for IN DOING THIS, thou shalt save thyself.”

So if we do not do it, we shall not save ourselves. Much more of the same could be added, but surely the picture is crystal clear. Eternal life is for those who truly realize its value. Job said—

“I have esteemed God's word more than my necessary food” (23:12).

That must be our fixed way of life too, if we hope for salvation.

* * *

5. DO EVERYTHING YOU DO TO GOD'S GLORY. ELIMINATE FROM YOUR LIFE EVERYTHING THAT CANNOT BE DONE TO HIS GLORY. CAREFULLY LEARN AND OBEY HIS MANY LIFE-GIVING COMMANDS.

This is a full time job for anyone who is interested in investing this brief life to gain eternity. The pattern is laid in the words of Christ—

“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. He that will save his life will lose it. He that will lose his life for my sake shall save it” (Lk. 9:23-24).

Have we “*lost our lives for Christ's sake?*”—that is, given them over totally to his service? Only such, he says, will save them eternally.

With most people, religion—if they have any at all—is a self-pleasing hobby; and a part-time hobby at that. They do what they like, and they set their own limits of what they consider reasonable service to God—an hour or so a day, and they think they are heroes.

It can be the same with Christadelphians. We have the same self-deceptive flesh and hearts as everyone else: go through the motions, attend a fair number of the meetings, enjoy the

association—but spend most of the life on self-pleasing and puttering about with the rubbish of the world, just like everyone else. Can we honestly feel this is enough to cause God to perpetuate us eternally, and let all the world perish? Is that reasonable? Do the Scriptures give us ground to expect it? Paul said—

"It is no longer I that live, but CHRIST LIVETH IN ME"
(Gal. 2:20).

Everything we do must be Christ living in us. Paul told the Colossians—

"Whatsoever you do, do it AS TO THE LORD"
(Col. 3:23).

This is just as much a divine command as "Believe and be baptized." Every activity of life must be purified and sanctified this way, as something done for Christ. This applies to *everything*—even the most humdrum and commonplace things. It is all or nothing, for it is a Way of Life, and part-time service is hypocrisy. To the Corinthians, Paul gives the same command—

"Be ALWAYS ABOUNDING in the work of the Lord"
(1 Cor. 15:58).

"Always" and "abounding" leave no room for anything else. Again to the Corinthians—

*"Ye are bought with a price: ye are NOT YOUR OWN.
Wherefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit"*
(1 Cor. 6:19-20).

Whatever is done must be done unto God: to His glory and in His service. What cannot be done to His glory must not be done at all. We are totally purchased slaves. That is the price of eternity with God, and it will be lovingly, thankfully, *eagerly* paid by the wise of heart. Yea, their only regret will be they have so little to offer to manifest their love.

Now coming more particularly to the question of specific, detailed commands. If we are completely dedicated to God, and all our actions are done as unto Him, and all is motivated by love and goodwill, *isn't that enough?* Do we have to have rigid, constricting laws? Are we not free from law, and under grace?

We need—and we should earnestly *desire*—specific, detailed "instruction in righteousness," for we are by nature totally ignorant and foolish, no matter how good-intentioned. Remember Peter, in his blind, misguided, very loving devotion to Christ, as Jesus spoke of his death—

"Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee!"
(Matt. 16:22).

And Jesus answered—

“Get thee behind me, SATAN: thou art an offense unto me: thou savorest not things of God, but those of men.”

What a harsh and seemingly unkind rebuke to the concern of a sincere, well-meaning, loving friend! “*Satan!*” Peter meant so well, but it was Satan—the adversary, the flesh—speaking in its presumptuous ignorance: the proud, foolish flesh that thinks it is so wise. We must realize that by nature we are absolutely ignorant. We are stupid. The flesh can never of itself rise above its native stupidity. Unaided from above, we can never think or do right. The Bible plainly tells us this, and accepting it is the first step in the way of wisdom and life—

“It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps aright”
(Jer. 10:23).

Jesus said—

“IF ye KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS, ye shall abide in my love” (Jn. 15:10).

And verse 14—

“Ye are my friends, IF ye do WHATSOEVER I COMMAND YOU.”

And he laid it down as a plain rule that (Matt. 7:21)—

“Not everyone (however well-meaning) that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom, but he that DOETH the will of my Father.”

Before we can do God’s will, we must first learn what it is. It will not come to us naturally (though so many presumptuously assume that if they do what they think is right, then God must surely be pleased). But the natural thoughts of our blind flesh are the very opposite of God’s holy thoughts. Jesus said—

“That which is highly esteemed among men is ABOMINATION WITH GOD” (Lk. 16:15).

To some who professed to follow him he demanded (Lk. 6:46)—

“Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and DO NOT THE THINGS THAT I SAY?”

That alone is the true test of discipleship. John says very bluntly—

“He that saith, I know him, and KEEPETH NOT HIS COMMANDMENTS, is a LIAR. . . but whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected. HEREBY we know that we are in him” (1 Jn. 2:4-5).

Let us then look briefly at some of his commands. These will be just representative—a few of many—chosen to illustrate that they are not the things that we would ever do *naturally*, or

of our own "wisdom," however good our intentions, because, as Paul says (1 Cor. 2:14)—

"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither CAN he know them."

So if these commands seem "foolishness" to us, then that should show us that we are just thinking quite normally and naturally, according to the ignorance of the flesh.

The first commands to consider concern our relation to the world. As natural animal creatures, we are a part of that world, interested and involved in all its silly, animal activities. But we are called completely *out* of it, to something higher and more sensible. James says—

"Pure religion and undefiled is . . . to keep unspotted from the world" (1:27).

And he further says, even more strongly and pointedly—

"Whosoever is a FRIEND of the world is an ENEMY of God" (4:4).

Likewise John says—

"If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 Jn. 2:15).

The world, and all its churches based on the teachings of the flesh, are godless, though making a great manifestation of "religion." Love of God and love of the world are mutually exclusive, and we must choose between them at the very beginning. Paul instructed the Corinthians—

"Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers. What communion hath light with darkness? Come OUT from among them and BE SEPARATE" (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

"Unbelievers" are any who do not believe *The Truth*, regardless of how sincerely and repeatedly they say, "Lord, Lord." It's a clear choice: God or the world—the people of the world, the things of the world. Once this issue is honestly faced, it tremendously simplifies all subsequent action. Until it is faced, we are in a hopeless bog.

The following are typical of the clear, specific instructions we are given for living according to the Spirit. They are utterly revolutionary, and this *must* be realized. We must strain to expand our puny little minds to accept *them* in their fullness: not cut them down to our *own* fleshly thinking, as is the universal custom—

"Resist no evil. Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matt. 5:39).

"Avenge not yourselves" (Rom. 12:19).

"If any man sue thee at the law, and take thy coat, give him thy cloak also" (Matt. 5:40).

Did you ever hear of anyone ever doing that, in this so "Christian" land?

"Love your enemies: bless them that curse you: DO GOOD to them that hate you" (Matt. 5:44).

"Lay NOT up treasure on earth" (Matt. 6:19).

Isn't that what the whole mad human scramble is all about?

"Having food and raiment, THEREWITH BE CONTENT" (1 Tim. 6:8).

Quit scrabbling for perishing possessions. Be satisfied with bare necessities, and give every moment you can spare to the work of the Lord, and not to your own interests and amusements.

"Let your speech ALWAYS be with grace. Shun all foolish talking and joking, which are fleshly and unseemly for saints" (Col. 4:6; Eph. 5:4).

"If any man bridle not his tongue, that man's religion is vain" (Jam. 1:26).

"Put away ALL bitterness, wrath and anger" (Eph. 4:31; Col. 3:8).

"Forgive seventy times seven" (Matt. 18:22).

"Be gentle unto all men" (2 Tim. 2:24).

"Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect" (Jam. 1:4).

These are but a few of many. Others will appear in the following.

* * *

6. OVERCOME THE FLESH: CRUCIFY IT: PUT IT TO DEATH

It will be perceived that the commands of God have a consistent pattern and purpose. They are for the destruction of the natural ugliness of the flesh, and for the building of the Christlike beauty of the Spirit.

What the evil, fleshly world worships and calls "manly" is simply glorified ugliness: war, sport, competition, rivalry, victory over others, possessions, power, prestige, lust—all the activities and pleasures of the undisciplined natural animal.

The Scriptures show us a more excellent way, a joyful and joy-giving way: a way whose motive is love instead of lust, purity instead of power, giving instead of getting, victory and rulership over *self* instead of over others. It is a way, above all, whose end is eternal Life, instead of the end of the natural way, which is eternal Death. Solomon said, by the inspiration of God—

"He that trusteth his own heart is a FOOL"
(Prov. 28:26).

And Jeremiah (17:9)—

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."

These are lessons we must be taught from *above*. They do not, and never could, come from *within*. Within our natural hearts and flesh is only darkness and ignorance. Paul told the Galatians (5:17)—

"The FLESH lusteth against the SPIRIT . . . these are contrary one to another."

It is to the Romans he explains this subject most fully and deeply. Romans 7 should be prayerfully studied over and over, till we clearly comprehend the mind of the Spirit, and see ourselves for what we *really are*—

"In my flesh dwelleth NO GOOD THING . . . I see a law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity (slavery) to the law of sin IN MY MEMBERS" (vs. 18-23).

This is the most deadly, most shameful, most pitiful slavery of all—and yet all mankind are deluded and willing slaves of the flesh, and they fiercely resent and reject God's offer of freedom from it. Paul continues in chapter 8—

"If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die. But if ye through the Spirit do mortify (put to death) the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (v. 13).

And in chapter 13:

"Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof" (v. 14).

And describing the very few true believers among all the pretenders: those few who are pleasing to God and in the Way of Life (Gal. 5:24)—

"They that ARE Christ's have crucified the flesh with ALL its affections and lusts."

The "affections and lusts" of which he speaks, which the faithful have put entirely away, are all the things that are forbidden by, and controlled by, the commands we have considered and are considering. Here is a clear test. Have we crucified the flesh? Are we Christ's?—or just of those who say, Lord, Lord.

This crucifying of the flesh can never be accomplished by pressure or fear or legislation. It must come from the power of the realization of the natural filth and repulsiveness of the flesh; and of the beauty and desirability of holiness and life. It must come from the power of the love of God and of His

marvelous goodness. It must come from above, in answer to long and earnest seeking in prayer.

* * *

7. DEVELOP THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT BY CONSTANT STUDY AND EFFORT AND PRAYER

We shall never in this life fully accomplish this; therefore we shall never have any time to waste on passing things. Paul says to the Romans—

“Walk in NEWNESS OF LIFE” (6:4).

“To be SPIRITUALLY-MINDED is life and peace” (8:6).

“Present your bodies a LIVING SACRIFICE, holy, acceptable to God, which is your REASONABLE service” (12:1-2).

If *God Himself* says that a total, living sacrifice for this so very short life is a “reasonable service” to manifest thanksgiving for the gift of the joy of the endless ages He promises, who would dare to say it is not reasonable, or that we can safely offer less? Is not such an attitude the most presumptuous of folly? To the Colossians, Paul said (3:2)—

“Set your affections on things above: NOT on things on the earth.”

Here is a specific something that must be done, and a specific something that must be totally refrained from. To the Galatians, Paul gives more detailed instruction as to what is involved—

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control.”

These are the fruits we are told we must “bring forth” in abundance that we be not rejected as “barren and unfruitful.” To the Corinthians he is even more analytical. First he says (1 Cor. 13:1-3)—

“Whatever other qualities I have, if I have not LOVE, I am NOTHING.”

Let us note that well. This is not something vaguely desirable, to just aim at as a possible eventual goal. No. It is something absolutely essential *right now*. And what is this indispensable “love” of which he speaks, without which we are “nothing” in God’s sight? He describes it clearly—

“Love suffereth long, and is kind”: infinite kindness and patience in the face of long provocation. *“Love seeketh not her own”*: is not at all concerned with personal advantage or possession. *“Love is not provoked”*: it does not get angry (the weakening word “easily” is not in the original).

“Love thinks no evil: bears all things: endures all things: LOVE NEVER FAILS.”

Without these spiritual virtues, says Paul, we are "nothing" to God.

There is an aspect of what God requires us to do for salvation which may seem very strange at first, but the spiritual mind will discern its fittingness and wisdom. Jesus said—

"REJOICE and be EXCEEDING GLAD when you are persecuted for my sake" (Matt. 5:11-12).

And Peter—

"REJOICE that ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings" (1 Pet. 4:13).

And James—

"Count it all joy when you fall into divers trials" (Jam. 1:2).

If a doctor successfully cuts out a cancer that would kill us, we "rejoice exceedingly"—even though the process may be a painful and weary one. So here. These things are of God, to cut out the deadly cancers of the flesh. We *must* rejoice in them. Paul gives the divine explanation—

"We rejoice in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, approvedness; and approvedness, hope. And hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts" (Rom. 5:3-5).

* * *

In summing up his new law, his revolutionary new commands, Jesus said—

"Be ye therefore PERFECT, even AS your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48).

Absolute perfection of character like God's will never be attained until the glorification of the body after resurrection and judgment, but God commands and requires us to be constantly *striving and straining toward perfection*—manifesting an intense love of and desire for it—or He will never bestow it on us at the last day. Why should He bestow such riches where they are not valued enough to do what He asks? Surely if we do not prize the gift enough, and *love God enough*, to devote our whole life to the effort, then it is not reasonable that He should give it to us, while billions perish forever.

* * *

A final command, and a final glorious promise—

"Pray WITHOUT CEASING" (1 Thess. 5:17).

"Men ought ALWAYS to pray" (Lk. 18:1).

"The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (Jam. 5:16).

And Paul's words from prison to the brethren and sisters at Philippi—

“REJOICE in the Lord ALWAYS: and again I say, Rejoice! In EVERYTHING by prayer and supplication WITHTHANKSGIVING let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God which passeth all understanding SHALL—(not might, or maybe, but)—SHALL keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:4-7).

God offers *everything*. He holds nothing back (Psa. 84:11)—

“No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.”

He even promises incorporation into the divine nature itself (2 Pet. 1:4). And He very reasonably demands *everything* in return (although our “everything” is such a miserable little nothing compared to His). Have we then the simple wisdom and common sense to go *all the way* for the incomparable and incomprehensible prize of life and joy for evermore? What unutterable stupidity if we do not!

If we haven't enough sense—if we haven't enough *love*—to give total service for seventy years in exchange for seventy billion, billion years (and more) of eternal joy, then what hope is there for us? What *good* could such half-hearted and self-pleasing creatures be to God?

It's *love* He asks: love manifested in *works*. How much do we have?

He Found Nothing But Leaves

"He came if haply he might find anything thereon . . . and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves" (Mk. 11:13).

Our readings in Mark have brought us to the last week of Christ's ministry. Since the raising of Lazarus he had spent a few weeks east of Jordan, and is now returning with his disciples.

At the end of chapter 10 they pass through Jericho. From here to Jerusalem was about fifteen miles—a steady climb out of the valley into the mountains—a rise in altitude of nearly a mile. Bethany lay on the route, about two miles from Jerusalem, at the eastern edge of the built-up Jerusalem suburbs—from there on down to Jericho was through barren hills. It was on this route that the parable of the Good Samaritan was laid.

At the times of the yearly feast (and this was one of them) this road was filled with travelers coming down to Jerusalem from Galilee and the north.

As chapter 11 opens, Jesus and his disciples are in the vicinity of Bethany and Bethphage, the latter being between Bethany and Jerusalem and apparently the village where, in verse 2, he sends two disciples for a colt. Matthew here refers us to Zechariah—

"This was done that it might be fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet, Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion: behold, thy King cometh unto thee. He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass."

(It is interesting to note that for "having salvation" the margin in Zechariah 9:9 has "saving himself.")

"Lowly, and riding upon an ass." The ass was a very common animal, a beast of burden and humility and peaceful activity, in sharp contrast to the horse, a symbol of pride, rulership and war.

Israel were forbidden to multiply horses, and in harmony with this we find in their early history their judges riding upon asses. Later their kings, in earthly splendor, turned to horses.

The prophecy in Zechariah immediately continues—

"I will cut off the horse and the battlebow . . . and he shall speak peace to the nations . . . and his dominion shall be from sea to sea . . ."

—this lowly king who comes into his kingdom riding upon an ass. Surely the thoughtful Jew from Zechariah's day on must have wondered and pondered over this strange prophecy!

The ass was one "*on which never man had sat.*" Two points are emphasized in this, uniqueness and separation. Jesus, we remember, was laid in a tomb "*where never man had laid.*" In his life and death, he broke new ground—opening a "*new and living way*" which never man before had trod.

But there is another aspect. In the Law, the red heifer which was sacrificed and burnt to provide the ashes of separation that were used to cleanse anyone unclean, must be one which had never borne a yoke—never been used for any other purpose. Its whole life and existence must be entirely devoted to the one cause.

No man can satisfactorily serve two masters. If he tries, he will fail in both. "*No man that is called to be a soldier entangleth himself in the affairs of this life.*" (What an unsuspected depth of meaning there is in that word "entangleth!")

"They found the colt tied by a door without, in a place where two ways met" (Mk. 11:4).

What is the reason for putting that in? Perhaps it is to give us a sense of *sign and symbolism* in these events. We remember that the events of this day were the climax and turning-point of Christ's mission to Israel. All that went before was building up to this.

This day he was to be presented to them as the divinely-sent King and Savior, and they were to joyfully accept him as such. But, within a week, what a change was to occur, and with what long and bitter consequences for Israel!

Surely Israel stood, this day, "*by a door—('I am the Door')—in a place where two ways met.*" One way was "*Hosanna to the Son of David*"—the other was: "*Crucify him!*"

What are we to learn from the method of taking the colt? Jesus told them to just walk up and take it, and if the owner questioned them to simply say: "*The Lord hath need of him.*" No request, no explanation.

Is not this the lesson of Job? "*The Lord hath need of him.*" The Lord's purposes and the deep counsel of *His* wisdom requires things a certain way. Man may not understand, but *his* wisdom lies in believing and readily accepting the will of the Lord in faith.

There is something marvellous in the statement itself: "*The Lord had need of him.*" How could the Lord have need of *anything*? Of all the wonders of creation, there is nothing to compare with the wonder of creating personalities which can, through trial and sorrow, become fit to minister to God's

eternal pleasure and fellowship. *"The Lord hath need of him."* God does not rest upon His Own divine all-sufficiency, but seeks the love and companionship of man.

Having brought the colt to Jesus, they spread their garments on it, and he sat thereon. In this coronal procession, as the King came to his royal city, the furnishings of his mount were not the usual jewelled and gorgeous equipage of royalty, but the common clothes of his humble followers.

The natural mind will say: "What a haphazard makeshift for such an important occasion! How much better it would have been to have planned it properly and have gotten suitable equipment! How much more orderly and impressive it would have been!"

We need only think back to the splendors of Solomon's court—the wonder of his age—to see the contrast with this one who came claiming to be his greater and more majestic son.

But there is far more depth and significance and beauty in this scene, and in the use of the common work-clothes of his followers, than in all the empty trappings of Solomon's external splendor.

John records at this point that much people, when they heard that Christ was coming, went to meet him, carrying palm-branches and crying, *"Hosanna to the Son of David."* Here we see enacted a symbol of Christ's later approach from the east to the Holy City with the 144,000, bearing the palms of victory in their hands and singing the Song of Moses and the Lamb.

And so this ever-increasing procession advanced toward the Holy City, just as eventide was approaching. The road led over the southern slope of the Mount of Olives, which up to this point in the journey obscured the view of the city. But Luke says that as they came to the descent of the Mount of Olives—that is, as they reached the crest of the road and the city came into view—there was a spontaneous burst of song—

"The whole multitude began to rejoice and to praise God with a loud voice" (19:37).

But there were two exceptions to the general rejoicing, as we learn from Luke. On the one hand some of the Pharisees said, "Master, rebuke thy disciples." It is quite evident they were displeased and out of harmony with the spirit of the event.

Doubtless they sincerely felt it was presumption and blasphemy. Doubtless they also felt it was a very undignified and unseemly proceeding, out of harmony with solemn, restrained

religious worship and liable to bring upon them the restrictions of the Romans.

And as the acknowledged religious leaders of the people, they would resent any popular religious movement that was outside of their own initiative and control. Probably this latter would be the most powerful motive of their annoyance, though they would not recognize it as such.

But there was another who did not enter into the general rejoicing, though for a far different reason.

"And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!" (v. 41-42)

"At least in this thy day!" The great day of crisis and of opportunity for Jerusalem came—and passed, and they did not know.

He was not deceived by the fickle Hosannas of the multitude. He knew that within a week all this shallow enthusiasm would have melted away and he would be standing in Pilate's judgment hall, looking out alone upon a human sea of malice and hate, self-hypnotized by the chant of "*Crucify him, crucify him!*"

From the crest of the Mount of Olives road, as the palm-bearing and singing multitude approached from the east, the whole city lay spread out before them. On the left, to the far south, was Gehenna, the valley of Hinnom; above that, within the south wall, the royal hill of Zion.

Before them, in the valley between them and the city, was the Garden of Gethsemane, which would mean nothing to the multitude, but much to Christ as he gazed on the scene.

At the north end of the city (now looking toward the right) was the gleaming white Temple, built by an Edomite usurper who had striven to destroy the royal Heir at his birth. Edom is the same root as Adam—red earth. The Temple truly stood for the flesh—the very symbol Jesus himself used—shining in its whitewashed hypocrisy of external religious pretension and internal fleshly bickering and hate.

God was in His holy Temple—but *not in this one*. The glory had departed from this spot six hundred years before, as Ezekiel saw in vision. God was in the Temple He had prepared for Himself—the spiritual Temple that this fleshly Temple was even now plotting to destroy, and did destroy. But in three days God raised it up again.

And further north—beyond the city wall—the hill of Calvary.

* * *

“And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve.”

“And when he had looked about upon all things”—another of those strange expressions that lead to so much thought! Here was his final survey—his final evaluation. And how sadly short it fell of what might, and should, have been!

“He came if haply he might find anything thereon, and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves”—
—nothing but outward pretence and show.

It was now evening. The dark night was closing down upon Jerusalem, and Jesus and the twelve disciples went back over the Mount of Olives to spend the night in Bethany with Lazarus, Mary and Martha.

In the morning, on the return journey to Jerusalem, the scene of the previous evening, and its consequences, is enacted in impressive symbol, as recorded in verses 13-14—

“And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came if haply he might find anything thereon . . . and he found nothing but leaves, and he said, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter forever.”

Fig leaves. Ever since the Garden of Eden they have been a symbol of a vain attempt to conceal barrenness and nakedness. The fig was a slowly-maturing tree, requiring several years of patient, hopeful labor. When matured, it was very prolific, bearing two crops a year. Hence it became a symbol of well-established plenty and prosperity, long waited for.

In the Kingdom age, every man will sit under his own vine and fig tree. So Jesus, by the power of the Spirit, saw Nathanael—the “*Israelite indeed in whom there was no guile*”—sitting under his fig tree.

In connection with a former destruction of Jerusalem, Jeremiah in vision saw Israel as figs—good and evil.

The fig tree was remarkable in that the fruit began at the same time as the leaves, unless the tree were barren. The statement “*For the time of figs was not yet*” seems a little out of harmony with the picture, but the simplest meaning seems to be that the ripe-fruit time, the *picking* time, was not yet, so there should be fruit. A comparison of the wording of similar passages supports this.

We note, "*He was hungry.*" He *needed* the fruit, just as we have seen in the case of the ass—"*The Lord hath need of him*"—The fig tree had the honored opportunity of ministering to his needs, and it failed. He was hungry, and it gave him no meat.

In the parable of the fig tree, in Luke 13, the householder says: "*These three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none.*" We wonder whether God has come to inspect our accounts, and has said: "*No fruit yet—just leaves.*" And how much longer before the edict is pronounced: "*Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?*"

It is notable that this was Christ's only miracle of cursing, and it was upon a tree. The only other miracle in any way comparable is the destruction of the swine in connection with the healing of the demoniac. There it was animals. To round out the picture, it was fitting and necessary that his judicial, as well as healing power be manifested, but only in a symbolic way, on animals and trees, for his mission at that time was to save men's lives, not to destroy them.

The closest he ever comes to harming human beings is in the next verse of this chapter, where he cleanses the Temple—another vivid and deeply symbolic manifestation of the power and authority he possessed.

The Temple was both the proudest and the most sacred spot in the nation—the center of the glory, dignity and responsibility of the ruling priesthood.

"*Make not my Father's house a house of merchandise*" (Jn. 2:16). What was wrong with selling sacrificial animals and providing the necessary money-changing facilities? These were not only not wrong—they were essential. But the trouble was that these necessary things kept growing and closing in until they obscured, and then overshadowed, and finally smothered the spiritual.

"It is written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer" (Matt. 21:13).

That was the great and central divine purpose in the Temple and in the Jewish nation—a nation of priests to manifest His Holy Name to the Gentiles—but it had become hopelessly bogged down in merely natural, fleshly things.

This is one of the biggest things we have to fight today—to keep the perfectly legitimate natural from swamping the spiritual. The Gospel of God is the most wonderful and most holy thing among men—it is the power of eternal perfection and

redemption—but the great problem is to keep it held up high and clean and separate from natural things.

We have no illusion about this hall being the House of God. but inasmuch as it is devoted to the service of God and proclamation of His eternal, saving Truth, we are under responsibility to keep it clear from all that is merely natural or social.

Paul emphasized the same lesson and the same ever present danger when he wrote to the Corinthians: "*What, have ye not houses to eat and to drink in?*" The spiritual—never too strong in this dispensation of weakness—was, as ever, being crowded and suffocated by the robust companionship and pleasure of the flesh.

The next day, passing the same way, they discovered the fig tree "*dried up from the roots.*" Upon their exclaiming at it, Jesus brought out the greatest lesson involved—

"HAVE FAITH IN GOD. Whosoever shall say to this mountain, Be cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart—he shall have whatsoever he saith"
(vs. 22-23).

No obstacle can stand before the power of Faith. Now abideth these three—Faith, Hope and Love. Faith is the first, the foundation, the root, blossoming into Hope, and bringing forth the fruit of Love.

What is Faith? Both Paul and James made it clear that Faith is the power and driving force that makes men act contrary to nature and in defiance of human wisdom.

Faith does not consist of a passive acceptance of certain doctrines—it is an *active, living way of life*. Faith, says Paul, is the power that made Noah give his life to building the ark; that made Abraham leave everything behind and wander as an alien for one hundred years; that made Moses turn his back on the luxuries of Egypt and throw in his lot with a rabble in a wilderness because they were—in their destiny and their potentialities—the people of God.

"Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. 10:17).

Faith is not ignorant superstition, or surface emotion. Faith is deep rooted in knowledge, though there are many shallow imitations that only time and testing can reveal.

Jesus here tells his disciples that prayer without Faith is useless. There is no use praying unless our way of life gives evidence that we believe God not only can, but WILL, take full care of those who seek Him.

"He that cometh to God must believe that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6).

There is no use professing faith while at the same time giving evidence in our lives that we have more confidence in the protective power of worldly goods, or worldly organizations, or worldly companies whose guarantees of protection we buy.

But what else does Jesus here say is essential to effectual prayer?

"And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also may forgive you" (v. 25).

There is a form of forgiveness—cold, patronising and self-righteous—that is worse than no forgiveness at all. True forgiveness, as Jesus makes clear, is that kind we ourselves hope to get from God. It is not a matter of writing off the offence, and letting the barrier remain—unless we are quite content to be so treated by God.

There is a proud and evil human saying, "I forgive, but I do not forget"—a selfish attitude that seeks the personal gratification of granting forgiveness without assuming any of its humility or burden. Here again—would that type of forgiveness from God satisfy us, when we ask Him to *blot out our failures from His memory*?

Jesus is always slipping a few words that upset our carefully-framed picture, and make it so hard for the flesh. Speaking of the fate of the unmerciful debtor, he says—

"So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye FROM YOUR HEARTS forgive not every one his brother" (Matt. 18:35).

"From your hearts"—there is the key. We must get resentment and irritation clean out of our hearts, or they will poison us and bring us down to death.

At the end of the chapter the rulers, incensed by the events of these three days, come to him in another attempt to trap him in his words. What was his authority for doing these things?

But he gave them an answer which, while perfectly relevant to the question—as all the eagerly listening multitude would perceive—still turned their question against themselves.

He asked them, *"Was John's authority of God or of man?"* The point and relevantly of his answer lay in the fact that John proclaimed himself as being sent for the very purpose of testifying to, and preparing the way for, Christ. John publicly and dramatically, as the climax of his mission, identified Christ as the Messiah.

Jesus simply reminded his questioners that he and John stood or fell together, and that they could answer their own question by telling where John got *his* authority.

Here the divine wisdom and mercy is shown in sending John to lay the foundation for the work of Christ. John was in line with what the people would naturally expect of a prophet. He was wholly and harmoniously within the established framework of the Mosiac system. But his work was to teach them to expect and be prepared for a change.

So it is with the unfolding of the divine purpose. It is precept upon precept, line upon line, each built upon that which preceded. The rulers rejected Christ because they rejected John. But the people accepted John and still rejected Christ. How could that be? In the same way they accepted Moses and rejected Christ. Jesus told them, "*He (John) was a burning and a shining light, and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light*" (Jn. 5:35).

"*For a season.*" But there was no permanent effect—no depth of earth—no true comprehension of the purpose—above all, *no fundamental change of life*, for John's basic mission was to bring about a national purification and renewal of heart. His warning was: "*The ax is laid to the root of the tree*" (Lk. 3:9)—the barren Israel fig tree. Therefore he exhorts with imperative urgency—"*Bring forth fruits—fruits meet for repentance*" (3:8).

But no fruit came—only more leaves—a prolific and showy display of the fig leaves of piety and religious pretence. But no fruit—none of the essential inward fruits of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness—so the Roman ax descended, and the Israel fig tree fell, and lay down-trodden and prostrate for eighteen long and terrible centuries.

But now, in the great cycles of God's purpose, the fig tree is again putting forth leaves, and soon the King will come again from the east to seek the fruit, and to present himself to the royal city.

Yahweh Elohim

"He Who Shall Be Mighty Ones"

REVEALED TRUTH ABOUT GOD

"This is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (Jn. 17:3).

This is the most solemn and exalted, and should be the most joyful and inspiring, consideration possible to man. Certainly it is the most important and fundamental.

As to the evidence of the Divine Existence, the inspired Paul said—

"The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are CLEARLY SEEN, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are WITHOUT EXCUSE"*
(Rom. 1:20).

God plainly says that He has given ample evidence of His existence and infinite power, and that men are therefore without excuse in not perceiving it in all things around them. This is CONCLUSIVE, and every wise man will agree heartily. He says again through David—

"The FOOL hath said in his heart, There is no God"
(Psa. 14:1).

Again—

"The heavens DECLARE the glory of God; and the firmament SHOWETH His handiwork" (Psa. 19:1).

More specifically, He says of the Jewish nation—

"Ye are my witnesses, that I am God" (Isa. 43:12).

No one who intelligently considers the 3,500-year history of the Jewish people, right down to this very day, in connection with all the Biblical statements and prophecies concerning them, could fail to perceive their positive evidence, not only of God's existence, but of His infinite power and foreknowledge. Furthermore, His dealings with them reveal a tremendous amount about His character and purpose. Practically the entire Bible is about the Jews, and what God has done, is doing, and will do, with and through them. His whole purpose centers in them.

* "Godhead" or "Godhood" is simply an archaic word for divinity, divine nature. It has been mystified by the Church and the Trinity theory, like many other Biblical words.

As a result of the absurd and godless superstition of Evolution, modern man has repudiated the idea of sin and morality, and has in effect adopted the animal philosophy of "Might is right," and "Survival of the fittest." This cold, dead outlook is essential to a consistent and logical acceptance of the Evolution superstition, based on blind force and blind chance. It has brutalized man, mocking all the finer, spiritual principles and characteristics as folly and weakness in a jungle world.

In casting away the Bible, and the rigid restrictions of God's law of holiness and purity on conduct and morals, man *thinks* he has cast away his chains; but in reality he has cast away his compass, and all the real values and meanings and beauties and joys of his life.

* * *

It is vitally important to have a clear perception of the relationship of God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures clearly distinguish them as THE FATHER, supreme and self-existent from all eternity, His *absolute Oneness* emphasized over and over and over again; the HOLY SPIRIT, God's universe-filling Power and Presence, by which He does everything and is everywhere; and JESUS CHRIST, God's Son, a *man* born of the virgin Mary, completely subject to and dependent on God, in and through whom God manifested Himself to Israel by His Spirit, and whom He (God) has now—because of his real and actual obedience and overcoming—raised to the divine nature, and given all power in heaven and earth.

We believe the Trinity theory is incorrect, for several reasons:

1. *We do not find anything like it in the Bible.*
2. *It is directly OPPOSITE to what we do find in the Bible.*
3. *It is contradictory, impossible, and absurd within itself.*
4. *It was developed by the Roman Catholic Church, the merciless persecutor of God's people all through the ages.*
5. *It was developed from Greek pagan philosophy in a corrupt age by men who could not possibly have been right in divine things.*

We do not wish to ridicule or belittle anyone's sincere beliefs, but the Bible makes it clear that knowing the truth about God is vital to salvation, and we wish to strongly present what we believe to be that Truth. "Trinity" is an invented, unscriptural word, and an invented, unscriptural theory. The Bible never,

from beginning to end, speaks of or even hints at three gods. It is repeatedly insistent on ONE, and *One only*.

Orthodox writers on the Trinity always say that though the Bible does not ever actually teach the Trinity theory, yet it infers it, and takes it for granted. They strain every mention of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit into this preformed Greek philosophical mold, even though this straining makes an absurdity, as when one everliving, almighty co-equal anoints another co-equal with a third co-equal without measure; or when one everliving, almighty co-equal *sends* another co-equal to overshadow a woman so that a third, *everliving, almighty, all-knowing co-equal* will be born of her as a helpless baby, and gradually grow up and increase in knowledge and understanding. We repeat that we are not making fun: just seriously trying to point out what we believe to be error.

It was the Holy Spirit that came upon Mary, and we are told she was "found with child of the *Holy Spirit*": but it is always God Himself, and not the Holy Spirit, that is said to be the Father of Jesus—the very term "Father" indicates this. This is quite clear and harmonious according to the Bible picture that the Holy Spirit is not a person but the power of God; but by the Trinity theory it is confusion.

No one reading the Bible in its simplicity would ever come up with the idea of three gods in one, or of Jesus being an almighty, all-knowing, co-equal, untemptable god who could not die: *pretending* to be tempted, to learn, to overcome the lusts of the mortal flesh in a mighty struggle, with "strong crying and tears," and to die.

It is undeniable that nearly all pagan religions had trinities. The trinitarian *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* admits (as it must)—

"Triads of divinities occur in nearly all polytheistic religions."

The writer is arguing that *his* Platonic Roman Catholic Trinity is different, but he does concede this incontrovertible fact.

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* says (9th edit., art. "Theism," by a trinitarian)—

"The propositions constitutive of the dogma of the Trinity were only formed through *centuries of effort*; only elaborated by the aid of conceptions, and formulated in the terms of *Greek and Roman metaphysics* . . .

"*The evolution of the Doctrine of the Trinity was the most important doctrinal fact in the history of the Church in the first five centuries. The fusion of theology and philosophy was the distinctive feature of medieval Christendom.*"

This is the trinitarians' own explanation of its origin.

The essence of the Trinity theory (after "centuries" of "evolution") is that there are three persons in what they label "the Godhead": all existing from all eternity, all perfectly equal, none greater or less, none before or after, not one but three, and not three but one—and that one must believe that or be damned everlastingly to eternal hell tortures.

The *period* in which the Trinity theory was confessedly "evolved" was very corrupt religiously. The church historian Mosheim, himself a devout trinitarian, said of the Council of Nice, AD 325, at which this theory was first officially formulated (though by no means in its final form)—

"Those idle fictions which a regard for the *Platonic philosophy* and for the prevailing opinions of the day had induced *most theologians* to embrace even BEFORE the times of Constantine, were now confirmed, extended and embellished."

Of the general religious conditions of that time he says (Cnt. 4, pt. 2, ch. 2-3):

"Constantine assumed to himself the supreme power over the Church, and the right of modeling and controlling it . . . nor did any bishop call in question this power of the Emperor.

"There were now added, by the authority of the Emperor, grand councils of the whole Church, the emperor having first summoned one of this character at Nice.

"The bishops, whose wealth and influence were not a little augmented from the time of Constantine, gradually subverted and changed the ancient principles of church government. They excluded the people altogether from having a voice, and deprived the presbyters of their authority, so that *they* might control everything at their discretion, and in particular appropriated the ecclesiastical *property* to themselves.

"Constantine and his successors assembled councils, presided in them, assigned judges for religious disputes, and decided contests between bishops and people.

"The Bishop of Rome exceeded all other bishops in the amplitude and splendor of his church, in the magnitude of his revenues and possessions, and in the sumptuousness and magnificence of his style of living. These indications of power and worldly greatness were so fascinating to the minds of Christians even in this age, that often most obstinate and bloody contests took place at Rome when a new pontiff was to be created. In the year 366 the contention issued in a bloody warfare, in which there was fighting, burning of buildings, and many lost their lives. Damasus came off victorious in the contest.

"The vices of the clergy, especially those who officiated in large and opulent cities, were augmented in proportion to the increase of their wealth, honors and privileges, derived from the emperors and various other sources; and that this increase was very great, after the time of Constantine, is acknowledged by all. The bishops had shameful quarrels among themselves, and while they trampled on the rights of the people and of the inferior clergy, they vied with the civil governors of the provinces in luxury, arrogance and voluptuousness.

"Genuine piety was supplanted by a long train of superstitious observances, derived partly from a disposition to adopt profane rites and combine them with Christian worship, and partly from the natural predilection of mankind for a splendid and ostentatious religion.

"The public supplications by which the pagans were accustomed to appease their gods were borrowed from them, and were celebrated in many places with great pomp. Worship of the martyrs was modeled by degrees into conformity with the pagans' worship of their gods.

"The doctors who were distinguished for their learning explained the sacred doctrines after the manner of Origen (on whom they all fixed their eye) in accordance with the principles of that philosophy which they learned in their youth at school, the Platonic philosophy. They were admirers of Plato, and held as certain all his decisions which were not absolutely repugnant to the truths of Christianity; and proceeding upon these as their first principles, they drew from them many and very subtle conclusions.

"From disputes on religion, the ancient simplicity had nearly taken its flight; and in place of it, dialectical

subtilities and quibbles, invectives, and other artifices had succeeded. Many endeavored to involve in obscurity the question under discussion, and to excite odium against their antagonists. So far from disguising these faults, they claimed praise for them.

"The truth of doctrines was proved by the number of martyrs who had believed them, by prodigies, and by the confessions of devils. Ambrose, in controversy with the Arians, brings forward persons possessed with devils, who are constrained, when the relics of Gervasius and Protasius are produced, to cry out that the doctrine of the Nicene Council *concerning the three persons in the Godhead* is true and divine. This testimony of the prince of darkness Ambrose regards as proof altogether unexceptionable." (*End of quotation from Mosheim*).

And so we could go on endlessly, from Mosheim and others. We urge that the writings of reputable church historians about this period be read. We just *cannot* believe that God would use *such* men to "evolve" new doctrines about Himself from pagan Platonic philosophy.

The Holy Spirit was not fully added to make up the modern Trinity until quite a late date in the development of the theory. The *Herzog Encyclopedia of Theology* (by trinitarians), describing the admitted gradual development of this theory, says (Article: "Trinity")—

"Tertullian (about 200 AD) made the Logos the Son: he reached only a trinity* of *succession*. Origen (about 250 AD) made the Sonship an eternal fact, but *his* trinity* is only one of *subordination*, and Arius might as well be his pupil as Athanasius.

"Up to 360 AD, the whole development was markedly dyadic (having just two elements: Father and Son). Even after the Council of Constantinople in 381 AD, it took a *long time* before the Holy Spirit attained full equality with the Father and Son in the divine triad."

Other trinitarian writers say the same. Mosheim says Origen taught—

"That the Holy Spirit is nothing else than the divine energy or power of acting and working."

Origen is certainly no authority on Truth, but he was the most influential churchman of his century, and this shows that

* "Trinity" here is obviously used to indicate simply a set of three—not the later co-equal theory.

the Trinity theory was far from developed in his day (about 250 AD). His admiring followers would have done well to follow him on this point, rather than in his myriad speculations, but this was too true and simple.

There is much more very interesting in this *Herzog* article. These men sincerely believe the Church is making commendable progress in developing new doctrines the apostles never dreamed of. It says further—

“Richard of St. Victor (about 1200 AD) poured his whole wealth of half-poetical mysticism into the subject, and produced one of the greatest efforts of mediæval theology . . . Luther, as well as Calvin, felt the necessity of regenerating and remodeling the dogma . . . The first *really new departure* in the development of the doctrine of the Trinity since the days of Richard of St. Victor was due to the Protestant philosophy, now set free from the fetters of the Church, more especially to Jacob Boehme. His idea of an immanent process by which the Deity *evolves into a Trinity* is one of the profoundest speculative thoughts which ever sprung from a dogma, and has exercised a widespread, fertilizing influence both on theology and philosophy.”

And so on and on and on! What a far cry from the refreshing picture of simple, unchanging, pure, revealed scriptural Truth! The final official form of the Trinity, the Athanasian Creed, which is the current standard Creed that must be believed on pain of eternal hell torment, had nothing to do with Athanasius, who flourished in the fourth century. It was long *thought* to be from him, but now is universally admitted not to be. It cannot be traced back earlier than the eighth century.

The Trinity theory was established as church dogma by armed force. The battle raged through the fourth century, as political power shifted back and forth between trinitarian and anti-trinitarian emperors. It was finally permanently established* by the emperor Theodosius (379-395), apparently because he was prepared to be most ruthless and thorough. The historian Gibbon says (*Decline and Fall of Roman Empire*, chapter 27)—

“The ecclesiastics who governed the conscience of Theodosius suggested the most effective methods of persecution. In the space of fifteen years he promul-

* Though not, of course, in its final, official “Athanasian” form, which was not yet developed.

gated at least fifteen severe edicts against the heretics, *more especially against those who rejected the doctrine of the Trinity*. And to deprive them of every hope of escape, he sternly enacted that, if any laws should be alleged in their favor, the judges should consider them as the illegal productions either of fraud or forgery.

"They were exposed to the heavy penalties of exile and confiscation. Their religious meetings, whether public or secret, by day or by night, in cities or in the country, were equally proscribed by the edicts of Theodosius. The buildings or ground which had been used for that illegal purpose was forfeited to the imperial domain.

"The theory of persecution was established by Theodosius, whose justice and piety have been applauded by the saints."

Mosheim confirms this and, like Gibbon, gives an account of the running battle between trinitarians and non-trinitarians through this period—

"Constantine was persuaded that Arius had been unjustly oppressed. He recalled him from exile, and Athanasius was banished (Athanasius was exiled and recalled four times in his lifetime, as the struggle surged back and forth).

"After the death of Constantine (when his three sons divided the Empire), Constantius in the East was very partial to the Arian cause, but Constantine and Constans in the West supported the (trinitarians). Councils were arrayed against councils.

"Constans died in 350, and much of the West, including Italy, came under Constantius, who involved the (trinitarians) in numerous evils and calamities. The latter made no hesitation to return the same treatment as soon as time, place and opportunity were afforded them. The history of Christianity under Constantius was a war among brethren carried on without religion, justice or humanity. The Orthodox and the Arians were constantly in the field, and they often came to bloodshed. The victorious party oppressed the vanquished with banishments and violence.

"When Constantius died, 362, the Arians' prosperous days ended. Julian had no partiality for either. Jovian (363-364) espoused the orthodox sentiments, and therefore all the West and most of the East rejected Arian views and reverted to trinitarianism.

"But the scene changed when Valentinian (West) and Valens (East) came to power in 364. Valentinian adhered to the Nicene decisions, therefore in the West Arianism (a few excepted) was wholly extirpated. Valens joined the Arians, and so in the East many calamities befell the orthodox.

"Theodosius (379-395), by depriving the Arians of all their churches, and enacting severe laws against them, caused the decisions of the Nicene Council to triumph everywhere, and none could any longer publicly profess Arian doctrines."

Such was the sorry picture of the Trinity's birth pangs. In all this period, the *true believers* were a small fleeing minority, persecuted by both political factions—trinitarians and non-trinitarians—keeping themselves separate from and unsullied by the ungodly fleshly strifes and wars of these "Christians" who had entered totally into the evil, carnal politics of the world of sin, and were murdering each other as that political power passed back and forth among them, just like the warring "Christian" nations of today. How could such worldly, warring "Christians" *possibly* have God's Truth?

* * *

The Scriptures emphasize over and over, not only that there is only one God, but that *God is ONE*, not three or any other number, as—

"Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is ONE Lord"
(Deut. 6:4).

And far from modifying this, the "*man Christ Jesus*" repeats it word for word, and declares it to be the "*first commandment of all*" (Mk. 12:29).

God proclaims several times through Isaiah (ch. 44 and 45)—

"I am God, and there is none else . . . Beside Me there is no god."

This testimony alone is conclusive. It is begging the question, and denying the meaning of words, to say, as trinitarians do, that in all these emphatic statements of absolute oneness, God really is trying to say that He is actually three, and there are two others.

But the Scriptures go even further, and put the matter beyond any possibility of cavil by very clearly, in several places, distinguishing between this One True God *and* the *man Christ Jesus*, as Jesus' prayer—

*"This is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God,
AND Jesus Christ, whom THOU hast SENT"* (Jn. 17:3).

- Note: 1. Jesus is SEPARATE and DISTINCT from the "only true God."
 2. Jesus PRAYS to this "only true God."
 3. This only true God SENT Jesus.

The well-known commentator Adam Clarke, trying to defend the Trinity theory against the obvious absurdity of one co-equal *praying* to another co-equal of which he is an inseparable part, said that Jesus just prayed as an example to us. Consider the agony of Gethsemane in the light of that facile explanation; and Paul's words (Heb. 5:7)—

"He (Jesus) offered up prayers and supplications with STRONG CRYING AND TEARS UNTO HIM that was able to SAVE HIM FROM DEATH, and was heard in that he FEARED."

It is IMPOSSIBLE to make any sense out of that if he were a co-equal part—an all-powerful, undying part—of an everlasting Trinity. Again, on the clear *distinction* between the man Jesus and the one true God—

"There is one God, AND one Lord Jesus Christ"
 (1 Cor. 8:6).

And even more clear and inescapable, if possible—

"There is one God, AND one mediator between God and men, the MAN Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5).

The Scriptures many times call Jesus a man, as—

"A man approved of God by miracles which GOD did BY him" (Acts 2:22).

When he was tempted (which God cannot be) he applied to himself—

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by the word of GOD" (Matt. 4:4).

He likewise applied to *himself* the command—

"Thou shalt WORSHIP AND SERVE the Lord THY God" (Matt. 4:10).

According to the Trinity theory, that is telling him to worship and serve himself. He called God *his* God (Jn. 20:17). He is called man *now*—

"God will judge the world by that MAN whom HE hath ORDAINED" (Acts 17:31).

This is still future: long after Christ's glorification and ascension to heaven. God is still the prime Power: Christ is still the *man* whom God has glorified and is using. If Christ is *still* a man, under God's control and subservient to God's use, *where is the co-equal Trinity?*

Those who are committed to the Trinity theory through tradition or position *have to have* some kind of answer for all the vast bulk of clear Scripture that disproves that theory. Therefore they have arbitrarily divided Christ into two people. These two people they call his "divinity" and his "humanity." According to their theory, complete opposites can be true at the same time of these two invented people.

One can know something, and the other at the same time can not know it; one can be almighty and omnipotent, the other weak and totally dependent. One can be possible of sin; the other absolutely unsinnable; one temptable, the other not. One can be dead, the other alive and impossible of death. One an almighty, all-knowing god, the other a helpless new-born babe, knowing nothing. One eternally co-equal with Almighty God, the other completely subject to and dependent on God for everything.

Two things about this weird conception will immediately strike any rational person: 1) it has no basis in Scripture, and 2) by such an invented theory, *any* truth could be nullified, and *any* error proved. The entire complicated fabric of the Trinity theory hangs on this completely groundless assumption, this absurdity, that Christ was a host of two sets of diametrically opposite things at the same time.

Go carefully through the Gospels. There are literally hundreds of incidents and statements showing Christ to be completely subject to and dependent on God. Over and over he himself emphasizes that God was everything: supreme, all-wise, all-powerful: and that he himself was *nothing* apart from God's power and presence and wisdom in him. It is impossible to imagine a picture more *different* from the coequal Trinity idea.

There are a great multitude of passages which we sincerely believe the Trinity theory makes meaningless and absurd, as—

"My Father (said Jesus) is GREATER than I"
(Jn. 14:28).

"God is the head of Christ, as Christ is the head of man" (1 Cor. 11:3).

"Of that day the SON KNOWETH NOT, only the Father knows" (Mk. 13:32).

"Not MY will, but THINE, be done . . . Father, save me from this hour" (Lk. 22:42; Jn. 12:27).

GETHSEMANE ALONE IS MORE THAN ENOUGH TO DIS-
PROVE THE TRINITY THEORY.

"To sit on my right hand is NOT MINE TO GIVE: it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared OF MY FATHER" (Matt. 20:23).

"God made Christ perfect through suffering"
(Heb. 2:10).

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"
(Mk. 15:34).

"Behold (said God), my SERVANT, whom I have CHOSEN: I will PUT MY SPIRIT on him" (Matt. 12:18).
THREE CO-EQUALS?

"The son can do NOTHING OF HIMSELF, but what he seeth the Father do" (Jn. 5:19).

"God appointed Jesus the HEIR of all things"
(Heb. 1:2).

"God SHALL GIVE Jesus the throne of his father David" (Lk. 1:32).

Face these honestly, and do not hide behind the meaningless word-jingle about his "divinity" and "humanity." They could be multiplied indefinitely. The whole picture in the Gospels is the very *opposite* of the Trinity. Just one more (1 Cor. 15:24), describing the final, eternal consummation of God's glorious purpose with mankind—

"Then cometh the end, when he (Jesus) shall have delivered up the kingdom to God . . . And (v. 28) when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall THE SON ALSO HIMSELF BE SUBJECT UNTO HIM that put all things under him, THAT GOD MAY BE ALL IN ALL."

The *final* picture: Jesus ETERNALLY SUBJECT that God may be ETERNALLY SUPREME. Trinitarians make little attempt to harmonize their theory with this scripture, though some, again splitting Jesus into two people, say his "humanity" will be subjected, but not his "divinity." One confessed bemusedly: "SUBJECTION CERTAINLY IS IRRECONCILABLE WITH EQUALITY." Adam Clarke says "HOW THIS SHALL BE WE CAN NEITHER TELL NOR KNOW TILL THAT TIME COMES." And *Speakers Commentary* lamely says it is: "A GRAND SUMMARY OF SUBLIME MYSTERIES WHICH THEIR OWN FULFILLMENT IN ETERNITY ALONE CAN SOLVE." We believe it completely disproves their theory.

* * *

GOD MANIFESTATION is the theme of the Bible. To recognize this is to see the beauty and true meaning of many passages that orthodoxy endeavors to use to justify the Trinity theory.

Angels often spoke as if they were God Himself. The "angel of Yahweh" says to Hagar—

"I will multiply thy seed exceedingly" (Gen. 16:10).

*"She called the name of Yahweh that spake to her,
Thou God seest me"* (v. 13).

The angel was a manifestation of God, speaking God's words. The same occurred to Moses at the Bush. For nearly two chapters (Ex. 3-4) there is a long conversation beginning: "I am the God of thy fathers." Yet we are told (Ex. 3:2; Acts 7:30) that it was an angel. Again (Gen. 17), an angel spoken of as a "man," visits Abraham and converses at length with him, speaking directly and exactly as if it were God Himself.*

Jesus likewise said—

"The word ye hear is not mine, but the Father's Who SENT me" (Jn. 14:24).

"The Father that DWELLETH IN ME, HE doeth the works" (Jn. 14:10).

And he instructed his disciples for when he left them—

"Take no thought what ye shall speak: it is not YE that speak, but the SPIRIT OF YOUR FATHER which speaketh IN you" (Matt. 10:19-20).

We are told—

"God was IN CHRIST, reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Cor. 5:19).

God was manifested in Christ more directly and fully and personally than He ever was in an angel. Therefore, Christ was named *Emmanuel*: "God with us." Christ was a perfect manifestation of God because he perfectly submitted in every way to God's use of him, and perfectly kept himself from any thought, word or action that was in the slightest way out of harmony with God. He was the flawless mirror of the Divine Perfection. It is to the constant, agonizing striving toward this ideal that we are called.

* Orthodoxy asserts, without any evidence, that any angel in the Old Testament that spoke as God in the Name of God—as the one that spoke to Moses at the Bush, and gave him the Law, and led Israel as its "captain"—was Christ himself. But Stephen and Paul very clearly *contrast* the "law given BY ANGELS" with the ministry of Christ. And Paul very clearly *contrasts* the administration of this dispensation by angels with the administration of the coming dispensation ("world to come": "future habitable") by Christ (Heb. 2:5-8).

The beautiful, inspiring scriptural picture is that Christ was a *man*, truly *one of the human race*, especially created and made strong for his work (not a god masquerading as a man), and he is now glorified and immortalized, not because he always was immortal, but, as the Scriptures say, *because of faith in God and perfect obedience and submission under trial*—the true FORERUNNER of a great host of sons and daughters *to be similarly developed*, and then similarly glorified with the divine nature.

He is our glorious Example and Incentive and Promise. Here is where the confused Trinity picture is so harmful and destructive. It makes it impossible to see the beautiful and inspiring work of Christ as a real, struggling, suffering, overcoming *man*, by the guidance and with the help of the great eternal Creator Who was *far above him*, but Who was working IN him and THROUGH him in all that he did—

“God was IN CHRIST, reconciling the world unto Himself” (2 Cor. 5:19).

Those passages where Christ speaks the words of God, as did the angels, no more prove him to be part of a co-equal Trinity than it does them. These passages are far better understood in the light of the beautiful and scriptural doctrine of God-manifestation. Paul says of Christ as he is *now*—

“In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead (Godhood, divinity) bodily” (Col. 2:9).

Christ submitted perfectly and completely to God’s indwelling and use; and God spoke and acted *through him* to Israel, just as He had—(but now to a far deeper degree)—through angels. And *now*, as a result of his obedience and faith, Christ is exalted to the divine nature eternally—perfect, corporeal God-manifestation. And Paul prays for the believers, using this same word “fulness” (*pleeroma*)—

“That YE might be filled with ALL the FULNESS OF GOD” (Eph. 3:19).

This is the eternal purpose of God-manifestation: *Yahweh Elohim*— the Memorial Name: “He Who Shall Be Mighty Ones”: God manifested in a glorified and immortalized multitude from among men, of whom Christ is the Forerunner and Head, the Earnest and the Promise.

* * *

The Scriptures teach that God is a Person in a centralized location; not just a general diffused force, “without body, parts or passions” as orthodoxy postulates. Solomon says—

"God is *IN HEAVEN*: thou *UPON EARTH*" (Eccles. 5:2).
And Jesus taught the prayer—

"Our Father Who art *IN HEAVEN*" (Matt. 6:9).

Paul says—

"God dwells in light that no man can *APPROACH UNTO*" (1 Tim. 6:16).

All these statements indicate *specific location*. Jesus, we are told;

"Was received up *INTO HEAVEN*, and sat at the *RIGHT HAND OF GOD*" (Mk. 16:19).

That statement would be meaningless, apart from specific location.

Paul says again—

"Christ is entered into *HEAVEN ITSELF*, now to appear in the presence of God for us" (Heb. 9:24).

Revised Version has, more literally and specifically: "*before the face of God.*"

Solomon prayed—

"Hear Thou in heaven Thy dwelling place"
(1 Kgs. 8:39).

Truly he said in the same context—

"Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee" (v. 27).

This is in full harmony with the teaching that God is everywhere present by His Spirit—

"Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord"
(Jer. 23:24).

But these passages combine to teach us that His Person is localized, and that the glorified man Christ Jesus is with Him at His right hand.

* * *

The Scriptures further reveal that He has form, and that the human form is patterned upon His glorious form. We are told very little in this direction, and it is not for us to pry or speculate beyond what is revealed: but this essential and basic foundation fact is revealed, and any Body that loses sight of it is on its way back to paganized orthodoxy.

The whole glorious divine purpose of God-Manifestation is the development from mankind of a divine family of sons and daughters for God's eternal pleasure—of whom Christ is the Firstborn. We are told—

"There is a natural *BODY*, and there is a spiritual *BODY*" (1 Cor. 15:44).

—and that, as we have borne the one, so we shall (if approved) bear the other (v. 49). Paul tells us that Christ, upon his return from heaven—

“Shall change our vile BODY like unto his glorious BODY” (Phil. 3:21).

—which again is meaningless if, as according to orthodoxy, he is just a spirit essence occasionally just giving a bodily appearance to men. Bible salvation is based on a “glorious BODY.” The Bible knows nothing of the bodiless specters of paganism and orthodoxy.

God said—

“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (Gen. 1:26).

This laid the foundation. The terms used clearly refer to CORPOREAL FORM. James says that mankind are *at present* in the image of God—all mankind in general (3:9). Natural man is most certainly not in God’s image intellectual or morally or spiritually. Natural man is an ignorant, carnal, totally unspiritual beast. He has only the divine form.

God, as revealed in the Scriptures, is a *Father* and a *Person*. Christ is in the “*express image of His Person*” (Heb. 1:3).

The word “image” in Genesis 1:26 (*tselem*) is used thirty-four times, and it always and inescapably means actual form and shape.

Moses was promised the great privilege of “*beholding the similitude of God*” (Num. 12:8). The word here is *temunah*. It is used ten times, and it too always refers to form and shape. It is the word used when God said—

“Ye (Israel) heard the voice (on Sinai), but ye SAW no similitude” (Deut. 4:12).

Clearly there it refers to form: something to be seen. Moses alone was very highly privileged to SEE the similitude, and we are told of the occasion, strongly emphasizing form and appearance. God said (Ex. 33:20-23)—

“Thou canst not see My face, for there shall no man see Me and live . . . thou shalt see my back parts: but My face shall not be seen.”

It is inescapably clear that Moses was given a *visual appearance of a form*. Jesus said similarly—

“In heaven the angels do always BEHOLD THE FACE of my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 18:10).

Christ, the glorified man, *our Elder Brother*, is now a glorious SPIRIT BODY, at God’s right hand in heaven. To that divine

family we hope to be joined eternally, each with his *body* changed to glorious incorruptibility. The gracious revelation of the fact that *our bodies* are patterned after God's form makes that final picture far more fitting and beautiful and appealing.

* * *

There is a scriptural sense in which *God's Name* is applied to Christ. Christ is given God's Name—as are *all* the Redeemed. This is part of this beautiful doctrine of God-Manifestation: God conferring on His loving and obedient sons and daughters His Own nature, and Memorial Name of *Yahweh Elohim*. Jesus said—

"Him that overcometh . . . I will write upon him the name of my God . . . and I will write upon him my new name" (Rev. 3:12).

Of the angel who manifested God to Israel, God said—

"Obey him for MY NAME IS IN HIM" (Ex. 23:21).

And God said of the priestly rulers of Israel—

"They shall put My name upon the children of Israel" (Num. 6:27).

In reasoning with the Jews who accused him of blasphemy for calling himself the Son of God, Jesus points out to them that those of Israel who represented God (manifested God) were called gods—

"Is it not written in your law, I (God) said, Ye are gods?" (Jn. 10:34).

Jesus is referring to Psalm 82. He continues (vs. 35-36)—

"If He called them gods to whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken, say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, thou blasphemest, because I said I am the son of God?"

So we see that the term "god" (*elohim*) is scripturally applied to men who represented and manifested God. But this in no way supports the Trinity theory. Rather it removes the principal argument used for that theory. Christ was not God in the no-beginning, co-equal Trinity sense, but a specially-created manifestation of the one true ever-existing God, upon whom God placed His Name, and through whom He spoke in self-manifestation to a fuller degree than ever before in angels.

* * *

Many scriptures clearly prove that the Holy Spirit is the universe-filling power of God, and not a separate co-equal god. We believe that the co-equal god theory, applied to these scriptures, makes an obvious absurdity. And we note it is

always "the Spirit OF God," and never, *never* (as so common in orthodoxy) "God the Holy Spirit, or Ghost": just as it is always the Son OF God," and never "God the Son."

"The disciples were FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT"
(Acts 13:52).

"The Spirit OF God came mightily upon him"
(Jdgs. 15:14).

These two expressions—being "filled with the Spirit" and the "Spirit of God coming on someone" to give them POWER to do something—are very frequent—

"God anointed Jesus WITH the Holy Spirit"
(Acts 10:38).

—an absurdity if speaking of three co-equal gods; but beautiful and meaningful when scripturally understood.

"God gave not the Spirit BY MEASURE unto him (Jesus)" (Jn. 3:34).

The Spirit clearly was something God could confer on *men* in *greater or less degree*, as He chose, obviously a power, not a person.

"Thou sendest forth THY Spirit, they are created"
(Psa. 104:30).

"The Spirit of God hath made me, the breath of the Almighty hath given me life" (Job 33:4).

NOTE THE PARALLELISM: SPIRIT AND BREATH.

"The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters"
(Gen. 1:2).

"Whither shall I go from THY Spirit? or whither shall I flee from THY presence?" (Psa. 139:7).

AGAIN NOTE PARALLELISM.

"Thou testifiedst by THY Spirit IN Thy prophets"
(Neh. 9:30).

"If He gather to Himself HIS spirit, all flesh should perish" (Job 34:14-15).

Surely that is very clear; "If He gather unto Himself His Spirit"—the Spirit is something of God's that can be distributed out and gathered in, at God's pleasure. It is His Spirit-power spread abroad sustaining life, not another co-equal person.

There's an interesting passage in 1 Cor. 2, paralleling *man's* spirit with *God's* Spirit, clearly illustrating the relationship of God and His Spirit—

"God hath revealed them unto us by HIS SPIRIT . . . for what man knoweth the things of a man save the SPIRIT OF MAN which is in him? EVEN SO the things of God knoweth no man, but the SPIRIT OF GOD" (vs. 10-11).

A man's "spirit"—vitality, understanding—is an essential part of himself: not a separate person. Scripturally understood, the parallelism is clear and logical: the Trinity theory (two persons here) destroys it.

* * *

By His Spirit, God is the Source and Power of everything in the universe. In fact, God IS everything in the universe. *HE alone is real*; the only underived, uncreated, self-sustaining existence or reality. The vast universe is merely a temporal manifestation and concretion of His will and power. We are told—

"If He gather unto Himself His Spirit and His breath, all flesh shall perish" (Job 34:14-15).

AGAIN NOTE PARALLELISM.

And this would be equally true of the whole Creation: animate and inanimate. Gold and silver, rocks and earth, suns and planets, are just as much a mere concretion of His Spirit and Power as are living things—

"OUT of Him, and THROUGH Him, and TO Him, are all things" (Rom. 11:36).

"There is one God, OUT OF WHOM ARE ALL THINGS" (1 Cor. 8:6).

"IN Him we live, and move, and HAVE OUR BEING" (Acts 17:28).

Man has discovered, in his little "scientific" surface-scratchings, that all apparently "*material*" things are simply *concretions of energy*. The atom—the fundamental building-block—is perceived as an ultra-microscopic solar system, composed of various units of electric power spinning at incredible speeds around an electrical center.

All basic substances—the "elements"—from hydrogen to uranium and somewhat beyond (there are a little more than one hundred of them), are simply formed of different arrangements of circling and central electrical impulses, in a beautiful, regular, ascending pattern of complexity,* and each atom is a

* Whenever we consider these marvelous things (and man has only scratched the merest surface), we are overwhelmed with the utter, utter infantile absurdity of the blind-chance, hit-and-miss Evolution theory. Surely there is no truer Scripture: *"The fool hath said, There is no God!"* To stoop to argue, or try to reason, with the benighted devotees of this modern superstition

(Continued on next page)

closed system of tremendous, self-centered, locked-in power. It is the releasing of some of this infinitely concentrated energy that is the basis of nuclear power and the atom bomb. Man has (to test him) at last been permitted to break into the basics of creation, and like a lunatic in a dynamite factory, he is about to destroy himself.

All of man's presumed and announced scientific "facts" are somewhat suspect, because he does not carefully draw the line between proven fact and imagined theory. But we can have confidence, up to a point, in cases like this where man's ever-changing "facts" are gradually conforming more and more with divine and eternal truths.

The entire universe—formed from the substance of God's Spirit—is in essence a manifestation of God: of His power and wisdom and eternal beauty, and—when we comprehend it from His Word—of His goodness and love and mercy.

If all Creation is out of God, and sustained by His Spirit, then obviously He is in direct touch with everything everywhere, down to the smallest detail. And this is exactly what we are told in Christ's beautiful words of comfort: that God is aware of the fall of every sparrow.

On the basis of this position of Supreme Creator and Sustainer and Carer-for of all, God *demand*s absolute, total, unquestioning submission and obedience. Natural animal man in his folly rebels at this; but reason and intelligence reveal that it is not only the best and wisest—but the only *possible*—way things can be, if good is to prevail.

The two basic points of wisdom we must accept are 1) that *God's law alone determines what is right and wrong for man*; and 2) that *God alone knows what is best and happiest and most beneficial for man*. If we have the intelligence to recognize and accept and conform our lives to these two bed-rock principles, we are on the path of life. We have known "Christadelphians" beat their hands against the wall in anger and frustration and resentment because things are not going

is like agreeing to gravely debate the truth or otherwise of Alice in Wonderland. To argue with absurdity or fanaticism is a prostitution of the mind. God says flatly that He has given ample evidence for anyone with the willingness and honesty to see it. That is final: either we see it, or we do not. Cows and pigs cannot see it: some choose to join them.

the way *they* desire them to go. They set *their* wisdom above God's. It is a folly we can all so easily stumble into.

Man has a brain, and a mind, and a will; a consciousness; a reasoning power. Where did he get them? *God made them*. God gave them to man—and *He alone* knows their intended purpose, their capabilities, their limitations. Everything man is and has is of the gift and mercy of God. Any use of them against God, in opposition to God, for any *questioning* of God, is obviously suicidal stupidity.

God alone knows what is eternally best. The slightest deviation from that is detrimental, and ultimately destructive. Therefore God in his love must demand *exact conformity* with His will, for man's own good.

Once we recognize and accept this, THEN God's love is infinite in both explaining and blessing. He urgently desires us to know and understand as much as our little minds are capable of. But He wisely and necessarily *insists* on being the absolute, final, unchanging standard by which all else must be measured.

God gave Adam a completely arbitrary command about eating of one particular tree. It had nothing to do with morality or basic philosophical right and wrong. It was not a command that Adam could ever have figured out for himself as to what God wanted. It was simply a plain matter of *obedience*, and it meant life or death.

We are in the same position. We can never determine from our own thinking what God wants us to do, and what is therefore right or wrong—beneficial or harmful—for us. We must learn His will for us from His commands. Some seem very arbitrary, with no relation to moral right or wrong. It is just a matter of simple belief and obedience, but it has tremendous consequences for good or ill.

* * *

We must clearly recognize "*the goodness AND severity of God*" (Rom. 11:22): His necessary anger, as well as His essential love: His inevitable punishment and destruction of the ungodly, as well as His blessing and preservation of the godly. The Bible says *much* about His severe judgments, and gives many examples—

"God is angry with the wicked every day" (Psa. 7:11).

"I will punish the world for their evil" (Isa. 13:11).

"I will execute vengeance in anger and fury"

(Mic. 5:15).

"The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness" (Rom. 1:18)

And note this is from the *New Testament*, as well as the Old. This aspect is essential. It is part of our assurance in the triumph of good, and the eventual establishment of universal peace and righteousness. Everything out of harmony with God **MUST** be totally swept away.

It is fashionable in modern religious circles to deprecate the utter destruction of the Canaanites—man, woman and child—as the unenlightened vindictive vengeance of a primitive tribal deity. We must raise our view above this animal, man-centered level up to the divine point of view. We must perceive, and rejoice in, the absolute necessity of the severity of God upon inveterate corruption and evil and rebellion.

For good to prevail, evil *must* be utterly destroyed. The vile and bestial corruptions for which the Canaanites were destroyed are increasingly popular and prevalent today, and are glorified as emancipation and enlightenment, accepted even into the churches not only as members but as officials. So a like fate necessarily awaits today's world.

There are those who decry any presentation of God's severity, arguing that if we do not seek and serve God through love, our service cannot be pleasing to Him. There is a large element of truth in this argument, but it is not the *whole* truth. Paul says (2 Cor. 5:11)—

"Knowing therefore the TERROR of the Lord, we PERSUADE men."

* * *

We are told of the grief of God at folly and sin. This is a great revelation: that God can be grieved by what we do—

"Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God" (Eph. 4:30).

"In their afflictions, He was afflicted" (Isa. 63:9).

"His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel"
(Jdgs. 10:16).

Why did a perfect and all-powerful God, able to create universes in a moment by the mere fiat of His will, create a situation—make a Creation—in which grief to Himself is possible? Is not One such as God necessarily of constant, unassailable, perfect joy, and far above being touched by such saddening emotions?

These are very deep questions. They go to the roots of the Divine character, and the Divine purpose. Grief is part of the working toward a joyful eternal end; an essential concomitant

of the love of God in creating sons and daughters for Himself, who will be made eternally worthwhile by sorrow and trial, tried gold, an everlasting joy to Him.

Christ—looking at the rich young ruler who had run to him so eagerly but who turned away from him—“*loved him*” (Mk. 10:21). There had to be grief in that love. The fear of grieving God and Christ should be a powerful deterrent of evil, and impulse toward good.

* * *

Holiness, righteousness and goodness are fundamental qualities of God. And His law for us is—

“Be ye holy; for I am holy . . . Be ye perfect, for I am perfect” (Lev. 11:44-45; Matt. 5:48).

He recognizes that complete attainment is not possible for weak, mortal man. He has made provision in Christ to bridge the gap with mercy and forgiveness. But He requires the fullest, most prayerful, lifelong, moment to moment *effort* at perfection. Nothing less is acceptable. Nothing less is worthy of the high calling.

Deeper and more urgent, however, than even holiness and perfection, is LOVE, for love is the power and motive by which all else is accomplished, and without which all else—even holiness and perfection—would be meaningless and dead.

The major message in any discourse about God must be His invitation and COMMAND to *love Him to the uttermost*, with every fiber of the mind, life and strength—because of the love He has manifested to us. To give Him anything less than everything we have, shows that we just do not realize or comprehend God and His love at all. *It is impossible to truly love Him without INEVITABLY giving the whole life to Him.* To true love, the impulse to do so is irresistible. This is the test of its genuineness and reality and redeeming power.

Awareness of God, and love for Him, must *always* be at the center of our consciousness. We must live wholly in this atmosphere. This is man’s proper condition of spiritual wisdom and nobility. He is not designed to live merely in the flesh, like cows and pigs. The natural, animal man does not live: he merely exists. He is a dead clod. He has no conception of the real joys and beauties of life. David said in the Psalms, in many ways and many times—

“My soul THIRSTETH for God . . . My flesh LONGETH for God . . . My heart and my flesh CRY OUT for the living God” (Psa. 42, 63, 84, etc.)

David was called the "man after God's Own heart" (Acts 13:22). This must be our feeling. We must *train* ourselves to this: *raise* ourselves to it from our natural, ignorant, animal level. It does not, never will, come naturally, no matter how long we are "in the Truth." But this alone is the Way of Life. The flesh is evil and animal, tending only to death.

But the *power of the love of God* can transform us from this: can save and purify us from the deadly leprosy afflicting all natural mankind.

The Scriptures are given for the purpose: *to fill our minds with God and to draw us unto God*. They are all about God. They are vital food for our spiritual growth and strength, and vital medicine for our spiritual healing and health. David said again (1 Chr. 16:8-12)—

"Give THANKS unto the Lord, CALL upon His Name
... SING unto Him . TALK of His wondrous works . . .
SEEK the LORD and His strength: seek His face CON-
TINUALLY. REMEMBER His marvelous works, His won-
ders, and the judgments of His mouth."

These are not just pious words. They are *essential working instructions*—the vital essence of spiritual life. Without this constant, joyful, God-centered frame of mind, we are DEAD—*stone dead*—just like all the rest of the dark, dead, animal world.

This is the only real happiness. There is no other way to happiness. *God will not let there be*: it would be a denial of His holiness and wisdom. All the other things men seek and strive so mightily for are but cheats and delusions. Here alone is health and wholesomeness; joy and peace.

A strong enough perception of God, and *love* for God, will solve all problems, and turn all sorrows to joy. It is a matter of faith. Few indeed have faith to the degree that God requires, because they do not *work at it FULL TIME*. They do not realize their need and lack. Faith comes from the Word of God, *constantly* studied in prayerful meditation.

Peace with God should be the over-riding aim of our life: and seeking it and retaining it should be life's greatest endeavor. It is neither obtained nor retained easily. This is the overcoming of the flesh that Christ commanded, and Paul so agonizingly exemplified. It requires complete *dedication and self-emptying*. God reserves it for those few alone who give their lives completely to Him.

Peace with God is everything there is to life. With it, we have everything. Without it, we have nothing. Peace with God depends on just one thing. It is not a matter of just what we do; or how much or how little we do compared to others; or how well or poorly we do.

It is simply the knowledge that we are doing *the very BEST and MOST we can*—every day and all day, all our waking time—to please God, and to get close to Him, and to learn more of Him from His Word, and to serve Him joyfully in love.

We must believe the Gospel of the Kingdom. We must be in Christ in the appointed way. And *then* we must totally thereafter earnestly desire and strive to center our entire life upon God and His will. *This* is perfect peace, now and forever. No one can breach it, or impair it, or take it from us. We can blame no one but ourselves for our lack of it. It is directly and solely between ourselves and God.

Peace with God is the sure, unassailable center and fortress from which all the rest of the life must be oriented and directed. It is not a selfish, self-centered peace, any more than Christ's peace was. It, of its own essential necessity, radiates blessing to others, as Christ's did.

But it is impregnable to action *from* others, no matter how close they may be to us. It lifts us above every sorrow and disappointment and loss. It is not callous and unfeeling toward these things. It simply *transcends* them, as God's ways and thoughts transcend man's. Actually, in the marvelous wisdom of God, sorrow and loss are blessings in disguise, for they deepen and intensify the joy and value of God's peace.

Paul sums it up in writing to the Philippians. He is persecuted and in prison, and they are free: but *he* teaches *them* about peace—

“Be careful for NOTHING (let nothing depress you or cast you down), but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving (that is vital) let your requests be made known unto God.”

“And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, SHALL keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6-7).

It is an absolute, unfailing, Divine guarantee.

The Smitten Rock

"ALL our fathers were under the cloud, and ALL passed through the sea . . . and were ALL baptised . . . and did ALL eat . . . and did ALL drink" (1 Cor. 10:1-4).

In these five things, the Israelites all partook of God's intimate favor and fellowship, but still He finally rejected them and scattered their carcasses in the wilderness. The Israelites had every reason to believe that they were a specially selected and favored group, but they had the bitter lesson to learn that as regards eternal salvation, God has no favorites. He is no respecter of persons. His ways are rigidly just and equal. As a man sows, so shall he reap.

"All our fathers were under the cloud."

That is, the miraculous and specially provided cloud of God's protection and guidance was spread over them all. Surely they could feel, *"We are the chosen people."*

"And all passed through the sea."

Here again a great miracle was openly performed on their behalf. Every one of them had the impressive personal experience of passing through that divinely provided channel of deliverance from bondage to freedom. This passage through the sea, with the water standing on both sides and the shielding cloud enveloping them above, Paul likens to baptism. And in this act Egypt—the world of sin—was left behind, and their former masters, the Egyptians—the old man of the flesh—were drowned in the cleansing baptismal waters.

WHAT IS PAUL TEACHING?

Let us bear in mind what Paul is driving at. He is saying that though all the Israelites partook of these things, yet the great majority were finally rejected and destroyed in the wilderness simply because—with special divine blessing and manifestations showered on them from every angle—they would not make the effort to rise above their natural, animal desires and way of life.

"And did all eat the same spiritual meat."

Paul is drawing the parallel between THEIR spiritual food and drink, and the bread and wine of the Lord's supper. The manna, we are told (Num. 11:8) was GROUND or BEATEN to make bread, just as the Passover lamb was SLAIN to provide the protecting blood, and the rock had to be SMITTEN to provide the life-giving water. In all these things we are reminded that in the great battle against the evil consequences

of sin, our Leader had to give up his life under the most cruel and agonizing conditions. This is to teach and impress on us that the struggle for holiness and life is not a pleasant, easy pastime but a vitally serious thing which only a few have the wisdom to apply themselves to and follow through to the end.

"And did all drink the same spiritual drink."

The manna and the water from the rock are called "*spiritual*" because they were specially provided by the Spirit of God and not by natural, human effort; and also because they typified the true spiritual meat and drink of the Word, and of the Word-made-flesh, by regular partaking of which we may (and must) be spiritually transformed, and finally reborn of Spirit-power.

SMITTEN BY THE ROD OF MOSES

Paul tells us here that the rock struck by Moses to provide water represented Christ. He was smitten by the rod, or Law, of Moses, in order to provide a way of life. He came under the curse of the Law and broke it open to free those held in bondage by the Law. And it was the Levites, the tribe of Moses the custodians of the Law, who smote him. They were the divinely-appointed "*rod of Moses*," for they were the administrators of Moses' Law, confirmed in this office by the ROD of the tribe of Levi being caused to blossom (Num. 17:8).

The incident of smiting the rock occurred at Rephidim, which was the last stop before reaching Mt. Sinai. Maps usually place it in the immediate Mt. Sinai region. The point is this. Paul says here that this rock "*followed them*." What did he mean? The most reasonable meaning seems to be that the stream caused by the smiting of the rock followed them from Rephidim to Sinai, where they stayed a whole year. The smiting of the rock was a very significant and important event. It is reasonable that it is associated with their whole stay at Sinai, which was the most important year in their entire history.

THE BROOK FROM THE MOUNT

If this be the case, it gives added harmony and meaning to Moses' action of grinding up the golden calf and casting the dust of it into the "*brook that descended out of the mount*," and making the people drink it (Ex. 32:20; Deut. 9:21). The water of life from the Rock, defiled by the sin of the people, would have the same significance as the brazen serpent—sin's flesh—lifted up to typify the nailing of the body of sin to the cross. In the one case the people had to drink, in the other to look with faith.

"He that believeth in me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (Jn. 7:38).

John immediately explains that Jesus referred to the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, which was dependent upon Jesus' crucifixion and ascension. He says the Spirit was not given because Christ was not yet glorified. Jesus himself said—

"If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you." (Jn. 16:7),

The Spirit-streams could not be poured forth until the Rock was smitten, just as the seals of the apocalyptic scroll could not be loosed until the Lamb was found worthy to loose them. The sacrificial death of Jesus, his glorious victory over, and destruction of, the sin-flesh-devil, was the great key that unlocked the treasures of spiritual blessing bound up in the Rock.

"He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men"
(Eph. 4:8).

There is another interesting aspect to the water-supplying rock. We are familiar with Jesus' identification as the foundation-rock of the spiritual Temple—the rejected and smitten stone that was made head of the corner. Now the smitten rock, we are told was *"in Horeb"* (Ex. 17:6). The first time Horeb is mentioned it is called the *"Mountain of God"* (Ex. 3:1). Horeb is another name for Sinai.

LIVING WATERS FROM THE HOUSE OF GOD

So we can trace a parallel here between the old and new covenants—Sinai and Jerusalem. The rock was smitten in Mt. Horeb or Sinai, and the water of life came forth and sustained the people while the Law was being given to them and the FIRST Tabernacle was being built. This was the typical Mosaic shadow enacted at Sinai—the founding and organization of the NATURAL Israelitish Kingdom of God.

Similarly, the TRUE, anti-typical Rock was smitten at Mt. Moriah at Jerusalem. From this mountain—*"beginning at Jerusalem"* (Lk. 24:47)—the Spirit poured forth carrying the Gospel to the ends of the world. Furthermore, we are told that when the new Kingdom is set up, living waters—both literal and spiritual—will issue forth from here. At this mountain in the future, as at Sinai in the past, the Tabernacle of God—both literal and spiritual—will be built. Joel (3:18), Zechariah (14:8), and Ezekiel (47:1) all speak of the LITERAL streams that will come from the foundations of the Temple, and the river of water of life of the last chapter of Revelation gives the SPIRITUAL counterpart. And finally, through the Prophet like unto Moses, the new Law will go forth from this mountain to all the earth.

The Treasures of Egypt

"With many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness." (1 Cor. 10:5).

They never reached the promised rest, and never will. The Revised Version says, "*With MOST of them God was not pleased.*" They were a nation under divine sentence of death. For forty years they wandered with the sentence hanging over them, each waiting his turn to die. On the average, one hundred bodies were left behind every day for forty years. "*With most of them God was not well pleased,*" though they had done just what was natural and human in the circumstances. "Natural" and "human" are not qualities that please God. In the next verse the Spirit through Paul gives the reason for dwelling on these matters—

"Now these things were OUR EXAMPLES."

And, like as he had mentioned five ways in which they had been divinely blessed, he now lists five ways in which they betrayed the blessing and brought destruction upon themselves. The five were: lust, idolatry, fornication, tempting and murmuring.

LUST

The *lust* was for the good things of Egypt. It was quite natural for them to desire the pleasing things of the world they had come out from. Truly there were many pleasant and desirable things about Egypt, which at that time led the world in all the arts and sciences and flesh-pleasing contrivances of man. Forty years is a long time to wander in a hot, dry, barren wilderness, partaking of the same monotonous, unchanging food day after day.

But if they had been able to rise to the broader, *spiritual* view of the matter, they would have seen things differently. Egypt, with all its pleasures, was a land of futureless death. *They* were on the Divine road of life and promise. If they only had had eyes to see the manna, the smitten rock, the tabernacle, the pillar of fire, the plagues of Egypt, the Passover, the crossing of the Red Sea, the miracles of Moses—all these things were concrete evidences that they were part of a marvelous, history-making divine operation that linked them to eternity.

Viewed in the proper perspective, what were the poor, passing pleasures of benighted Egypt? But they forgot the glory

of God that had lifted them up, and could think only of the garlic and onions of Egypt. It is very easy to let food and animal pleasures monopolize much of our thoughts and conversation—to forsake spiritual food in the interest of natural food. Of such Paul sadly says, “*Whose god is their belly, who mind earthly things*” (Phil. 3:19). Moses had the proper outlook. The apostle records of him (Heb. 11:26) that he—

“Esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.”

He weighed up all that Egypt had to offer and he could see through its empty deceptiveness and its inevitable end. Doubtless, he too, naturally speaking, would have enjoyed some of the pleasures and comforts of Egypt, but HE realized that there were more important things in life than babyishly catering to the flesh. *He* had a work to do and a goal to reach.

IDOLATRY

And what of idolatry and fornication and tempting and murmuring—the other examples of failure that Paul calls to our attention? As to the first, it is hard to draw a clear dividing line between lust and idolatry. All lust is a form of idol worship and voluntary slavery, but the Apostle’s distinction seems to be that by idolatry he refers to the placing of *faith, trust or dependence* upon something, as upon money or insurance. The commonest form of this idolatry is *self-confidence* or *self-reliance*—depending upon the arm of the flesh. Perhaps, too, he has in mind the angle of *service, devotion or worship*, as when he says—as previously quoted—

“Whose god (or idol) is their belly.”

FORNICATION

Fornication is a general term for a wide range of activities of which divorce is at present the most pressing and dangerous problem in the ecclesial world. Only a high, scriptural standard, firmly and faithfully applied, will save the brotherhood from the undermining infection of the modern Midianites and Balaamites. The slightest relaxing of scriptural restraint is fatal when such forces are involved. This plague is raging with unrestrained and mounting fury in the godless world of today. Uncompromising vigilance is essential to keep it from invading and destroying the Temple of God. “Marriage” into the world is another very serious aspect of this general evil of which Paul speaks. In fact, *the specific instance he gives is of this particular sin.*

TEMPTING

And the sin of "tempting"—what is that? The example Paul gives is when it is recorded (Num. 21:5)—

"The people spoke against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?"

They "*spoke against God!*" What unutterable folly! But is it not an easy thing to fall into, when the presentation to us of God's commandments is irksome and restrictive? Of course we would not admit we were speaking against God. It is safer to appear to be directing our annoyance against man, as they did against Moses. But when the people in the days of Samuel clamored for a king, God put His finger on the heart of the matter. "*They have not rejected YOU,*" He told Samuel, "*they have rejected ME*" (1 Sam. 8:7). God told Samuel they were running true to the rebellious pattern they had always followed from the time He brought them out of Egypt. They had said then, "*Let us make a captain, and let us return unto Egypt*" (Num. 14:4).

They pretended it was on account of Samuel's sons. This gave them a handle. But really they lusted after a worldly setup of splendor and magnificence. They wanted to be like the world — to have all its flashy tinsel, in all the latest models. God warned them, but still they blindly persisted in their headlong way.

We tempt God when we set our judgment and opinion against His. When, instead of casting aside the deceptive reasoning of the flesh and seeking to learn from Him, we rather attempt to find something in His Word that we can interpret to justify our own views and desires. If our scriptural judgment in any matter corresponds with our *natural* feelings, then we should examine both very carefully, for they are probably wrong. The commands of God are usually plain if we are anxiously seeking to understand and to always be on the safe side in any matter of doubt. Jesus said—

"The Word that I have spoken, the same shall judge you in the last day" (Jn. 12:48).

He will have a Bible there, and it will only be necessary for him to open it and point silently to some passage to put many to confusion and shame. Let us try to take every precaution not to be among them.

MURMURING

And finally, says Paul, "*Let us not MURMUR, as some of them murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer*" (v. 10). The

basic frame of mind of the godly man should be *calm, contented gratitude and praise*. Anything else is a reproach against God. Restlessness and dissatisfaction are basic evils of the flesh. "*Keep your life free from covetousness, and be CONTENT with such things as ye have*" (Heb. 13:5) is a *command* of God for the free development of the spiritual mind—a clear, plain *command*—that will loom to far greater importance at the judgment-seat than it does today. And the Apostle concludes this portion of his exhortation—

"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12).

As he says in the next chapter in relation to the partaking of the memorial supper—"*Let a man examine himself.*" Let him take the searching spotlight of the Spirit-Word and turn its full glare upon the inner workings of his fleshly mind. What he sees if he looks carefully will move him to exclaim with Paul, "*Who shall deliver me from this body of death?*" But if the whole counsel of Scripture is eagerly and unreservedly accepted and applied, he will be able to also say with the apostle—

"I strain forward toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus . . . I can do all things THROUGH CHRIST WHICH STRENGTHENETH ME" (Phil. 3:14; 4:13).

Sorrowful, Yet Always Rejoicing

"We all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18).

SECOND CORINTHIANS CHAPTERS 1 TO 7

After his conversion at Damascus, Paul went into seclusion in Arabia, in all probability at Sinai, apparently for three years, then back to Damascus, then briefly to Jerusalem to see the apostles, and then—because of the plot on his life—to his home city Tarsus, where he appears to have stayed five or six years, until Barnabas fetches him to help with the work in Antioch.

At Antioch, probably about 46 AD, the Holy Spirit separated Paul and Barnabas for the work of carrying the Gospel to the Gentiles. In this work, Paul made three long journeys before going as a prisoner to Rome.

The first journey was to Cyprus, then throughout Asia Minor (Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe), then back to Antioch.

On the second journey they went westward through Asia Minor and then were directed by the vision of the "man of Macedonia" to carry the Gospel over into Europe. It was on this second journey, after visiting Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea and Athens, that Paul established the ecclesia in Corinth in southern Greece, staying there a year and a half. This appears to be around 50-51 AD. It was a large, prosperous, wicked, industrial city, much like our big cities today. From Corinth Paul finally returned again to his headquarters in Antioch.

On the third journey, after again visiting the ecclesias throughout Asia Minor, he stayed three years at Ephesus.

It was toward the end of this period in Ephesus that he wrote the first letter to the Corinthians. This would appear to be about four or five years after he had left them. It is clear from this first letter that in that period serious conditions had developed there. The second letter, which we are now considering, seems to have been a few months after the first.

In the salutation (2 Cor. 1:1-3) he speaks of the "*God of all comfort*," and arising out of this are the beautiful thoughts of the comfort that even trouble gives, when its purpose and value are spiritually discerned. Paul regards trouble (vs. 4-7) as first an opportunity to seek and enjoy more intensely the comfort of God, and secondly, as a practical opportunity to learn from it how best to comfort others who have trouble.

"Good" and "evil" circumstances are not always what they outwardly appear, and seemingly evil circumstances are often—in the deep wisdom of the Spirit—gateways to hidden and unsuspected joys.

Then (vs. 8-10) he speaks of the peril that he had recently experienced in Asia—such that he had despaired even of life. This may have been the uproar raised by Demetrius at Ephesus, which had occurred just before this, or it may be some other of the many perils which are not specifically recorded, for we know from his remarks in chapter 11 that he was in constant peril of his life.

Even from this he draws a lesson and a comfort, for it helped to teach him, he says, not to trust in himself, but to rest more confidently on God Who can easily raise the dead (as He did—at least in a figure—when Paul rose up from his stoning at Lystra).

In the rest of chapter 1 (vs. 15-24), Paul explains that his failure to visit them after he had said he would, was not due to changeableness but to spare them the unpleasantness and pain that would be entailed if he came while they were in the conditions described in the first epistle. He determined (2:1) that he would not come in heaviness, for to meet those who had been so dear to him, under such alienating conditions, was more than he could stand.

So, he explains, he had instead written to them in much anguish of heart, with many tears, hoping to move them to repentance by the entreaties of his love and care. He had no rest in his spirit until word came back to him that his letter and his prayers and Titus' visit had been successful in inspiring them to a thorough repentance, and renewed love for him.

This leads him to the closing thoughts of chapter 2, that he was both a messenger of life and a messenger of death, according as how he—as the appointed minister of God—was received. And he says in awe—

"Who is sufficient for these things?"

He was overwhelmed with the great responsibility of life and death that lay upon him, and his high position in the purpose of God. These concluding remarks of chapter 2 cause him to say (3:1)—

"Are we beginning to commend ourselves again?"

Self-commendation, with which he had apparently been charged by some in Corinth, we know was farthest from Paul's nature and desires. And yet he was a special, chosen vessel,

and he knew it, and he had to proclaim it as part of his message. He had to establish his authority and apostleship.

It was a very difficult and trying position, especially as there were always those who were eager to seize upon any apparent indication of self-glorification.

Some in Corinth questioned Paul's authority to instruct and correct them. But, he says, answering their criticism, why should I need any evidence of authority, why should I need any letter of recommendation? You yourselves are my letter of authority. You are a letter from Christ, delivered by me, written with the Spirit of God on the hearts, for all men to read in your way of life.

It is a beautiful and sobering thought: each ecclesia is a letter written by God to men. Each true saint is a part of the living Word of Life.

This leads him to (v. 6) a comparison between the Old (Mosaic) Covenant, engraved on dead stones—the ministration of condemnation and death; and the New Covenant, written by the Spirit of God on the living hearts of the regenerated believers.

If the giving of the first was so glorious an event (v. 7) that Moses had to cover his face to protect Israel from the radiance of the reflected glory of what he had experienced, how infinitely more glorious is the New Covenant—the ministration of righteousness and life!

And this leads him to that beautiful verse at the end of chapter three that is so full of practical instruction in the way of holiness—that expresses, in fact, the only possible hope of success—

"We all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord."

This must happen to us, or we are just part of the perishing world. Is it happening?

Therefore, he says, beginning chapter four, seeing we carry this glorious message, *"we faint not"*—we never lose heart—we are never discouraged. The ever-fresh marvel and glory of it is so wonderful and inspiring that nothing can depress us, because—

"God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

God's first creative act was to cause light to shine out of darkness, and in this Paul sees all the glory and joy of the divine purpose. As long as we keep the transcendent glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ shining into our hearts, we CANNOT be cast down.

* * *

Verse 7 of chapter 4 begins a new phase of thought—

"We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

The more frail and earthy the vessel, the more obvious it is that this wonderful glory that illuminates it must be divine. From here to 5:10, Paul speaks of this earthen vessel—our mortal frame—emphasizing the great contrast between the eternal divine glory and the present pitiful weakness and struggle of the perishing outward man, which was particularly intense in the apostle's own case—troubled, perplexed, persecuted, cast down, always on the brink of death for Jesus' sake.

But the constant comfort and assurance of the divine glory banishes all bitterness and despair from the present struggle—

"For which cause we faint not: but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day."

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Surely the apostle's greatest appeal and inspiration is in his wholesome, ever-cheerful, spiritually-balanced discernment of the basic joyfulness and goodness of the real meaning of life in relation to God, in spite of all its present storms and shadows and valleys of sorrow and care!

The same theme is carried over into chapter 5, and we must see the whole section as a unit to understand the meaning of the much-wrested verses 6-9 of chapter 5. The basic thought is that we should not be careful for life nor concerned about death, for as long as we are in the present mortal probation we are separated from Christ. Our whole concern should be, not about the present, but about our standing before the judgment seat of Christ to give an account.

Whatever may happen to our perishing mortal body, an ever-living spiritual body is assured, if we are found faithful. The present life is nothing to be clung to—it is simply painful probation and separation from Christ. The judgment seat is the

gateway to real glorious existence, and therefore all concern should be directed toward passing it with approval.

The latter half of chapter 5 speaks of the entirely new life of the believer in and through Christ (v. 14)—

"The love of Christ constraineth us."

That is, it guides and motivates us, it has taken control of our lives, and directs all our actions—meaning both the inspiration of Christ's manifested love for us, and the dedication of our worshipful love for him—

"Because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead."

We are careful in lecturing to the alien to emphasize the vital truth that Christ died as a REPRESENTATIVE, not a substitute; to SHOW THE WAY for others to follow, not just to go instead of them.

That is Paul's point here, applied practically to our life. As Christ died (v. 15), so must we, leaving everything—all self—behind, and rising to a new life devoted to him. Wherefore, from that time forward, we know no one after the flesh—all relationships are on the basis of our spiritual relationship to Christ—all acquaintances and associations are regulated by the principle he later elaborates at the end of chapter 6—

"What communion hath light with darkness?"

As he closes chapter 5, he goes beyond Christ to the ultimate source of all good in Christ (v. 19)—

"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."

The apostle, not for self-glory, but to emphasize the height and greatness of the call, points out (vs. 18-20) that he is a direct ambassador from God—it was as though God Himself were imploring them to accept His reconciliation and love.

The Corinthians had been misled into belittling the apostle's position, and in this error they had obscured the tremendous honor and majesty of their call through him (6:1)—

"As God's fellow-worker, I implore you not to receive the grace of God in vain!"

What could be more tragic than to find in the end that because of carelessness, or thoughtlessness, or too much interest in present things, this gracious appeal to us from God had been "in vain?"

Would not this thought—kept before the mind—provide the incentive for continued effort when otherwise carelessness

might intervene? Why go so far in the way of life, and then take the chance of not having gone quite far enough?—

"He that endures to the end shall be saved"

(Matt. 10:22).

—not just holding to certain doctrinal beliefs to the end—but ENDURING—giving our life and strength to Christ, and not being sidetracked into our own interests and desires.

To inspire them to such continued effort, Paul again reminds them (6:4) how he himself had suffered and endured. He is neither boasting nor complaining, but simply endeavoring to impress them with the seriousness and value of their high calling in Christ Jesus.

In reading these various lists of different things which occur frequently in the New Testament, as in this case Paul's trials, the tendency is to read them right through as a whole, without stopping to think of each item individually. But that way we miss the power of his word.

"Ministers of God, in much patience."

—he says (v. 4) as he begins this list of trials. Sometimes we are, in our weakness, overwhelmingly impressed with the fact that patience is our primary problem—learning first to hold back all the surging natural reactions—learning to calmly and quietly analyze both self and the circumstances of the moment.

Patience here is not so much just the first item of a list, but rather the basic approach to all the trials that follow. "MUCH patience," he says: meeting whatever comes with cheerfulness, meekness, and godly self-control.

The sufferings he mentions (6:4-5) are in three groups of three. First—

AFFLICTIONS: The word means pressure, burden, that which bears one down.

NECESSITIES: Need, hardship, deprivation of the comforts of life.

DISTRESSES: Literally, being driven into a corner, hemmed in, with relief or deliverance a seeming impossibility.

These are general. Then three more specific, occasioned by the viciousness of men—

STRIPES: Beatings, floggings, physical injury and abuse of every kind. Such was Paul's repeated experience, but he was never cast down in heart.

IMPRISONMENTS: He had been a respectable and respected leader in his nation. Now the company and shame of the lowest criminals was his common lot.

TUMULTS: Uproars and insurrections. Wherever he went his words and work stirred up violent hatred and opposition and set in motion all coarseness and baseness of mob excitement. What a constant strain this would be on anyone as gentle and sympathetic and sensitive as Paul!

Then finally three more that were self-imposed upon the others—

LABORS: When we examine the apostle's record, we realize how little we know of what labor means—first the common physical labor for his daily bread, and then the endless and self-sacrificing labors for the brethren and the Truth. His life was a life of labor, with no thought of self. The word does not just mean "work," but toil and strength-consuming exertion.

WATCHINGS: Weary vigils, sleepless nights, because of the pressure of work or concern for the ecclesias whose problems and sorrows he bore.

FASTINGS: In chapter 11 he says he was—

"In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness."

Fasting is associated with deep spiritual emotion and devotion, as related to prayer and self-dedication. It was part of Paul's labors on behalf of, and for the welfare of, the Household of God. It speaks of a putting aside of fleshly satisfaction and gratification that the heart may draw closer to God.

Fasting is never enjoined as an external observance or ritual, but it appears to be the natural accompaniment of intense application to divine things—as in the cases of Daniel and Anna: any foregoing of normal and legitimate natural gratification for the sake of the Truth and the Brotherhood.

From his trials, Paul turns (v. 6) to his inner course of life, as manifesting the beautiful characteristics of the Spirit of Christ—infinitely more beautiful as being the fruits of such sorrow and adversity. Here again, let us not read through them and pass on, but let us stop and study them one by one—

"Purity, knowledge, longsuffering, kindness, holiness of spirit, simple sincere love."

And then the means by which he accomplished these things—

"The word of truth, the power of God, the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left."

What a man was this whom God had chosen as His ambassador in bonds! This man who could say in simplicity and truth—

"Be ye followers of me, even as I am of Christ."

"As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing" (v. 10).

How perfectly and strikingly he sums up the spirit of God's elect whose lives are purified and ennobled by this strange harmony of coexistent sorrow and joy. "O ye Corinthians," he continues (v. 11)—

"Our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged."

He was guileless and unrestrained in the largeness of his deep affection for them, regardless of their hesitancy to yield themselves fully to him.

"There is no restraint in my love toward you."

—he assures them (v. 12)—

"The restraint exists only in your own feelings."

And he exhorts them to give their hearts to him as freely as he did to them. Only their own hesitant reserve stood between them and the full enjoyment of the communion of mutual, spiritual love. We cannot miss the connection between this thought and what immediately follows—

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers."

How strikingly this contrasts with the invitation and exhortation to yield themselves wholly to him in the bonds of the pure mutual love of the Truth! How strikingly it contrasts with the touching and beautiful picture of pure divine service and suffering that he has just described. And how this contrast emphasized the bitter tragedy of unequal yoking when we see what should, and could, have been!

"What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" (v. 14).

Here is the most fundamental principle of Scripture—*separation*—the basis of all holiness, righteousness and faithfulness.

Be ye separate—completely apart—completely different. Cleanse yourselves from contact with all that is dark, ungodly and perishing, that you may yield yourselves completely to the glorious operation of the Spirit of God.

The things of God and the things of the world cannot be mixed. Those who understand and love the Truth, and who recognize the priceless value of their eternal inheritance in

Christ, will not want to have ANYTHING to do with the things of the world.

They will be ever anxious to get away from its necessary contacts to their Father's business and joyful attendance upon His Word. They will never dream of wasting their precious hours in worldly amusements and entertainments that appeal only to the fleshly and vacant-minded.

Here is how we may "examine ourselves" to see if we are really in the Faith. We shall never be satisfied with what we find by this self-examination. It will always—if honest—reveal causes for shame and concern, but it should reveal a gradual trend in a godly direction—a gradual weakening and lessening of the tendencies to worldly foolishness and a gradual strengthening and deepening of our spiritual perception and affection for eternal things. This is what he means by being—

"Changed into the same image from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord."

It is a gradual growing up, maturing, expanding, learning, discerning, perceiving and appreciating of the glories and beauties of oneness with Christ, as the beloved sons and daughters of the Almighty Creator of heaven and earth.

It is a process that will, and must, occur in all who are to be finally revealed as God's true elect. It is a joyful and glorious process—a gradual separation from the poor little natural rattles and baubles of babyhood, as the mind, by the power of the Spirit, grows and expands in the ecstasy of the marvelous things of God.

"WHAT COMMUNION HATH LIGHT WITH DARKNESS?"

How can the children of God—the children of light—find any pleasure or satisfaction in the empty amusements, entertainments and activities that belong to the foolish world of darkness?

"Light" and "darkness" here refer to the presence or absence of that spiritual enlightenment which recognizes God and eternal things as the only true realities. Those with this enlightenment will have no affinity or desire for the things of the dark world.

Beginning chapter 7, he exhorts:

"Having, therefore, these wonderful promises held out to us, let us cleanse ourselves from everything that is defiling to body or spirit, perfecting holiness in the reverent fear of God."

"Perfecting holiness", that should be our life's ambition, a wonderful adventure into divinity, our highest pleasure and joy.

What are the "filthinesses of the flesh and spirit" from which we must cleanse ourselves? Generally speaking, the filthinesses of the flesh are not the problem among us that the filthinesses of spirit are. Tobacco-addiction is about the only form of the filthiness of the flesh that has ever troubled the Brotherhood to any degree.

But filthiness of the SPIRIT is a real and pressing problem for all. This includes anger, pride, selfishness, covetousness, worldly ambition, unkindness, irritability, the natural, universal human proneness to criticize and belittle and think evil, gossip, being absorbed and interested in the passing unimportant things of natural existence, instead of setting the heart and mind and affections on the pure and eternal things of God.

This last is the key to the power that will enable us to overcome the rest. Anything—like television, worldly literature, worldly entertainment—that fills our mind with worldly things and thoughts, is working directly against the attainment of the perfection of holiness.

If we are to have any hope of success, we must be honest with ourselves and face the facts. We are weak. The attainment of the spiritual self-transformation necessary for acceptance to the Kingdom is possible to all, in the mercy and by the power of God, but not if we deliberately put stumbling-blocks in our own way and—what is worse—in the way of others who may be even weaker than ourselves.

The flesh always desires to spread its own weaknesses and corruptions. It feels more comfortable and more justified if it can get others to share its follies. Sisters who cut their hair try to get others to do the same; brethren who waste time with television and sports like to lure others into the same childishnesses and immaturities.

We, as Bereans, must have the spiritual wisdom to take a higher stand, to try to stem the tide of looseness and worldliness that is generally sapping the life of the Body, try to uphold the old standards and zeal and soundness of fellowship.

We shall stand or fall according as we are faithful or not to this position, according as we recognize the enticements of worldliness in all its deceptive guises, and honestly reject them.

We stand not just for a name, but for a principle of life. We stand for the old, sound outlook that recognizes that the common goal is the perfecting of holiness in the fear of the Lord—that we have no right to lower that standard of perfection—that anything less is a falling short that must be repented of and striven against, and never condoned and justified—and that we can have no hope of attaining if we are not sufficiently honest with ourselves to at least put resolutely away from us the obvious and major forms of enticement and diversion.

There is little point and little hope in praying to be delivered from temptation if we are so foolish and unfaithful as to deliberately set ourselves in the way of temptation.

The heart of man is sufficiently deceitful that there will be always plenty of stumbling-blocks, even when we have done our honest best to put away the obvious ones.

The apostle says (7:3)—

"I speak not this to condemn you."

That was neither his nor any mortal's prerogative. That is reserved for the judgment seat of Christ. His duty and desire was to exhort, upbuild and inspire—to present the vision of the beauty of holiness with such infinite and appealing desirability that the mind will be ennobled and enlarged, and perishing worldly things will lose their deceptive attraction and will stand revealed as ugly stumbling-blocks in the glorious way to life.

"Great is my boldness of speech toward you."

—he continues (v. 4). Why? Because they had reacted so wonderfully and affectionately to his former entreaty.

He had, as he said, written his first letter with anguish of heart and many tears. He had not long since called them out of darkness and corruption to form in Corinth a community of holiness and zeal. Then in his absence the light had grown dim and the world had slipped in among them—the mind of the flesh had reasserted itself.

All his labors seemed to have been in vain. The divine fire he had kindled among them seemed to be on the verge of extinction. So he wrote in tears, and waited in prayerful apprehension for their reaction. He had no rest in his spirit. How relieved and overjoyed he was when godly sorrow worked such repentance in them! (v. 11)—

"What carefulness it wrought in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what revenge!"

"I am filled with comfort," he exclaims. "I am exceeding joyful, even in all my tribulation." Why should he care? Why should he let the failures of others make him so disturbed and unhappy? Could he not say: "*The Lord knoweth them that are His?*" Could he not just quietly do his own faithful part, preaching, exhorting, and warning, and leave to God the concern about results and increase?

If others would not rise to the height of their calling, need Paul agonize and strive so much about it? In the end, the elect would all be there. Unnumbered millions had been perishing in darkness for ages. Need he be so upset if a few insisted on slipping back among those millions?

But Paul did not look at it like that. His whole outlook and attitude was just the opposite. He was terribly distressed and concerned at every sign of weakness and declension and slipping away. THIS MAY BE, FOR US, THE BIGGEST LESSON OF THE WHOLE EPISTLE. The first words of defiant human rebellion against the mind of the Spirit were—

"Am I my brother's keeper?"

Paul felt that he was, and he felt the obligation to its fullest extent. His whole life was one of labor and concern for others—not because they deserved it, but because they needed it. We must guard against the easy outlook that our own salvation is our only concern.

Nor does this mean that we are fulfilling our duties to others by just criticizing and condemning. Anyone will happily do that.

In order to help, there must be a sacrifice of self. There must be a basic desire to help and upbuild, based on sympathy and love, a desire to understand, to strengthen and comfort and inspire—a fellowfeeling for every human weakness born of a humble recognition of our own weakness and failures.

No man liveth to himself. All who try to just shrivel up and die. Jesus said of himself in a beautiful enigma—

"Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

"He that loveth his life shall lose it" (Jn. 12:24-26).

Paul, in his concern for his brethren, perceived the secret of the corn of wheat that did not abide alone, but fell into the earth and died. The second great command is—

"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

Where does the command stop? How far does it go? The only limit is our ability to perceive its boundless implications. Paul said (v. 12), of one aspect of his letter of admonition—

"I did it not for his cause that had done the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you."

As he had said in 2:4—

"I wrote, not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly to you."

Paul's power to inspire was in his care and love for his brethren. Unless we have the same care and love one for another, we can accomplish nothing. God's purpose in Christ, and Christ's work for us, are founded in love. We are out of harmony with that work and purpose—which we meet here this morning to remember and commemorate—if all that we do is not likewise founded on love.

Criticism, without love, is alienating and destructive, but if—like Paul's—criticism is the sincere outpouring of anxious love, then it is purifying, unifying and upbuilding—a wholesome and necessary activity.

Let us, in this especially, *"examine ourselves."* Let us be sure the sincere love is there first, the sincere, humble, sympathetic desire to strengthen and save.

Until it is, we are not ready to speak, for we have not learned the primary lesson of love and care and sacrifice for others that this bread and wine is designed to teach.

Mortify the Deeds of the Body

"They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:5).

"To be fleshly-minded is death, but to be spiritually-minded is life and peace . . ." (Rom. 8:6).

"If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Rom. 8:13).

Paul makes it very clear in these words that there are two ways of living, two kinds of character and disposition—the natural and the spiritual; and further, that one leads to death and one to life.

One way takes no effort, no knowledge, no ability. It is just acting naturally, pleasing ourselves, doing what we want to do, following nature.

Because men's interests and capacities and backgrounds differ, the way of the flesh takes a wide range of courses, some, in fact, very good and commendable from a natural point of view. But all come under the general heading of the will of the flesh, and all end in eternal death at last.

The other way is to realize, from the Word of God, that the whole range of the way of the flesh, from worst to best, leads only to death, and to thankfully accept the life-giving way of the Spirit. This way involves setting the whole life to the task of learning and applying the instructions God has given, and constantly seeking His help in absorbing and fulfilling them—constantly examining ourselves: our hearts, our motives, our desires.

The greatest enemy to our salvation is taking it for granted, being satisfied with ourselves, seeing nothing wrong.

Baptism, and membership in a Christadelphian ecclesia, is no passport to final acceptance. They are just the barest beginning. We are warned that the way of life is narrow and hard and mortifying to the flesh, but that in the infinite mercy of God it is within the reach of all who give their whole lives and energies to obtaining it.

God does not mock men by requiring impossibilities, but—neither does He permit men to mock Him by presumption and complacency. He presents Himself as infinitely tender and eager to help where His help is sincerely and wholeheartedly sought, but a consuming fire against the doubleminded, the

careless, the worldly and the insincere. He is a terrible, destroying God, and a wonderful, loving, compassionate God.

And He is no respecter of persons. The Christadelphian name will awaken no response and recognition with Him, if the Christadelphian character—the mind of Christ—spiritual-mindedness—is not present.

* * *

Writing to the Galatians, chapter 5, Paul gives two lists of characteristics which are in direct contrast to each other—the “*works of the flesh*,” and the “*fruits of the Spirit*.”

We need not dwell on the first list. They are the negative, natural aspect. They do not come under the description of “*whatsoever things are lovely, pure, of good report*,” etc., which we are exhorted to meditate upon—to feed our minds upon. If we concentrate on absorbing and developing the beautiful fruits of the Spirit, the works of the flesh will be choked out and put to death.

Let us then, briefly, once again consider the fruits of the Spirit, one by one, remembering that the apostle is here spelling out the “*living according to the Spirit*” which is *essential to obtaining salvation*.

Let us constantly remember that these are not just beautiful and desirable and pleasant-to-think-about things. The Scriptures warn us repeatedly that they are vital and essential things—not just hazy ideals but definite requirements—that there is NO HOPE OF LIFE without this spiritual character. Let us call to memory the very striking and searching expression of the Spirit to Ezekiel, concerning those who crowded to hear him—

“They sit before thee as My people, and they HEAR thy words, but they will not DO them, for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.

“Lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they HEAR Thy words, but they DO them not” (Eze. 33:31-32).

They got so much satisfaction and enjoyment and relief from sitting piously before Ezekiel and listening to all his teachings and warnings that they could go out for another whole week and live according to the flesh before they need to come back and ease their conscience by dutifully sitting and listening to him again.

They would have been terribly hurt and offended to hear the Spirit's evaluation of them. They would say, as so many of the flesh say when presented with the true facts, "*How discouraging!*"

James gives the same picture when he speaks of a man looking at himself in the searching mirror of God's perfect law, and then going right out and *forgetting* what he saw. Forgetting is our great problem. We see everything so clearly and beautifully when we sit listening to an exhortation, and then we go and straightway forget and act like the rest of the natural, fleshly human animals of the world.

We need helps to our memory. We need systematic daily, even hourly, reminding. At the turn of each hour we should stop for a quiet moment and get our spiritual bearings, check up on where our minds and interests and attitude have strayed.

There are nine of these fruits of the Spirit that Paul lists in Galatians 5:22-23—three threes. That's a simple, easy pattern to remember—

Love	Longsuffering	Faith
Joy	Gentleness	Meekness
Peace	Goodness	Temperance

The last should be, more properly, not "*Temperance*" but "*Self-Control*." We should memorize this list (as we should many important lists in God's inspired Book of Life)—go over it often in our mind—check our characters and actions repeatedly on each item in order. This is a matter of LIFE and DEATH, like finding the way out of a burning building while precious seconds remain.

Aid the memory by some phrase using the initials, as—

"Let Joy Prevail: Let God's Grace Fill My Thoughts."

When Jesus came to the fig tree and found no fruit when there should have been fruit, he cursed it, and it shriveled to the roots, as a terrible and impressive lesson to all his professed servants.

When the divine husbandman in the parable came seeking fruit on his tree, and found none, he said (Lk. 13:7)—

"Cut it down! Why cumbereth it the ground?"

And when the vine-dresser examined the vine and found branches not bearing fruit, he cut them off, and had them gathered and cast into the fire and burned.

All will depend in the end upon whether or not we are found bearing fruit: these Fruits of the Spirit.

Let us then, with sober earnestness, realizing the dreadful issues involved, constantly check ourselves against this list of

spiritual fruits on which our destinies depend. Peter says that if these things be in you AND ABOUND they make you that ye shall be "*neither barren nor unfruitful.*" If these spiritual qualities do not "*abound*" in us—that is, not just be present, but overflow and dominate our whole being and course of life—then we are guaranteeing our own rejection as surely as if we were writing our death-warrant.

LOVE

Love is the first and greatest. It is the power and spirit of them all. It must radiate like light from us toward everyone and everything. In defining what love is, and how it acts, John lays the very clearly-defined foundation which we must constantly keep in mind—

"THIS is the love of God, that we keep His commandments." (1 Jn. 5:3).

If we get away from the commandments, we are not loving in the scriptural and acceptable sense, however affectionate our feelings or good our intentions. There must be a careful adherence to divine commandments to keep love in a sound and healthy path.

But there is far MORE to love—ininitely more—than a cold, technical compliance to command. In our necessary opposition to the wishy-washy sentimentalism of the world's religion, we may tend to lose sight of some of the immeasurable depths and beauties of love.

Love is far more than any technical definition can encompass. Love is a transformation of the mind from the cramped self-centeredness of the natural man to the universal beneficent goodwill of the man of God. Love is complete and glorious newness of life.

In our defense of sound doctrine, in our condemnation of evil, in our opposition to looseness and laziness and compromise and declension, let us never—NEVER—belittle or betray love.

Let us never crush love, or cast it aside, even momentarily, on the pretext of any other virtue or necessity. What cannot be done in love and kindness should not be done at all. It is so easy to let self-righteousness and natural antagonism and contentiousness trample love underfoot on the pretext of duty.

JOY

The second fruit of the Spirit is Joy. The command to rejoice is repeated over and over. It is a vital ingredient of godliness. It is essential to pleasing God.

It may at first thought seem strange to be *commanded* to rejoice, for we think of joy as something that comes naturally as a result of joyous things and events.

But deeper thought will reveal the wisdom and necessity of the command. The brief spontaneous giggle of a temporarily pleased and gratified infant has no relation to the steady, unchanging, intelligent, spiritual "*Joy*" here referred to.

We are commanded to rejoice in EVERYTHING in our lives, good or bad, for all is of God and all is for a wise and loving purpose. We rejoice in the fundamental, unchanging realities that God is good, and that God is great, and that all things work steadily forward toward eternal joy.

A sour, complaining, self-pitying attitude is purely of the smallness and evilness of the flesh. If we are not fundamentally, basically joyful, we cannot please God—rather we insult and dishonor Him.

Paul "*rejoiced in tribulation.*" The disciples rejoiced that they were considered worthy to share in the sufferings of Christ. Jesus said—

"Rejoice and be exceeding glad when men revile and persecute you" (Matt. 5:11-12).

The infinite goodness of God and His purpose must overwhelm and overshadow every other consideration in our mind. Paul had the sound, sensible, balanced perspective when he said—

"Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:17).

Paul realized the vital importance of this spiritual fruit of thankful joyfulness if we are to be of any constructive use in God's purpose. Nehemiah exhorted the rebuilders of Jerusalem, at a time of trouble, and in a day of pitifully small things—

"The joy of the Lord is your strength" (Neh. 8:10).

All who are sorry for themselves or difficult to please or given to complaining or always wanting something they haven't got, or in any way dissatisfied with their lot are barren of this spiritual fruit, and are not only making themselves and others unnecessarily unhappy in this life, but are cutting themselves off from the life to come.

PEACE

Peace is the third fruit of the Spirit. Jesus said, on the last night, as he went forth to suffering and death (Jn. 14:27)—

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you."

"Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Throughout the Scriptures we are invited to peace, to—
"Cast all our cares on God, for He careth for us."

Do we really believe in this promise? Have we a real and assuring faith in God's constant care? Paul, writing to the Philippians, gives a clear, specific formula for peace. He says—

"Rejoice in the Lord always: again I say, Rejoice!

"Let your gentleness be known unto all men.

"Be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. 4:4-6).

The five essential ingredients of peace which he here lists are: Rejoicing, gentleness, casting all care and worry and anxiety upon God, prayer, and thanksgiving—a healthy, spiritual, beautiful frame of mind. And the assurance he gives, if this formula is followed in loving faith, is—

"The peace of God which passeth all understanding SHALL keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:7).

The commands of God are all designed to purify and beautify our characters and make our lives fuller and richer. They are the loving instructions of infinite wisdom for controlling and curing *mankind's worse disease—SIN-IN-THE-FLESH.*

All natural mankind are deathly sick of this disease. It has filled the world with sorrow and suffering and inequality and oppression and hatred and confusion.

Let us have the wisdom to carefully follow the instructions of the Great Physician, and enjoy the glorious spiritual health and joy that these fruits of the Spirit portray.

Paul says that Christ is our peace, and in all his salutations to his brethren he speaks of peace as a blessing from God, and prays that his brethren may receive it abundantly.

Are we sincerely concerned with the spiritual peace of our brethren? If we are, we will be very careful to do everything that will contribute to their peace, and avoid everything that will disturb it. Then we can with Paul, sincerely pray to God that His peace may be on them. It is hypocrisy to pray for their peace while willfully disturbing them.

LONGSUFFERING

The fourth fruit is long-suffering—patience toward others. This is the first and basic aspect of love that Paul enumerates in 1 Corinthians 13—

"Love suffereth long" (v. 4).

This is certainly the most important aspect of love, and for most of us it seems to be the most difficult. How often does our "love" break down at this first testing point! Love—true divine love—suffereth LONG, and is kind.

We may find we can make quite a fair show of our spiritual fruit if we are allowed to display them in attractive and pleasing circumstances at our own convenience, but the enumeration of "*longsuffering*" faces us with the problem of irritations, obstruction, opposition, provocation.

How does our long-suffering stand up? Our patience and long-suffering are the measure of the depth and sincerity and spirituality of our professed love for others. If our works are marred by impatience and irritation, then our motive is exposed as not spiritual love but fleshly self-gratification.

GENTLENESS

The fifth is gentleness. That is mildness, sweetness of character.

James says the wisdom from above is "*gentle and easy to be intreated,*" quick to adjust and conform and conciliate where comfort or convenience or the desires and well being of others is concerned. Never harsh, or abrupt, or willful, or selfish. Jesus said—

"Blessed are the peacemakers . . . agree with your adversary quickly" (Matt. 5:9, 25).

And the Spirit through Paul instructs us to be at peace with all men, to the fullest extent that is possible in harmony with faithfulness. Some bearing the name of Christ glory in conflict and harshness and antagonism to mankind, thinking thus to manifest their "*zeal for the Lord.*" But the Spirit of Christ is the spirit of gentleness.

This "*gentleness*" is the same word Jesus used when he said—

"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

"Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly. . .

"My yoke is EASY" (Matt. 11:28-30).

"Easy" here is "*gentle.*" His yoke was gentleness—a loving, but all-powerful yoke.

Paul, who had full authority to condemn, appealed in love to the proud and self-satisfied Corinthians—

"I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:1).

And God said through Hosea, of backsliding Israel—*"I drew them with bands of love"* (Ho. 11:4).

GOODNESS

The sixth fruit is goodness. Jesus himself disclaimed the description of *"good,"* saying—

"There is none good but God" (Mk. 10:18).

This shows the height to which this spiritual fruit points. Here is Godlikeness—complete devotion to truth and righteousness and purity and holiness—absolute sincerity and integrity—hating anything that in the slightest degree deviates from truth and wholesomeness. Here is the preserving salt of incorruptibility that gives all the other spiritual fruits soundness and purpose. Jesus said—

"Truth shall make you free" (Jn. 8:32).

Only perfect truth can give freedom from corruption. Paul's words concerning the flesh make a striking contrast to this most exalted of the fruits of the Spirit—

"In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth NO good"

(Rom. 7:18).

And James declares that all goodness and perfection are gifts from above.

FAITH

Seventh is Faith. Faith is the channel by which everything is accomplished. Faith is our link with the divine purpose. Faith is the unshakable conviction of the universal power and reality of God that turns weakness into strength and overcomes the world—

"This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith!" (1 Jn. 5:4)

Jesus made everything hinge on faith—

"All things are possible to him that believeth"

(Mk. 9:23).

In view of the magnitude and immensity of the divine relationship to which we have been called, we exclaim with the disciples—

"Lord, increase our faith!" (Lk. 17:5).

But there is a vital part in the process that WE must do—

"Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. 10:17).

Our duty is to increasingly build the power of our faith by constant study of the Word.

How clear is the majestic picture faith portrays, compared with the pitiful confusion and speculation of the world—

"Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God" (Heb. 11:3).

MEEKNESS

The eighth fruit is meekness. The word for meek literally means "*tame*," not wild. It is somewhat related to gentleness, which comes before, and also to the final fruit, self-control, which follows.

While gentleness carries more the idea of consistent kindness and courtesy toward others, meekness refers rather to the wisdom of true humility and lowliness. "*Learn of me*," said Jesus—

"For I am meek and lowly, and ye shall find rest to your souls" (Matt. 11:29).

The opposite of meekness is pride and self-satisfaction and desire for praise and admiration. Meekness is true wisdom. It sees all the foolishness of mortal pride and glory that brings no real happiness and satisfaction and only ends in death.

TEMPERANCE

And finally, Self-Control—the full control of the scripturally-enlightened mind over all the desires and reactions and impulses of the flesh—what a glorious, worthwhile culmination!

What a wonderful promise that if we will do our part, God will "*work in us to will and do of His good pleasure*," that we may be gloriously transformed in the spirit of our mind, given power to overcome the flesh! Following the list of these nine beautiful fruits of the Spirit, the apostle continues—

"They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

"If we live in the Spirit, LET US ALSO WALK IN THE SPIRIT" (Gal. 5:24-25).

Straight Words to the Colossians

From Colossians 1:2 we get our name—“*Adelphois en Christo*”—Brethren in Christ. And this epistle well defines those who rightly bear this name. IF we truly ARE conforming ourselves to the marvelous spiritual picture it presents, we ARE Christadelphians.

Paul first thanks God for the joy and courage that their faith and love gave him. How COULD he have carried on if there had not been SOME evidence of success to his labors—some VISIBLE working of the Spirit, transforming natural, animal men and women into spiritual children of God? There are always a FEW faithful, carrying forward the divine purpose and bearing evidence—amid disappointment and distress—that that great purpose is still alive in the earth.

In verse 6 Paul speaks of the Gospel BEARING FRUIT in them—spiritual fruit to God’s glory—the pure beauty of the divine mind and character gradually beginning to glow among them, distinguishing them from common, ugly, perishing clay. The details of this fruit and character are brought out throughout the epistle.

FRUITS ARE REAL, MEASURABLE THINGS

The tree that does NOT bring forth fruit, said Jesus, will be cut down and burned (Matt. 7:19). These fruits are real, MEASURABLE things. In the last day God will measure them. He is no respecter of persons.

Treasure in HEAVEN is just as real and PRACTICAL an affair as treasure on earth. It is simply a matter of time, and effort, and desire. In NATURAL things we get results in direct proportion to how long, and how hard, and how carefully we work. When the books are opened at the last great day of account, exactly how LONG and how HARD we have worked for SPIRITUAL things will be found recorded in clear, impartial, unchangeable figures. There will be no argument or appeal. The full record will be there.

The first spiritual acquisitions that Paul mentions (v. 11) are “*patience and longsuffering.*” How is weak, natural, evil flesh to develop spiritual patience? By keeping the mind firmly FIXED ON GOD—His love, His desires, His greatness, His ever presence beside us—and upon that man who perfectly manifested Him. God’s great plan is being worked out with infinite, divine patience. If we are to be co-workers with God in developing a holy, eternal community for His glory, PATIENCE is essential.

SPIRITUAL PATIENCE

The Spirit through Isaiah, speaking of Christ, gives a wonderful picture of spiritual patience (42:2-4).

"He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the dimly-burning flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment and truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged TILL HE HAVE SET JUDGMENT IN THE EARTH: and the isles shall wait for his law."

A quiet, loving, persistent, IRRESISTIBLE determination for good—never rough, never discouraged. Infinite care to avoid injury, and yet an unswerving adherence to divine principles. That is patience, as exemplified by the Great Example. Paul continues (Col. 1:11)—

". . . patience and longsuffering WITH JOYFULNESS: giving thanks unto the Father."

Paul—beaten with many cruel stripes and chained fast in the inner dungeon at Philippi—could still at midnight JOYFULLY sing praises to God. He had the true and healthy outlook. God does not want a brooding and self-pitying patience. Paul KNEW that ALL things—in the eternal, ultimate reckoning—work together for GOOD for those that truly love God. He KNEW he was faithfully doing God's will and helping forward His purpose and that—regardless of the present—time would reward his efforts and justify his joy.

TOO BIG IN OUR OWN PERSPECTIVE

Joy and thanksgiving are the normal state of the spiritual mind. Depression is self-pity and a perverted form of self-glorification. We are too big in our OWN perspective. If we realize that God is ALWAYS in full and active, wide-awake control, overlooks nothing, makes no mistakes, and is steadily bringing to pass His glorious purpose of good, then we shall not be tempted to indulge ourselves in the destructive fleshly pleasure of self-pity.

Are we discouraged by our failure? There is nothing wrong with us—at the worst—that faith and hope and love cannot cure, and there is an abundant fountain where these may freely be found. There is no state of mind that a quiet meditation on God's Word will not improve. *"Get thee up! Wherefore liest thou on thy face?"* said the Lord to Joshua (Josh. 7:10).

If there is something wrong, then there is something that can be DONE about it. The Scriptures leave no room for discouragement. The great purpose of God is too grand and triumphant.

If, like Paul, we FILL our lives with LABOR on behalf of this purpose, and our hearts with THANKSGIVING that we have been offered a place in it, we shall find no room or time for discouragement or self-pity.

HOLY—UNBLAMABLE—UNREPROVABLE!

In the next few verses, Paul centers our attention on Christ the Head of the Body, in whom and through whom the whole purpose exists. It is HIS mission (v. 22) to present us holy and unblamable and unrepvable in God's sight. HOLY—UNBLAMABLE—UNREPROVABLE! The goal is very high. The POWER is God's but the APPLICATION of it is up to us. Complete devotion to His Word is the way. The power lies there in abundance, waiting for the few wise who will heed, but He will not force it upon any.

"Warning every man, that we may present every man PERFECT" (Col. 1:28).

To the Ephesians he said (Acts 20:31) that for the space of THREE YEARS he had ceased not NIGHT AND DAY to warn everyone WITH TEARS. There certainly must be very GRAVE DANGER of failure, if such incessant and urgent warnings are necessary! Are we SURE we are fully alive to the deceptiveness of the danger that threatens us? *"Narrow is the way, and FEW there be that find it"*—but those few DO find it, and all others COULD if they were willing to make the necessary effort.

NO EASY SLIDING INTO GLORY

The warning is to seek FIRST the Kingdom of God—to make SURE of that ONE thing to the sacrifice of everything else. It is quite possible to ALL—but only with the utmost effort. There will be no easy sliding into glory. A constant, tearful warning is needed against the Truth-choking concerns of this life and the deceitfulness of treasure on earth.

"That your hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love" (Col. 2:2).

The only thing in which there is TRUE comfort, and the only thing that can effectively knit ANYONE together is—as he continues—*"the riches of the full assurance of UNDERSTANDING . . . the treasures of WISDOM and KNOWLEDGE."* How much of this divine treasure have WE laid up?

FOOL'S GOLD

There is a mineral called "fool's gold." It resembles gold in glitter and appearance and is often gathered by inexperienced miners. This thought strongly presents itself to the mind when

the scriptural picture regarding wisdom and treasure is considered, as also do the searching words of Christ—

"Thou FOOL, this night thy life shall be required of thee: THEN whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" (Lk. 12:20)

HEAVENLY treasures knit brethren together in love: EARTHLY treasures separate them, as they did Abraham and Lot (Gen. 13:6-7). Lot's choice of Sodom was the result of this separation. Trouble followed, then disaster. Was the wealth worth it?

"I am with you in spirit, joying and beholding your ORDER, and the steadfastness of your faith" (Col. 2:5).

Harmonious order and steadfast faith present a beautiful picture. The spiritual mind will delight in orderliness. All God's vast creation, from infinitely great to microscopically small, reflects the beauty of ORDER. Disorder is destructive, and alien to God. Voluntary and mutually-agreed order—faithfully complied with—is essential to spiritual growth together. As Paul told the Corinthians (1 Cor. 14:33—Revised Version)—*"God is NOT a God of confusion."*

AN EASY, BUT UNHEALTHY, WAY

The larger an ecclesia is, the more order is necessary—IF all are to take a part. Of course, if the work is left to a FEW, then forms of procedure and detailed arrangements may be greatly reduced—this is an EASY, but UNHEALTHY, state. ALL should work while it is day.

"Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the SABBATH days: which are a SHADOW of things to come, but the BODY is of Christ" (Col. 2:16).

This is a clear charter of freedom from the ordinances of the Law of Moses, of which the most ardently advocated element today is the SABBATH. But God does not go backwards. If He THEN, in days of shadow, required one full day in seven for His service, He certainly requires NO LESS today. As Paul clearly shows later in this epistle, the ONE-day Mosaic sabbath has become the SEVEN-day Christian sabbath (3:17, 23-24)—

"WHATSOEVER ye do in word or deed, do ALL in the name of the Lord . . . WHATSOEVER ye do, do it HEARTILY to the LORD, and not to men, knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward."

To what extent do WE consciously do ALL things as to the Lord? The COMMAND is clear enough. Its PURPOSE is self-evidently good and fitting. It gives ALL an opportunity for

limitless service to God—regardless of circumstance. It fixes the mind ALWAYS upon God. Properly followed, it would completely eliminate from our lives all activities that could NOT be sincerely done as service to God, and it would ennoble all others and give the meanest task value and dignity.

“WHATSOEVER YE DO, DO IT HEARTILY”

God HATES half-heartedness. There is no pleasure in it to Him, or satisfaction to the doer. It is a burden on both sides. God requires our enthusiastic BEST in all things—lovingly given—because the only frame of mind that is pleasing to Him is that which is ever eager and ANXIOUS to give Him its utmost. Jesus said (Mk. 12:30)—

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with ALL thy heart, and with ALL thy soul, and with ALL thy mind, and with ALL thy strength: THIS is the FIRST commandment.”

The accent is on the “all.” Its essence lies in its COMPLETE-NESS, because unless it is complete and all-embracing, then it is not the genuine thing at all. Unless it consistently dominates the whole life, it is a mere EXTERNAL “form of godliness,” lacking the living power.

EVERY DAY A SABBATH

Unless we are truly keeping ALL days as holy sabbaths to God, and doing ALL things heartily as unto Him, we have a very unconvincing case against the sincere but misguided advocates of the old Mosaic “shadow” sabbath.

“IF ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are ABOVE” (Col. 3:1).

Paul is referring back to their baptism, mentioned in chapter 2, verse 12. The reasoning is this:—By your symbolic submission to death in baptism, you signify a willingness to die to all the things belonging to the world, and to attach yourself unreservedly to the things related to Christ, and you entered a solemn covenant to set your heart and interest on heavenly things. ARE YOU LIVING UP TO YOUR WORD? A covenant with man is a solemn obligation—a covenant with GOD is infinitely more so.

“Set your affections on things ABOVE, and not on things on EARTH” (Col. 3:2).

Jesus tells HOW—“Lay up treasure in heaven and not on earth, for where your TREASURE is, there will your HEART be also.” That is, arrange your LIFE in harmony with your PROFESSIONS—accumulate nothing on earth to hold your attention and desires. Conduct your affairs so that ALL your

prospects and pleasures and advantages are bound up with the FUTURE and not the present. Jesus' way is very simple—IF we wholeheartedly accept it. It is the ONLY way.

“FOR YE ARE DEAD” (Col. 3:3).

A dead man has no worldly cares or attachments. The believer—in baptism—voluntarily dies to the world. There is no greater break that can be made than DEATH, yet how difficult it is to realize ALL that is implied in this symbolic action! Paul is pleading for the REASONABLE necessity of a WALK consistent with the position we have professedly taken—a position we voluntarily took in hope of great personal gain. If you are dead to the world, he reasons, WHY are you concerned with its empty, perishing possessions and customs and interests?

In the following verses he lists several things to be put away, most of which, fortunately, it is not necessary to mention among us. But the final crowning item in this list of ungodly vices is such a subtle part of our sin-flesh as to ALWAYS be a problem—“COVETOUSNESS, which is IDOLATRY.” The Spirit could use no stronger expression of abhorrence and condemnation than “*idolatry*” in describing covetousness.

“THE DESIRE TO HAVE MORE”

Covetousness—“*the desire to have more,*” as Young's Concordance translates it. Why does God HATE it so? Because it is so DESTRUCTIVE of ALL the principles of the heavenly teaching of Christ upon which salvation depends. “*Having food and raiment, therewith BE CONTENT*” is the command—the PLAIN command—of our Master. The world is ENTIRELY given over to covetousness and greed. It is the root, says Paul (1 Tim. 6:10) of ALL EVIL. Jesus (Mk. 7:22) associates covetousness with theft, wickedness and deceit. Again he says (Lk. 12:15)—

“*BEWARE of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*”

It is an evil, consuming disease, a mocking waster of time and lives. Because of the infection in the Brotherhood of this universal malady, countless hours are spent in getting worldly things that could be given to the service of God. When the Lord comes to demand an accounting of his servants, WHAT SHALL WE SAY? Shall we proudly show him our houses, our clothes, our cars? It will be difficult to explain to the Lord of heaven and earth that OUR standard of living and worldly possessions during our probation had to be so vastly greater than HIS. “*The servant is not above his master.*”

"Covetousness, which is IDOLATRY: for which things' sake the WRATH of God cometh on the children of disobedience" (Col. 3:5-6).

RENEWED IN KNOWLEDGE

"Put on the NEW man which is renewed in KNOWLEDGE after the image of Him that created him" (v. 10).

KNOWLEDGE is the key to the whole process. Knowledge is a matter of learning and effort. We should ALL know the Scriptures FAR better than we do. Daily we are reminded of our ignorance in this direction—of the countless wasted opportunities for learning and study. In verse 16 Paul says—

"Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs."

There is much material for reflection in the hymns we sing, on this matter of KNOWLEDGE, as on the others—*"O, how love I Thy law! It is my study ALL THE DAY."* But IS IT? Or are we just mouthing meaningless words?

DO WE MEAN IT?

Again we sing: *"Firm to the fight I stand! What terror can confound me?"* and *"Thy way, not mine, O Lord."* Noble words! But IS God's way, and not our own, always the paramount consideration with us? *"Not mine, not mine, the choice, in things or great or small."* Truly godly sentiments—IF they are consistently followed out. Our hearts can say.

"Tis not for present power or wealth, or worldly fame we look to Thee" . . . "All I ask for is enough." Do we, as we sing, consider the REAL MEANING of these things, and frankly examine our own activities in the light of them? *"Life's fleeting treasures I resign."* Does it come from the heart—or just the lips?

There are many subjects in which we can find scriptural admonition in the hymns. *"We should learn the rather free from wrath and strife to live, FAR REMOVING ALL THAT MIGHT OFFEND OR GRIEVE."* To what extent can WE declare before God that we sincerely try to avoid ALL things that offend and grieve others? We can all think of several things among us—some quite easily dispensed with—which grieve our brethren. Even if these things were right in themselves, it is clearly evident that the spirit of Christ is lacking in us if we persist in them when we know they trouble others. Some day God will ask us just WHY we followed this course. WHAT SHALL WE SAY?

"PURE RELIGION BEFORE GOD IS THIS"—

Then we sing so heartily to each other, *"Work, brethren, work!"* But are WE working? A cardinal element of TRUE

religion is to visit the afflicted (Jam. 1:27; Matt. 25:43). How much visiting do WE do? In other words, how much true religion do we actually possess? And to the alien we take pleasure in singing: "*How long your strength and substance waste on trifles light as air?*" Let us make sure that EXAMPLE corresponds with PRECEPT.

The whole of Hymn 170 is a searching indictment of a common failing—"The thoughtless still with levity and mirth delight to dwell." Paul says "Foolish talking and jesting are not befitting" (Eph. 5:4—Revised Version). And in this very epistle we are considering (4:6)—

"Let your speech be ALWAYS with grace, seasoned with salt."

The important word is the "always." To mean anything, it must be a consistent principle of life, faithfully applied in all circumstances.

IS THIS US?

"Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved . . ." (Col. 3:12).

These are very exalted titles. They define a people of a character, disposition and purpose far removed from the world. "*Elect of God, holy and beloved.*" A rare and different kind of people who are strikingly outstanding—as the apostle continues—for "*kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering.*" IS THAT US? Does the description fit?

"And let the PEACE OF GOD rule in your hearts" (Col. 3:15).

We are told, "*Great peace have they which LOVE THY LAW and NOTHING shall offend them.*" Peace is a precious gift of God, bestowed ONLY where HIS conditions are complied with. We are told "*the work of RIGHTEOUSNESS shall be peace*" (Isa. 32:17). And conversely (Isa. 48:22), "*There is NO peace to the wicked.*"

Peace is spoken throughout the Scriptures as a supreme divine blessing. Like many blessings, it requires a certain amount of spiritual discernment to even RECOGNIZE its desirability, and usually too, a certain amount of previous worldly disappointment. Peace is a spiritual quality that has little appeal to the pride and ambition of the flesh.

PEACE WITH GOD

It is not just abstract peace, as such, that is the promised blessing. It is "*peace WITH GOD through our Lord Jesus Christ*"

(Rom. 5:1). It is a living, personal relationship of joyful unity and harmony with the Eternal Creator.

Jesus laid the foundation for this peace in the bitter road he trod that culminated in Calvary. Peace with God is clearly not a lightly-won privilege. Nor is it lightly HELD. Its requirements are summed up in the following verses (Col. 3:16-17)—

“Let the word of Christ DWELL IN YOU richly in all WISDOM—whatsoever ye do, do ALL in the name of the Lord Jesus.”

Here again, “all” is the key. Bound up with this “all” lies life and peace. Short of that, there is only conflict. Again we sing: “Yet while I seek, but find Thee not, NO PEACE my wandering mind shall see. When shall all my wanderings cease, and ALL my steps to Thee-ward tend? Is there a thing beneath the sun that strives with Thee my heart to share? Tear it thence and reign alone the Lord of EVERY motion there.”

HOW MANY FIND IT?

When we ACCOMPLISH in our lives that of which we SING in our hymns, THEN—and ONLY then—have we “*peace with God.*” Paul, who said “*Be ye followers of me,*” said also —

“I count ALL things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of ALL things, and count them but refuse that I may win Christ” (Phil. 3:8).

And he continues, a little farther on, “*Be careful for nothing,*” we sing that, too!, (Phil. 4:6)—

“Be careful for NOTHING: in everything rely on God, and the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

In very similar terms our Great Example said (Matt. 11:29)—

“Learn of me, for I am MEEK and LOWLY: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”

THAT is peace. HOW MANY FIND IT?

The Mission of Jesus

"The blood of Christ shall purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (Heb. 9:14).

In the opening verse of Hebrews 8, Paul says, *"Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum."* He has gradually worked into the very heart of his subject—the center, in fact, of all Scripture—the mission of Jesus Christ, the great high priest, *"set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens."*

There is nothing higher, nothing greater, nothing more exalted than this—the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. This is the high calling to which we are called. If there is one lesson in the Tabernacle, and all the tragic events connected with it and its contents, it is the great and terrible majesty of God. Jesus Christ shows forth his love and condescension—but the majesty had to be established first. Only on the altar of the sacrifice of Christ can He be approached. His own Son must die before men can come near Him. Not because He is vindictive, or malignant, or despotic, but because eternal things can only be built on true principles, and the principle of righteousness and perfection must underlie everything related to eternity. *"Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins."* We approach God shielded by the perfection of Christ.

Verse 3 continues, *"Every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices."* Sacrifice did more than establish principles and keep the issues clear between righteousness and sin. It provided an outlet for the expression of repentance, gratitude and love. It gave man something he could do to show his feeling toward God—a way in which he could offer the best and choicest of his possessions, and in the uprising smoke of acceptance he found peace. The principle of sacrifice still holds true. It is the opposite of the basic principle of the flesh—selfishness.

"He that will lose his life shall find it" (Matt. 16:25).

The Law was nothing in itself—it just taught lessons.

And to those who could discern, here also was a constant reminder that, in the fullness of time, the love of God would provide a lamb who would bring mankind back to perfect divine fellowship. For those who had eyes to see, the sacrifices were what the bread and wine are to us. The depth and righteousness of the mystical significance is limited only by the development of our mind to receive it.

"Wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat to offer" (Heb. 8:3).

The whole plan from the beginning is built on sacrifice. Every prophecy and ordinance points forward to one great culminating sacrificial act. And now the time has come when it is all brought expectantly to a focus on this one man, standing alone before God. What has he to offer? Only a complete self-surrender—only the utmost possible—could fittingly fulfil the requirements of the case. Anything short of perfection would hopelessly lower the plane upon which eternal salvation was being developed. Anything short of perfection was failure.

What a weight for mortal man to carry through thirty years of troubled life, never free from the burden of the world's redemption. This was the sacrifice called for—ceaseless vigilance and struggle—the issue constantly in the balance. Only our utmost efforts at self-discipline and self-transformation can justify our dependence upon this man's mediatorship and friendship. We have no perfection to offer, but we are asked to give all that we have. To give less would be to mock his suffering, and belittle the seriousness of the condition that made it necessary.

"If he were on earth, he should not be a priest" (v. 4).

Paul has already shown that one must arise according to a new and different priesthood. He has shown this from the references to Melchisedec who was a priest, but not of the Mosaic order. And the Messiah is to be a "*priest after the order of Melchisedec.*" Now Paul goes further to show that this new order couldn't fit into the old Mosaic system. The main point he is establishing all through the Hebrews is that everything connected with the Law of Moses ritual is done away and no longer operative—replaced by something immeasurably better.

THE JEWS DIFFICULTY

It was difficult for the Jews who had become Christians to realize that that which had been ordained by God and had been the centre of their national life for one thousand five hundred years should be changed. The Law was ingrained into their very nature. The whole life of the Jew was built upon it from the day of his birth. To see the Truth concerning the end of the Law required tremendous independence of mind. It meant going directly in the face of all the established thought and authority of the nation. It meant taking the time and trouble to study and learn his own Scriptures to the point of being able to stand up confidently against the experts, rather than the easy way of

accepting handed-down interpretations. It meant above all things *thinking*—really *thinking*—for himself. Very, very few have ever been willing to do that and stand by it.

But Paul takes it point by point. Here is a new and superior order of priesthood foretold in their own Scriptures. But is it still possible for them to cling to some of the old order? No, says Paul, it all must go. No new patches on an old garment. No half measures.

This new high priest—if he were here on earth—could not fit into the old system. There was no provision in that system for him. The Law would disqualify him from priestly service. Clearly then an end of the Law was contemplated by God, as Paul points out in Heb. 7:12—

“For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.”

This mysterious Melchisedec, irremovably rooted in the Jewish Scriptures at two vital points—the records of Abraham and David—is Paul’s strongest lever in overturning the Jewish conception of the eternal supremacy and unchangeability of their Law. Melchisedec undeniably Abraham’s superior—David’s great son to be of the Melchisedec order.

Verse 6 presses the advantage by asserting that a new and better order to harmonize with the new priesthood was also foretold in the very Scriptures they relied on in defense of the unchangeability of the old. What could be plainer than these words of Jeremiah to which he refers? Had they never considered what they meant? Were not the Scriptures read every Sabbath in the synagogue, and every day in the home?

They said, “We can’t be wrong. We read the Scriptures constantly. We are familiar with what’s there.” But how easy to read it and accept it without getting the faintest idea what it means! All Jewish study and learning was about the Scriptures. There were doubtless many who practically knew them by heart, and the books of commentary were legion. These words of Jeremiah which Paul quoted would not be new to them—

“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a NEW COVENANT with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: NOT ACCORDING TO THE COVENANT that I made with them in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt.”

“Well,” Paul says, “what does *that* mean? How does *that* fit in with your view of the case? What is the “*rest that remaineth*” which David referred to long after the Israelites entered the

Promised Land? Who is the priest of the Melchisedec order? What is the new covenant? And doesn't a *new* covenant necessarily make the old obsolete?"

SATISFACTION

These questions would be annoyingly uncomfortable to those who were thoughtlessly content with the old and did not want to be disturbed. But they would be intensely satisfying and interesting to the few real thinkers among them who hungered and thirsted for divine knowledge and wisdom. These inspired teachings of Paul would be like a discovery of hidden treasure—as if someone had at last opened a locked door which had been for ages the object of reverent hope and wonder. These were the things the angels desired to look into, and these questions Paul propounded, and undertook to answer, would have been topics of conversation among the godly through all the previous ages.

To some, as he said, he was a savour of death unto death; to others of life unto life. It all depended on how they reacted to his message. It all depended upon how deep their knowledge of divine purposes and principles went. The obvious lesson, of course, is to be sure we redeem the time and get ourselves well grounded and deeply rooted. That is our only defense. With a poor knowledge of the Bible, we are just empty lamps ridiculously pretending to be brighter than all the world's great luminaries. But with a good knowledge of the Bible we are the light of the world.

There are no short cuts to a good knowledge of the Bible, and no excuses for a lack of it. If a desire to continually know more about God and His Word is not our primary object in life, then our whole profession is a mockery. Our characters are made up of the things that fill our hearts and minds and attention. If these things are personalities, or trivialities, or temporalities—then our characters are small and empty and stunted, totally unfit for the great things God has in store. We shall never be any better or bigger than the things that fill our minds.

We are therefore continually exhorted to set our minds and attentions on the things that are above. Such are the matters Paul treats of in writing to the Hebrews. How much do we know and understand about them? They were recorded so that by continual meditation upon them we could empty our minds of chaff and rubbish, and gradually transform them from fleshly to spiritual. It is so easy to deceive ourselves into the idea that

others know more of the Scriptures because their memory is better. But we don't have any trouble remembering the things we are interested in—they crowd into our minds without any effort. Just listen to the things people habitually talk about, and see how wonderfully well-versed they are in them, and what marvelous memories they have in certain directions.

"Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also"
(Matt. 6:21).

In the first seven verses of chapter 9, Paul briefly describes the Tabernacle—the holy place where only the priests could go, and the Most Holy where only the high priest could go and then but once a year and not without a solemn atoning ritual. Was this arrangement final—or was it but a symbol of what the final arrangement would be?

THE EFFECTIVE REALITY

In verse 8, we are told that the Holy Spirit signified by the Tabernacle ordinances that the way into the holiest of all—final perfection—was not yet made manifest, or opened to man, as long as the condition symbolised by the restrictions of the Tabernacle existed. The way must be opened. The veil of the flesh which obstructed man's access to God must be taken out of the way. The Tabernacle showed that something stood between God and man, but in itself it contained no provision for correcting the condition. Quite obviously, if perfection was ever to be reached, the repetitious and never-advancing shadows of the Tabernacle must be superseded by one final and ever-effective reality.

In verse 9 Paul says the offerings of the Law could not make the worshiper perfect in conscience. In verse 14 he says *Christ's sacrifice will purge the conscience from dead works*. In this we are getting very close to the heart of the Truth, and the great distinction between the shadowy Law of Moses and the living Law of Christ. The Law of Moses was strictly a law for the regulation of the flesh. It was on the level of the flesh. The Law of Christ sweeps away all restraints and restrictions of the flesh, but—it also sweeps away the flesh itself as an influencing factor of the mind and conduct. The Law of Christ does not regulate the flesh—it obliterates it. The believer in Christ is no longer *"in the flesh."* Paul says—

"When we WERE in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death" (Rom. 7:5).

"They that are IN THE FLESH cannot please God, but YE are NOT in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit dwelleth in you" (Rom. 8:8-9).

"In the flesh dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7:18).

This is all-embracing. There are wide degrees of badness in the flesh, and the flesh has its own standards of good and bad, but to God *"in the flesh"* nothing is good. All is carnal and unholy. The first step toward goodness is to step right out of the flesh. This parallels the truth that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. The flesh has its own standards of wisdom and folly but to God all *"in the flesh"* is folly. All the works of the flesh are *"dead works."*

Christ takes us out of the flesh. He agonized through a perfect life of renouncing and condemning "the flesh," though in the most intimate contact with it right in himself; and finally, by death and resurrection, he came actually and physically out of the flesh. Now He calls us to Him—out of the flesh, into the Spirit. That is why he, and he alone, can purge our conscience, or consciousness of sin. The enlightened, spiritual conscience can never be clear in the flesh. The motions of the flesh will continually disgust and humiliate it. Paul cried—

"In my flesh dwelleth no good thing—who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 7:18, 24-25).

There is no condemnation to those which are IN CHRIST—those who are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit" (Rom. 8:1).

But what necessarily follows? What is required to maintain the consistency of the picture and to avoid destroying all its meaning and bringing on a bitter anti-climax? *"How shall we that are dead to the flesh live any longer therein?"* We have launched out. We have staked everything. We cannot falter or go back. *"The just shall live by faith."* That is true. But the Scriptures immediately continue—

"BUT IF ANY MAN DRAW BACK, MY SOUL SHALL HAVE NO PLEASURE IN HIM" (Heb. 10:38).

There must be no drawing back into the flesh. Once purified, we must, as He says earlier, *"go on to perfection."*

The test of success is in actual, measurable results, not hopes and feelings. *"The tree is known by his fruits" (Matt. 12:33).* *"The fruits of the Spirit are these"*—and specific qualities are listed: gentleness, meekness, holiness, patience, hunger for divine knowledge. *"The works of the flesh are these"*—and

again we have definite characteristics—pride, greed, worldliness and the love of pleasure. The works of the flesh include everything that the flesh does naturally—all the things we do whenever we are not specifically and consciously seeking the guidance and help of the Spirit. No one can perfectly follow the Spirit, but two things are essential. First, the fruits of the Spirit must predominate—they must shape the main course of our life, and second, they must constantly increase and gradually invade and purify the whole fabric of our existence. “*On to perfection*” is Paul’s watchword.

It is a common misconception that because we are under grace, and justified by the blood of Christ, works are not necessary to salvation. *Works are absolutely essential to complete the process that Christ has begun in us.* But we don’t do them—they are done through us.

“I am the vine and ye are the branches, HE THAT ABIDETH IN ME BRINGETH FORTH MUCH FRUIT. Without me ye can do nothing” (Jn. 15:5).

“He that beareth not fruit is cast forth and burned.”
To the Romans, Paul says (Rom. 8:3-4)—

“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.”

But is that the end? No, as far as we are concerned, it is the beginning, for He continues—

“THAT THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE LAW MIGHT BE FULFILLED IN US who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit” (Rom. 8:4).

Unless that happens, the sacrifice of Christ has, in our case, failed.

“That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us.”

The *end* has not been changed, only the *means*. The Law was a carnal commandment. It took the power of the flesh and attempted to direct it toward godly ends. The corruptness of the flesh made that impossible. The Law merely succeeded in exposing that corruptness—the exceeding sinfulness of sin—the great pretensions of the flesh to goodness but the actual emptiness and deception behind those pretensions.

God lifted up Christ that all who keep their eyes and mind fixed upon him may be healed. The chief priests said—

“By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?” (Acts 4:7).

The Apostle answered, "*Jesus Christ.*" We must go back at the old problem—the mortification of the flesh—armed with a new and invincible sword of God's providing, the Name of Jesus Christ. Everything must be faced and solved with Jesus Christ kept purposely in the forefront of the consciousness. Paul says (2 Cor. 10:5)—

"We must bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

It is God's expressed will that all things should be by Him and through Him. "*I can do all things,*" says Paul, "*THROUGH CHRIST*" (Phil. 4:13). Jesus said, "*I am the way.*" This is the answer to all questions as to "How can these things be?" "*I am the way.*"

"The mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints—CHRIST IN YOU, the hope of glory"
(Col. 1:26-27).

This does not apply just in specific and larger activities—belief, baptism, breaking of bread. No matter how finely we subdivide the analysis of our time and activities, "*I am the way*" still is the only hope of success. No matter how small or unimportant the matter may be, it is either Christ consciously present or a victory for the flesh.

Of course, it must be the *real* Christ. There are Christs many, but only one true Christ—the Word made flesh. The Christ we have must correspond with the Word we have recorded, and the image must be constantly refreshed from that appointed source. Of the Tabernacle, God said, "*I will meet with you there.*" It was useless to seek elsewhere, however earnestly. The Scriptures are the present appointed meeting place. Christ and the Scriptures are synonymous. They permeate each other. We cannot have Christ in our hearts unless we have the Word continually renewed in our minds. And we cannot get any living power out of the Scripture unless we see Christ shining through every word of it.

Let us then, with boldness—not presumption, but the boldness of intimate love—enter into the holiest by the blood of Christ, in the full assurance of faith, never looking back but going on to perfection, drawn irresistibly forward and upward out of the flesh and into the eternal immensity of the Spirit.

By Himself

"God, Who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son" (Heb. 1:1).

Surely these first words of Hebrews are the most impressive and majestic opening of any of the books in the Bible! They are comparable only to John's Gospel and first Epistle. Both are on the same subject: the greatness of Christ as the Son and manifestation of God.

God spoke in many different portions and many different manners in the past through the prophets. These were not belittled: all were vital, all were glorious. But now has come the full, open, unveiled, manifestation of the glory and goodness and purpose *"in these last days."* All the "many portions" that went before are fulfilled and completed and bound together in Christ in these *"last days."* They were the last days of Israel's commonwealth, the last days of the wonderful, but now passing, law given through Moses which had led them so long.

The Old Covenant was ended. It had run its course and accomplished its purpose. It was, as he says later, *"waxed old and ready to vanish away."* It was the end of the Mosaic age.

The Temple was about to be destroyed; the sacrifices discontinued; the nation scattered; the Covenant broken off.

The Epistle to the Hebrews is the great divine call to the Hebrew Christians to now leave the Law and Judaism behind—to go forth to Christ without the camp, bearing his reproach. That to which all the Law and Prophets had pointed for so long had now come—the Seed of the Woman; the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; David's Son; the Messiah; Emmanuel—God with us.

How much more beautifully and briefly could Christ's position be defined? He was everything. All that went before bowed before him. All that followed after sprang from him.

* * *

"Whom He hath appointed heir of all things" (1:2).

The greatness of Christ was what they must see. This alone could free them from their fleshly bondage. And it is what we must see also. See that, and everything falls into place. To this greatness we are invited to be related. God has approached us and called us to Him, invited us to be part of His glorious Son, to put away everything else and seize this pearl of great price.

It is well that we constantly contemplate the infinite greatness of Christ in the Divine purpose. It broadens and enlarges our natural petty, fleshly outlook so often absorbed in trivialities. Paul said to the Corinthians, trying to lift their small cramped minds from petty present things—

"All things are yours—the world, or life, or death or things present, or things to come. ALL are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's!" (1 Cor. 3:21-23).

With this most glorious relationship and destiny, how can we for a moment be concerned about the childish passing things of the present? Nothing matters but this. Nothing begins to compare with this. Get this one thing clear and strong enough in our minds, and everything else fades away and disappears.

Hebrews portrays the supreme greatness of Christ—over the angels, over Moses, over the Levitical priesthood—all very great in their place in God's purpose. To these three provisions from God, the faithful Israelites had taken heed and trusted through all their history.

But while Hebrews gives the fullest and clearest presentation of greatness and glory and preeminence of Christ in the divine purpose, it also speaks the most clearly of his weakness and subjection to mortal flesh, and his complete dependence upon the subordination to the Father.

It is Hebrews that speaks of his strong crying and tears; his being saved from death; his being heard in that he feared; his learning obedience by the things that he suffered; his being brought from the dead by the blood of the Covenant; his being made perfect through suffering.

The truth concerning Christ and his real struggle and his great victory is very beautiful and inspiring; more, it is transforming. It can turn ugliness to beauty, and death to life.

* * *

"By whom also He (God) made the worlds" (1:2).

Rather—*"Through whom He made the ages—the aions."*

All the ages—dispensations, different periods in the development of God's purpose—revolve around Christ. As in English, "made" in Hebrew is far more than to just create; it is to prepare, make ready or arrange.

* * *

"Who being the brightness of His (God's) glory" (1:3).

This word "brightness" simply means the "fullness of the shining forth." It has always been the yearning of godly men to see, and feel, and more fully comprehend the glory of God.

Moses, pressed down beyond measure with the burden of faithless, childish, fleshly, rebellious Israel, said—

"Show me Thy glory" (Ex. 33:18).

Just as the disciples said—

"Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us" (Jn. 14:8).

Herein, in a glimpse of God's glory, and in a direct reassurance of His divine mercy and love, Moses found strength to continue the battle alone.

Christ was the full manifestation of that glory to man—

"The word was made flesh, and dwell among us. And we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (Jn. 1:14).

So John begins to tell this same beautiful marvelous story of Immanuel, *"God with us."*

Grace and truth—what a power they have! These are the basic divine characteristics from which all else springs. Their power and beauty lie in their inseparable oneness. Together, they are divine eternal love; separated they cease to exist.

This was the *"light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,"* of which the apostle speaks to the brethren at Corinth, exhorting them to—

"Behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord."

And be thus—

"Changed into the same image from glory to glory."

Let us devote our lives to this divine experience. "Change" is the key word. What we are today is never good enough for tomorrow.

* * *

"And the express image of His person" (1:3).

More literally and correctly—

"The exact engraving of His substance."

We might point out, first of all, that this loses much of its basic meaning if we do not have a true understanding of the wonderful revelation of man being made in the image of God. But it goes much further—for it is clearly something special as related to Christ—as related to his greatness, as related to his work and accomplishment for men.

"The exact engraving of His substance."

The perfect man, the perfect image of God, the perfect, flawless, unblemished manifestation of God—the perfect Son and likeness of the perfect Father.

Perfection is a tremendous and overwhelming conception. We shy away from it as unearthly and unreal, but the command

is—*“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect”* (Matt. 5:48).

This is what we must aim at constantly, unceasingly, every moment—

“Be YE PERFECT.”

—every deed, word and thought brought into captivity to the mind of Christ.

There is a tremendous power and incentive and joy and glory in even the attempt to be perfect. What greater adventure, what greater ambition, what greater satisfaction can anything in life offer more than this complete mastery of the mind and body by the power of the Spirit of God!

This was Christ. This was his power. This was his greatness before God and men. His life was the most lowly; his circumstances the most humble; his possessions nothing; his end complete desertion by his friends, and rejoicing and triumph by his enemies.

And yet, he could truly, calmly, peacefully, triumphantly say of that end—

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you—be of good cheer—I have OVERCOME THE WORLD”

(Jn. 14:27; Jn. 16:33).

* * *

“And upholding all things by the word of His (God’s) power” (Heb. 1:3).

The “His” is clearly God in each case: His glory, His person, His power. The apostle is speaking of Christ’s life on earth—an aspect of his work and accomplishment. Truly today in his glory he upholds everything by the Word of his own power. He said himself, after his resurrection (Matt. 28:18)—

“All power is given me in heaven and in earth.”

But that is clearly not its meaning here. It is actually much deeper and more meaningful as related to the divine purpose.

In the days of his flesh and weakness and struggle and overcoming, how did he “uphold all things by the Word of God’s power?” It is clearer if we look into the meaning of the word “uphold” (*phero*). Basically it means, according to Liddell and Scott, “to bear or carry a load,” secondarily, “to endure or suffer.” The thought is beautifully expressed in Isaiah 53—

“He hath BORNE our griefs, and CARRIED our sorrows—the chastisement of our peace was upon him; the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all.”

The key thought is not just that it was laid upon him, but that he bore, he carried it, he *sustained it to perfection*, “by the Word

of God's power." We remember his immediate reaction to the tempter—"It is written." Surely that was "enduring all things by the Word of God's power." Isaiah covers this thought when he says, by the Spirit—

"He opened not his mouth" (Isa. 53:7).

There was perfect acceptance, complete resignation to the will of God—

"Thy will not mine be done" (Mk. 14:36).

Job was a wonderful man—a wonderful example of suffering in patience and in faith—a record for all time that few have equalled. But it could hardly be said of him that he "opened not his mouth." In fact, his great realization was of his failure in that respect—

"I have uttered that I understood not, things too wonderful for me, which I knew not . . . Therefore I abhor myself in dust and ashes" (Job 42:3, 6).

James 3:2 says—

"If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body."

There was only one such, "bearing all things by the Word of God's power." Christ bore, endured, suffered all things in the pure perfection of godliness. Paul says of love that it—

"Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things—and never faileth"
(1 Cor. 13:7-8).

This was Christ—

"Greater love hath no man than this" (Jn. 15:13).

* * *

"When he had by himself purged our sins" (1:30).

Or rather more correctly, as the Revised Version—

"Made purification of sins."

It was broader than "OUR sins." It was universal—

"Behold the lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world" (Jn. 1:29).

He took away sin—conquered sin—destroyed sin—all sin—UNIVERSAL sin—by his perfection.

One man did this: one man alone, strengthened, of course, by God in Whom he fully trusted. Consider the power, and eternal effect, of one man's perfection—one man's perfect, single-minded, wholehearted, dedication to perfect obedience—

"As by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life"
(Rom. 5:18).

It was one man alone—terribly, tragically alone. This passage in Hebrews points that out—“*by HIMSELF.*” He knew it must be that way—

“Ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone because the Father is with me” (Jn. 16:32).

He was alone with God all his life, and in his death. We have read recently of Paul—

“No man stood with me—all men forsook me”
(2 Tim. 4:16).

But the results are an eternal multitude of joyful, loving companions that no man can number.

* * *
“Sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high”
(Heb. 1:3).

He sat down. The sacrificial aspect—the terrible aspect—of his work was done. He said—

“It is finished” (Jn. 19:30).

He sits at God’s right hand: the closest communion, the highest honor, the most joyful relationship. No higher position is possible in the whole universe—on the right hand of the Creator and Ruler of all. In writing to the Colossians, Paul bases a deep and urgent exhortation upon this particular point—

“If then ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which be above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God” (Col. 3:1).

This is a glorious command, a life-giving exhortation, a tremendous mental and spiritual revolution. It is the only course that will find acceptance in the great day soon to come.

* * *
“Being made so much better than the angels” (1:4).

More correctly, and more clearly, as in the Revised Version—
“Having become so much better.”

It was a “becoming” through suffering. Paul says in the next chapter that he was—

“Made a little lower than the angels.”

The Psalm from which he quotes refers to man in general, and to Christ in particular as inseparable from man—THE man, the ONLY man as man should be. Hebrews 2 is largely concerned with CHRIST’S COMPLETE IDENTITY WITH MANKIND and their weaknesses, temptation and sufferings and the basic fact that this was absolutely essential if he were to be mankind’s Savior and High Priest.

"As he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they" (Heb. 1:4).

Christ's superiority to the angels was not only in his accomplishment but in his divine Sonship. As the apostle says later (Heb. 5:8)—

"Though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things he suffered."

He was Son of God from his beginning, though humbled for the purpose of his perfection. Having perfectly overcome, he showed himself worthy of his sonship, and thus received the honor both by birth and by achievement.

This verse 4 begins the section of chapter 1 in which Paul contrasts Christ with the angels and shows how much greater he was in every way. Things were said of this promised Savior—Messiah—Emmanuel—never said of angels. As the bearer and fulfiller of the memorial Yahweh Name—*"He who Shall be Mighty Ones"*—he is addressed as *"God"* and *"Lord."* This is the deep beauty of God-manifestation, not the meaningless confusion of the Trinity.

In the closing words of chapter 2, Paul beautifully sums up his great work and victory—the destruction of sin and the loving, compassionate, all-understanding, mediatorship between weak, failing, striving man and the God of all holiness and purity and power—

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

"For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.

"Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

"For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted"

(Heb. 2:14-18).

Let us rejoice that—

"We have such an high priest who can be touched with the feelings of our infirmities" (Heb. 4:15).

Grow in Grace

“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia” (1 Pet. 1:1).

These were the ecclesias of Asia Minor which were the scene of Paul's earliest labors. Peter was the “*apostle to the circumcision*”—to the *Jews*. These brethren and sisters whom he wrote were Paul's first *Gentile* converts. What then were the purpose and circumstances that would cause Peter to write to these?

We know from Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians that there was a tendency among believers to identify themselves with one particular apostle or leader to the detriment of unity and balanced growth in the Truth. The appointment of Paul to the Gentiles and Peter to the Jews would have a tendency among the undiscerning to encourage this.

The Body of Christ is a unity; its unity is a vital First Principle. *Anything that detracts from that unity is evil.*

Paul's teaching inculcated a very high degree of holiness and selfless devotion, which he manifested in his own life. The natural tendency of the flesh is to question the authority of such, and to seek an authority which seems less restrictive, or to try to create an appearance of conflict between authorities, to escape their force.

We know from Paul's remarks to the Corinthians that because some were seeking an easier way, Paul was discounted as an extremist and a fanatic. And we know too, from the epistle to the Galatians (in the same area) that the ecclesias here which Paul had founded had turned aside to teachers who desired to lead them back to the Law of Moses and the old Jewish customs (Gal. 1:7; 3:2).

We know further that on one occasion (Gal. 2:11-13) Paul had to take public issue with Peter regarding a mistaken course of conduct that would have restricted the freedom of the Gospel from Mosaic bondage; and that Paul's own companion Barnabas had for a time been influenced by Peter's action.

So we can see the wisdom and necessity of something on record from Peter to those among the converts of Paul who might be inclined to question Paul's authority in relation to that of Peter and the original apostles.

In his second epistle, Peter speaks very highly of “*our beloved brother Paul,*” and classes his writings as among the “*Scriptures.*”

The more we think of the early chapter of Galatians, where Paul strives to illustrate and convince them of his direct *divine authority* and appointment to preach the Gospel, and look behind these chapters to visualize the conditions he was combating, the more we appreciate the fittingness of these epistles of Peter to these same brethren.

* * *

Concerning the subject of these epistles, we know the dangers that assailed the Truth in the early years and they are the same today, because the flesh is still the same. The differences are only in detail.

There was the tendency to fall back into the Jewish reliance on external ritual and external regulation of conduct—feeling that all righteousness was fulfilled in a technical compliance with “*Thou shalt*” and “*Thou shalt not*,” failing to realize that *the great battle is deep down within each heart*. This shallow external view leads to self-satisfaction and self-glorification—a gradual, fatal, building-up of a conception of a personal accomplishment in righteousness.

Another danger was, and is, glorification of, and reliance upon, the *wisdom of the world* which is foolishness with God. The simplicity of Christ and the depths of the Spirit’s wisdom are all refreshingly independent of any worldly attainments or qualifications, and are equally attainable and available to all. *Worldly education, if anything, is a detriment, swelling the conceit and filling the mind with rubbish.*

Then there was the constant pull of all the desires and pleasures and enticements of the flesh. As long as we are in this tabernacle, the flesh never ceases to constantly demand attention and satisfaction.

Above all, there was the tendency for zeal and enthusiasm to weaken with the passage of time. In his first epistle it is this that Peter seems particularly concerned with.

He labors to impress them again with the greatness and wonderfulness of their calling in Christ—how its joy, when fully apprehended, completely transforms the mind and glorifies every moment with the wonder of divine love.

It is this divine joy that is the mainspring of all holiness and godliness. *If this can be kept strong, and constantly built up and increased, all else will come, all other problems will be solved.*

* * *

“*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ*”—a simple but all-inclusive introduction—an apostle—an appointed messenger of the

Anointed Savior—a messenger from him who was at once the King of Kings and the Elder Brother—the Lamb of God, the central figure of mankind, around whom all revolves, the personal manifestation among men of all the power, wisdom and love of God. Peter had a message for them and us direct from him.

* * *

"To the strangers"—to those sojourning in a strange place, pilgrims, living, like the patriarchs, in tabernacles, having no continuing city, no fixed ties to this present order of things—a strange, separate, consecrated people—

"No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him" (2 Tim. 2:4).

How easy it is to forget this!—to begin to *"hew us out sepulchres on high"* as if the things of this life had any importance or value. But as the Scriptures so vividly present it, all we can ever have out of this life is a *"SEPULCHRE on high"* a monumental gravestone to commemorate our folly and lost opportunity.

* * *

"Scattered"—literally, *"of a dispersion."* The primary figure is the worldwide, homeless dispersion of Israel all through the Gentile times, but the real, deeper thought is—

"THE CHILDREN OF GOD SCATTERED ABROAD."

—whom John in his gospel declares it was the purpose of Christ's sacrifice to *"gather together in one"* (Jn. 11:52). This is, and must ever be, the condition of his people in his absence—*scattered abroad*. It is a day of small things—a day of *individual things*.

The tendency, in religion, as in all else, is to build organizations, but the Truth is essentially a matter of *individuals*. Our strength or weakness lies solely in the degree of godliness and spiritual knowledge in the individual brethren and sisters. We must constantly force ourselves to think in terms of individuals, considering each separately, never in masses.

Ecclesial organization, the ability of leaders, numerical strength—these things mean nothing in the ultimate—all this will be sifted out as chaff and all will stand forth as individuals—one by one—*"the children of God scattered abroad."*

* * *

"Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, Bithynia"—that is, Asia Minor, the present Turkey—scene of Paul's earliest labors in

proclaiming the Truth to the Gentiles. As such, as the foundation, this area is typical of all. It is the land brother Thomas always preferred to speak of by its name of *Anatolia*—"the land of the sun's rising"—the land of the earliest proclamation to the Gentiles of the Sun of Righteousness. It was the area also in which lay the ecclesias to whom Jesus' last great prophetic message was addressed—the Revelation. Here again its representative and typical character is illustrated.

* * *

"Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." "Elect" simply means "chosen"—nothing more nor less. It is the same word for both—elect and chosen—throughout the New Testament. Peter uses the same word three other times in this epistle, all in chapter two. Of Christ—

"CHOSEN of God, and precious" (v. 4).

"A chief corner stone, ELECT, precious" (v. 6).

And of his people—

"Ye are a CHOSEN generation . . . that ye should show forth the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light" (v. 9).

The full description of the Redeemed is given in Rev. 17:14,

"He is Lord of lords, and King of kings, and they that are with him are called, and CHOSEN, and faithful."

Paul expresses the same marvellous and beautiful truth when he says in his greeting to the Ephesians (1:4)—

"According as God hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before Him in love."

God's choice is upon eternal and unrespecting principles—

"SEEK, and ye SHALL find" (Lk. 11:9).

"Draw nigh unto God, and He will draw nigh unto you" (Jam. 4:8).

"Ye shall find Me WHEN ye shall seek for Me WITH ALL YOUR HEART" (Jer. 29:13).

* * *

"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God." Here again we have the assurance that God's choice is on the basis of *what He foresees*. It is not arbitrary or capricious—

"The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of THEM WHOSE HEART IS PERFECT TOWARD HIM" (2 Chr. 16:9).

The foreknowledge of God, and its relationship to the freewill of the individual, has caused much confusion and perplexity,

but it need not. We know that *both are basic and simple truths*, yea, they are *essential truths*, in the very nature of things. We trouble ourselves needlessly when we in any way set one against the other, because of the limitations of our own minds.

It is not just a matter of being asked to accept an incomprehensible contradiction like the unscriptural doctrine of the Trinity. It is simply a matter of accepting *obvious, and inescapable, and simple divinely testified truths*.

The limitless foreknowledge of God is essential to His character as the eternal, all-wise, all-powerful Creator of all. God is essentially limitless in power, and knowledge, and goodness and love, for He is perfection and completeness in all these things.

"God is light, and in Him is NO DARKNESS at all"

(1 Jn. 1:5).

—declared the Spirit through John. Any limitation of His knowledge would be darkness.

Even though we find difficulty in adjusting our puny minds to these vast conceptions, all concern is removed from the subject by the revelation that He is not only all-wise and all-powerful, but *all-good*.

We can calmly leave the matter of free will and predestination in His hands with the assurance—not only of perfect fairness—but limitless help, mercy and love to those who seek Him wholeheartedly in the way His love prescribes.

This is contained in the title Peter here uses—*"God the Father."* This manifestation of Himself to us as "The Father" draws us to Him in affectionate faith and confidence, and takes away all the strangeness and terror that would attach to so great a Being to whom we had no kinship or likeness. Is not the revelation of Jesus Christ, the perfect *man*, as His Own Son, a powerful source of strength and fellowship in this respect? The Fatherhood of God is one of His most beautiful truths toward us.

* * *

"Through sanctification of the Spirit." "Sanctification" means "making holy" which in turn means cleansing from all that is evil and ungodly, and bringing into full harmony with the pure perfection of God. The whole epistle is a stirring up unto holiness.

Paul expresses the same glorious thought of divine choice and sanctification in writing to the Thessalonians (2:2:13)—

"God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."

Both are essential to salvation: (1) *belief of the Truth*—the gospel of the Kingdom and Name—and (2) *being made holy*—purified—transformed—*"sanctified of (by) the Spirit."*

* * *

"Unto obedience." Obedience is the great lesson to be learned, not as a matter of force and necessity, but of love and wisdom—

"By one man's disobedience many were made sinners" (Rom. 5:19).

What a long train of evil came from that first foolish act of disobedience! Disobedience is *always* foolish and self-destructive. God, for all His love and mercy, cannot tolerate disobedience. He would cease to be truly loving and merciful if He did tolerate this principle, for it is evil and destructive, and if tolerated, would destroy all good.

"So by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Rom. 5:19).

"He learned obedience by the things that he suffered" (Heb. 5:8).

Paul speaks of—

"The course of this world . . . the spirit that now worketh in the CHILDREN OF DISOBEDIENCE" (Eph. 2:2).

These verses illustrate the fundamental nature of this matter of obedience. It must be recognized and accepted as a basic principle. The *spirit of obedience* is the key to life—a *desire* to obey—a PLEASURE in obeying—in getting as CLOSE to God's requirements as possible. Saul was told—

"To obey is better than sacrifice" (1 Sam. 15:22).

Nothing that we can do, however self-sacrificing or worthy or laborious, can take the place of simple obedience to the commands of God.

* * *

"Unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." Obedience of itself is not enough, essential as it is. There must be the sprinkling, covering, atoning blood—the God-provided way of life, humbly and thankfully accepted. There is no other way of cleansing.

Paul, writing to the Hebrews concerning the typical sprinklings of the Law, speaks of the fulness of the divine purpose in Christ—

"How much more shall the blood of Christ . . . purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Heb. 9:14).

And again (Heb. 10:22)—

"Let us draw near . . . having our hearts SPRINKLED FROM AN EVIL CONSCIENCE."

What does it mean to have the heart "*sprinkled* (or purged) *from an evil conscience*" by the blood of Christ?

Paul explains the evil conscience that is cleansed when he speaks of coming to a recognition of the indwelling law of sin which tended to pull him down to death. This was the "*evil conscience*"—the consciousness of inner, inborn evil that caused him to exclaim—

"O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24).

As we come back to the seventh chapter of Romans from time to time, we increasingly realize that it describes a *stage through which all must pass*—a great awakening—a great turning point. Thenceforth, the realization of the deliverance—the thankfulness and relief—becomes stronger and stronger the more we realize and are oppressed by this consciousness of the evil of the flesh (Rom. 7:21)—

"When I would do good, evil is present with me."

Only the blood of Christ, and all it stands for in love, and mercy, and reconciliation and forgiveness, can lift the weight of this oppression of the evil of the flesh, and give strength and hope to press on in the way of righteousness.

* * *

"Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied"

(1 Peter 1:2).

The peace he prays for for them is the "*Peace of God that passeth understanding.*" It is a condition of heart and mind—settled—not disturbed—not anxious—not discouraged—but quiet joyfulness, confidence in the goodness of God regardless of anything else.

It is a recognition that all trials are passing and for a purpose, that God is good, that we shall not be tried above what we are able to bear, that nothing matters but the maintenance of a close communion with God, that everything else in life but this is just the passing scenery of a brief dream.

Peace is a quiet determination to do our best each day—cheerfully, patiently and thankfully, and leave things each night without anxiety in the hands of God. Peace is not the

blankness or numbness of stagnation, but a *living, active thing*—a keen, joyful, absorbing intenseness in the unchanging eternal beauties to which we are by faith and hope related. *Peace is stability of mind, built upon the stability of God.*

Grace is usually linked with peace, as here, and rightly so, for there can be no true peace apart from the grace and blessing of God. *Grace* is a word of great depth of meaning. It combines the thoughts of favor, benevolence, kindness, gentleness, charm, beauty, sweetness of disposition, balanced and mature cheerfulness—but none of these comprehend it in its fulness. It carries the sense of heavenliness of character, freedom from the ugliness of all the natural evil reactions of the flesh.

This word is used in two related ways—of God's attitude and action toward man—infinately forgiving and patient; and of man's own manifestation of the same godliness and beauty of character. Of Jesus it was recorded—

"He increased in favor—grace—(same word)—with God and man" (Lk. 2:52). And when he began his ministry, it was this beautiful heavenliness of deportment that struck his hearers—

"They wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth" (Lk. 4:22).

John said (Jn. 1:14, 16)—

"We beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH."

"And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace."

"Grace for grace"—grace from God, that grace may be begotten in us. He goes on to say (v. 17)—

"The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

Moses, the great lawgiver, could say like John, in the thankfulness of wisdom and humility—

"He must increase and I must decrease" (Jn. 3:30). *All are absorbed in Christ.*

Peter uses this word "grace" twelve times. He defines it beautifully by illustration in 2:19-21—

"THIS is grace—if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully . . ."

"If, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, THIS is grace with God."

When we have learned the Divine patience of complete peace and kindness and self-control in the face of the most unjust and flesh-provoking of circumstances, we have learned the

beautiful characteristic of *grace*. Grace is true, unmarred beauty of thought, word and action toward good and bad alike.

Peter concludes his epistles with the admonition—

“GROW in grace, and in knowledge” (2 Pet. 3:18).

* * *

The next few verses speak of the greatness of God's purpose in His elect, and their transcendent joy even in the midst of the trials which they know to be for the purging and beautifying of their characters.

It is against God's law to be anything else but joyful—intensely, overwhelmingly joyful in Faith, Hope and Love. Any other frame of mind is an unfaithful reflection on His goodness and providence and glorious eternal purpose. He has assured us, as His beloved children, that (Rom. 8:28)—

“All things—ALL THINGS—work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.”

Everything that happens to us is lovingly designed to develop and test our comprehension of this glorious promise—to teach us that nothing is able to obscure this eternal joy or to separate us from the glorious power of the love of God. Paul assures us (Rom. 8:38-39) that—

“Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God.”

* * *

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ Who, according to His abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (v. 3).

“Blessed be God” should be our continual frame of mind. It is a sound and healthy frame of mind. It recognizes the true facts of eternity and is in harmony with them.

There are many unhealthy and self-destructive frames of mind, but *this* line of thought has the power to drive them all away. If we can keep this uppermost, it will set the pattern for the growth of grace and godliness.

* * *

“According to His abundant mercy.” Mercy is sympathetic forbearance towards weakness and guilt—unearned goodness. God's mercy is limitless, as are all His attributes of goodness, but it is not shapeless and haphazard, it only runs

in a certain specified channel, in harmony with His righteousness and justice. The Psalmist says (103:17-18)—

“The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon THEM THAT FEAR HIM . . .

“To such as KEEP HIS COVENANT, and to those that REMEMBER HIS COMMANDMENTS to do them.”

The universal tendency of the flesh is to presume on God's mercy, to take His endless longsuffering for granted, to be always thinking of mercy in terms of its *future* manifestation; but our continual thought should be upon what His abundant mercy has *already done* for us in the past, and the great obligation of love that we are under because of it.

* * *

“Hath begotten us again”—that is, He has caused us to be born again—He hath brought us through the travail and wonderfulness of a new birth. There is much comfort and inspiration in this picture of a complete new birth unto a life of goodness.

Natural man is dead in trespasses and sins, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, driven by selfish, destructive, never-satisfied lusts and urges—*“by nature children of wrath”* (Eph. 2:3).

But God desires a holy family for Himself, and out of this dead mass of corrupt humanity He is calling some, through a new birth, to a life of beauty and purity unto Him.

This new birth, this passing from death to life, is inseparably connected by both Peter and John, with LOVE. *The new birth is the adoption of the motive of divine love as the rule of life*, in place of the old way of fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. John says (1 John 3:14):

“We KNOW that we have passed from death unto life, BECAUSE WE LOVE THE BRETHREN. HE THAT LOVETH NOT HIS BROTHER ABIDETH IN DEATH.”

Peter expresses the same thought in verse 22 of this chapter, to which we hope to come later.

* * *

“Unto a lively hope”—that is a living hope, or as many render it, “a life of hope.”

God hath begotten us unto a life of hope. Hope, Paul tells us, is one of the three basic qualities of the Christlike character—Faith, Hope and Love—beautiful, spiritual qualities. We can often get a more vivid picture when we contrast a word with its

opposite. Hope is the opposite of *hopeless*, “*without hope*”—our natural Gentile state, as Paul describes it (Eph. 2:12)—

“*Without Christ . . . aliens from the commonwealth of Israel . . . strangers from the covenants of promise, having NO HOPE, and WITHOUT GOD IN THE WORLD.*”

—nothing to look forward to but death and oblivion. The alternatives are: a “*life of hope*”—or a hopeless life.

A “*life of hope*” is a life of cheerful, confident assurance, joyful anticipation, a constant looking forward toward that which is promised. A life of hope contrasts with a life devoted to the present. It is a life whose interests are all in the future.

Peter says later in the chapter, “*hope PERFECTLY*”—completely, exclusively—entertain no thought that does not shine with hope.

* * *

“*By the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*” The resurrection of Christ is the basis of all hope. But it must be more—it must be the basis of all *love*.

“*Greater love hath no man than this—that a man lay down his life for his friends*” (Jn. 15:13).
—*and the whole purpose of love is to beget love.*

God did not beget us to a living hope simply by deciding that it should be so. He did it by the precious blood of His only begotten Son. We may not fully *understand* the necessity of these things, but we **MUST** fully *realize* their necessity. We must fully realize the suffering and the sacrifice that was required to lay the foundations of the way of life to which we have been invited. The precious blood of Christ must be an ever-present reality with us—a subject of continual meditation—for these are the thoughts that soften and purify the heart and create the gentle power of godliness.

* * *

“*To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away*” (v. 4).

The figure of inheritance is a prominent one in Scripture. We will readily call to mind many references to heirs, joint heirs, fellow-heirs, inheriting and inheritance. Paul expresses this principle very wonderfully in writing to the Romans—

“*The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.*”

“*And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*”

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:16-18).

"Heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ" speaks of the infinite glory of the inheritance, far beyond our mortal comprehension. "HEIRS OF GOD"!—consider what is involved in the thought!

We note that Paul connects the inheritance and the glory with the "*fellowship of the suffering*" (Phil. 3:10). That is the same thought that Peter is leading into in the next few verses—the deep purpose of suffering in the development of the characters of God's children, and their *thankful, Christlike attitude toward it*.

Natural Israel murmured at the loving, chastening of God—AND WERE DESTROYED. This is one of the biggest lessons of Israel's history—that complaining, murmuring, dissatisfaction, is not only dishonoring to God, but indicates a complete lack of comprehension and appreciation of the operation of His love.

* * *

Peter says the inheritance is "*incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading*." It is *incorruptible*—endless—continuing for ever—can never be destroyed or taken away. It is *undefiled*—there is nothing to detract from this infinite perfection of its goodness and joy. It is "*altogether lovely*." It is free from all the problems and sorrows and weaknesses and limitations of this sad present vale of tears. It is perfection.

It is *unfading*—this is perhaps its most wonderful aspect. The word means that it never withers, wastes, or loses strength. To our natural weak minds, the conception of endlessness in anything—even infinite joy—is a little frightening. All our thinking is adjusted to the limits of human nature. The greatest of joys, the keenest of excitements, the deepest of emotions, soon give way to fatigue and monotony. But if we by any means attain unto the resurrection of the dead, all human limitations will have been forever left behind—we shall have entered a timeless joy that will never lose any part of its intensity and fresh vigor.

Let us remember that God's infinite wisdom and power has given us all the capacity for enjoyment of things as we are at present. Whatever pleasure we experience, God's wisdom has designed and created the capacity for it in us.

All at present is on a low, brief, mortal level. Surely we can leave it to God to fulfil His marvellous promise to recreate our

powers of pleasure on a vastly greater, spiritual and eternal plane. The Psalmist said, by the mind of the Spirit—

"In Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures forever more" (Psa. 16:11).

We have not the mental capacity to even conceive the eternal joys prepared for THOSE THAT LOVE GOD.

* * *

"You who are kept by the power of God unto salvation" (1 Pet. 1:5).

In what way are the children of God preserved by this power unto salvation? To the Thessalonians Paul said—

"I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:23).

And to the Corinthians—

"God shall confirm—sustain—preserve—you unto the end that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1:8).

This "preserving blameless" is "by the power of God unto salvation." But upon what principle? Who is preserved blameless, and who is not? What of those who "for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away?" What of those who are "choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring forth no fruit to perfection?" They enter the race—why are they not "Kept by the power of God blameless unto salvation?" Peter says—

"You are kept by the power of God THROUGH FAITH unto salvation."

"Through faith" is the key—

"Chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and BELIEF OF THE TRUTH" (2 Thess. 2:13).

"Belief" and "Faith" are synonymous words in Scripture. It is always exactly the same word in the original for both. Belief is faith and faith is belief—always. John declares—

"He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave" (Jn. 5:10).

Paul says that there is One Faith—One Belief—that is, one body of Truth to be believed, and that body of Truth is called THE GOSPEL, for the apostle says to the Romans—

"The gospel is the power of God unto salvation unto every one that believeth" (Rom. 1:16).

Belief of the Gospel, then, is the connecting link—the ONLY connecting link—between the power of God and the believer's

salvation—*“Kept by the power of God—THROUGH FAITH—unto salvation.”* Paul emphasises this when he says to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 15:2)—

“Ye are saved by the gospel IF ye keep in memory—(margin & RV: hold fast)—what I preached unto you.”

So although Peter speaks of the *“elect according to the foreknowledge of God”*—being *“kept by the power of God unto salvation,”* he is neither minimizing the essential necessity of belief of the Gospel, nor is he lessening the force of the basic truth that *salvation depends upon faithful personal effort sustained unto the end,* and is only for those who of their own free will, choose to submit to—and be transformed by—the purifying power and will of God—

“NOT MY WILL, BUT THINE, be done” (Lk. 22:42).

Peter continues (v. 5) by saying that this salvation is—*“READY to be revealed in the last time.”*

In what way was the salvation “ready”? We get the picture in relation to this when we consider the parable of the marriage feast, and we get a beautiful new insight into the mercy and forbearance and patience of God, to Whom a day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as a day.

In this parable of Jesus, recorded in Matt. 22, a certain king made a marriage feast for his son, and he sent his servants to tell the bidden guests (but they made light of it):

“All things are READY: come unto the marriage” (v. 4).

“All things are ready.” This was the invitation to the Jews in the days of Jesus (Matt. 21:5)—

“Behold thy King cometh!”—“The kingdom is at hand!”

Six days before he was crucified, Jesus stood upon the Mount of Olives and looked down upon the city of Jerusalem, and wept. And he said unto it—

“If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! . . . but now they are hid from thine eyes” (Lk. 19:42).

“THIS THY DAY” . . . “HE CAME UNTO HIS OWN AND HIS OWN RECEIVED HIM NOT.” “ALL THINGS ARE READY.”

“When the king heard thereof, he was wroth and he sent forth his armies and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city” (Matt. 22:7).

Thus the Jewish commonwealth was overthrown and their city destroyed by the Romans who were used as God’s sword:

“Then saith the king to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy.”

"Go out into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage" (Matt. 22:8-9).

Here is the extension of the invitation to the Gentiles. Here is where the grace of God was sent forth unto us. He said, when this invitation began—

"The wedding is ready, but the guests were not worthy."

He had done His part—

"When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law to redeem them that were under the law" (Gal. 4:4-5).

God, in His patience, is still waiting.

"The wedding is ready, but the guests were not worthy."

We get the same thought in Paul's words to the Corinthians:

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared—hath made ready—for them that love Him" (1 Cor. 2:9).

God is ready and is waiting for us. Does not this picture of divine graciousness and patience add great force to the words we read in the Revelation—

"The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath MADE HERSELF READY" (Rev. 19:7).

And Jesus' words—

"The bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage; and the door was shut" (Matt. 25:10).

And the warning that he utters—

"Be ye therefore ready also; for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not" (Lk. 12:40).

* * *

"Wherein ye greatly rejoice," Peter continues (v. 6)—

"Though now for a season—for a little while if need be, ye are in heaviness—sorrow—through manifold temptations."

"Ye greatly rejoice . . . though ye are in sorrow." It is a strange and beautiful truth that earthly sorrow can be mixed with heavenly joy and that the bitterness of the sorrow can intensify the joy. How fearfully and wonderfully we are made! How little we know of the marvelous ways of God! How great our puny darkness to His infinite light! Who are we to question?—we can but accept His wisdom with awe.

"Ye greatly rejoice." Other versions have "exult," "full of exultation," "rejoice triumphantly," and the same word is

rendered elsewhere "exceeding joy," and is applied to the mental condition of those who in the last day stand accepted in the presence of the Lord—

"Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with EXCEEDING JOY" (Jude 24).

He is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless—will He DO it? He will if we let Him—if we will get everything else cleared out of the way so that He can. It is clear from Peter's words that the exceeding joy is a part of the future which we can have right now, IF WE WILL ACCEPT IT.

There is one very clear fact that we can all easily observe, and that is that *it is not those that have the most, and suffer the least, that are the happiest and most contented.*

We can easily learn by observation that happiness, contentment, peace of mind and rejoicing do not stand in any direct proportion to outward circumstances—the greatest sufferer can be the happiest; the most fortunate can be the most miserable.

On what, then, does joy depend? *Purely on the inner state of the mind.* Now although this is true even in the natural, we are not concerned with any joy except the true, sound, unchanging spiritual joy that is based on the Faith, Hope and Love which come from a wholehearted embracing of the Gospel of the Kingdom.

There the intense inward joy exists, not only *in spite of* outward sorrow, but actually *because of* it. It is recorded of the early disciples, when they were beaten by the Jewish authorities—(and these public beatings, whippings by strong men with lashes, were cruel and vicious; the intent was to inflict as much pain as possible that would continue a long time after)—when they were beaten, they departed—

"REJOICING that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name" (Acts 5:41).

—not just patiently bearing it, but *rejoicing!* How close are WE to the mind of Christ? James exhorts—

"Count it ALL JOY when ye fall into manifold trials" (Jam. 1:2).

Paul said, *"I take pleasure—(a powerful word translated "well pleased" in the occasions where God speaks of Christ: "In whom I am WELL PLEASED")—*

"I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches (insults, abuses) in necessities (need, hardship, deprivation) in

persecution, in distresses (grievous difficulties) for Christ's sake: for WHEN I AM WEAK, THEN AM I STRONG" (2 Cor. 12:10).

Do we even understand what this spiritual joy in suffering is all about? How are we ever going to break up our smug, comfortable little self-centered existences and cast ourselves fully into this glorious spiritual joy? Peter himself says—

"Rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings: that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" (1 Pet. 4:13).

The testimony is (2 Tim. 2:12)—

"IF we suffer (with him); we shall also reign with him."

* * *

"Though now for a season"—"for a short time"—"for a little while." This is an important aspect. The trial is short, the results are eternal. Sometimes seventy, eighty or ninety years do not seem short, when they are filled with difficulties and struggles and sorrows and bereavement and long lonely waiting. But that is just the natural fleshly point of view. We must get the spiritual point of view. Paul says—

"Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:17).

Because Paul had the true point of view, he was joyful and contented and continuously thankful through the most terrible of trials; therefore he could look forward to a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Similarly Peter continues—

"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth (though it be tried with fire), might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:7).

"The trial of your faith"—How is our faith tried? We are apt to think in our thoughtlessness, that as long as we do not openly abandon the Truth, our faith is holding firm. But there is far more to it than that. Paul tells us—

"If any provide not for his own relatives, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Tim. 5:8).

"He hath denied the faith"—This illustration shows that anything that is contrary to the commands of God is "denying the faith." Denying the Faith is not just denying the doctrine. The purging, purifying, perfecting of our faith is the process of putting us through a long series of adverse experiences wherein,

by practice and self-control, we gradually develop a godly character. Of Jesus it was said—

"He learned obedience by the things which he suffered" (Heb. 5:8).

How could Jesus, who was from the first *perfect* in obedience—*never disobedient*—how could he "*learn obedience*"?

He, too, like his brethren, had to build and strengthen the mental character of joyful enlightened obedience and faithfulness to Divine principles of conduct under great trial. He never failed, never disobeyed, but still he, too, *grew in grace and knowledge and spiritual strength and stature*.

This is why the theory of his preexistence as a divine person is so utterly contrary to Scripture and subversive of the true picture of salvation.

* * *

"Much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire" (1 Pet. 1:7). Though gold is unaffected by fire, and is one of the most unchanging and uncorruptible substances we know, still "*it perisheth*," as compared to the spiritual things of eternity. Gold like all the worldly things it stands for, is perishing and corruptible, though it seems so lasting and dependable.

The tried character of faith is of infinitely more value and durability. Gold is the *treasure on earth*—all the things men desire and strive for—better houses, better positions and possessions—all the tangible, perishing things.

But faith is the *treasure in heaven*. The Scripture always presents earthly treasures and heavenly treasures as opposites—*incompatibles*—God and Mammon. It always presents the faithful as pilgrims and strangers—the simple, humble, suffering Lazarus class. To the rich man it was said—

"Remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented" (Lk. 16:25).

Naturally, we desire to have the good things of *both* lives, but that is not the way the children of God are being prepared for their eternal glory. *Who are we*, that we should selfishly seek the luxuries of this life, when most of the world is underfed, and Christ our Master whom we profess to love and follow, in devoting his life to mankind, had not where to lay his head? *Who are we* to say to the great suffering multitude—

"Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled?"
(Jam. 2:16)

LET US REMEMBER THAT JESUS SAID—

“The disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord . . . He that taketh not his cross, and FOLLOWETH AFTER ME, is not worthy of me”

(Matt. 10:24. 38).

“IF we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him.” Paul, given by Christ as an example of the life and character and labor he expects, said that for Christ he had—

“. . . suffered the loss of ALL THINGS, and counted them but dung, that he might win Christ, and might BY ANY MEANS attain unto the resurrection of the dead”
(Phil. 3:8, 11).

To him the attaining of the resurrection of life was no easy matter, no foregone conclusion by just “being in the Truth.” He recognized the greatness and the fulness and the all-embracing nature of the call to *“Come out, take up the cross, and follow the Master.”*

* * *

“Praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 1:7).

Are we interested in “*praise and honor and glory?*” Is this the motive of our obedience, or is it selfless love? The praise and honor and glory of which the Scriptures speak are different entirely from the praise, honor and glory of the world, for they are based on truth and reality and are an essential part of the goodness and joy when all things will be in harmony with God.

Good will be triumphant, and all the upright will rejoice in that fact, not personally and selfishly, but because it is for universal good. Those who have sought the good and made God their portion will be in the ruling places of the earth, with the wisdom and power to teach and enforce the ways of God in all the earth, and they will glory that they are taking a leading part in the universal goodness.

Praise and honor and glory are empty things in themselves, but when they are related to the triumph of righteousness and victory over sin and evil, they are wholesome and beautiful and sound and desirable.

* * *

“At the appearing of Jesus Christ.” All hope and expectation is centered on that event. For that glorious appearing all creation waits. How infinitely sad that the religious systems of the world have confused and obscured this great central truth—*“Until he come.”*

"Whom, having not seen, ye love" (v. 8). Why do we love him? John says (1 John 4:19)—

"We love . . . because he first loved us."

The love of which the Scriptures speak is not a natural thing. *We should be very clear on this.* The term "love" is applied to many things. *This* love is the first of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22), which Paul very distinctly *contrasts* with the "*works of the flesh.*" It is something, therefore, entirely outside the realm and comprehension of the natural mind, for Paul again clearly says (1 Cor. 2:14)—

"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither CAN he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

The Bride says of Christ in the Song of Solomon that he is "*ALTOGETHER lovely.*" He stands before us as the perfect manifestation of all that is good and desirable, with no fleshly weakness or changeableness to mar the beauty of the picture. Only perfect goodness can inspire perfect love.

And it is not a dead, mechanical goodness. The essence of the way of salvation is its *living, personal* nature. We are not asked just to love and strive toward goodness in the abstract. It is all intensely *personal*—a personal Father, and a personal Elder Brother who seeks, by the inspiration of a loving self-sacrifice and a perfect example, to raise us up, through love, to the fulness of eternal glory and joy.

* * *

"In whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (v. 8).

THIS WE MUST HAVE—"Joy unspeakable, and full of glory." IT IS THE ONLY POWER THAT CAN OVERCOME SIN. It is the only power that can hold an ecclesia or a fellowship together in soundness and truth. We MUST be sufficiently deep in the Truth to lead us into this fixed and consistent state of "*rejoicing in Christ with joy unspeakable and full of glory.*" As Nehemiah told weeping and repentant Israel—

"Mourn not, nor weep . . . for the joy of the Lord is your strength!" (Neh 8:9-10).

* * *

"Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls" (v. 9).

"Receiving" salvation is a *process*—parallel to "*working out your salvation*"—ye rejoice that ye are in the way of, and on the way to, salvation.

"The salvation of your souls." The word here translated "soul" occurs about one hundred times in the New Testament. It is translated about forty times as "life" and about sixty times as "soul." The following are examples of its use—

"I lay down my LIFE for the sheep" (Jn. 10:15).

"He that loveth his LIFE shall lose it" (Jn. 12:25).

"To give his LIFE a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28).

"He laid down his LIFE for us, and we ought to lay down our LIVES for the brethren" (1 Jn. 3:16).

It is clear from these passages that the word "soul" (here translated "life") *really means LIFE*, and does not mean some "immortal essence" within us. We cannot lay down an "immortal soul" for our brethren. The "salvation of your souls" is well illustrated by Jesus' words (Matt. 16:25)—

"Whosoever will save his life (psuche—soul—same word) shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life (soul) for my sake shall find it."

How can we lose our life, or "soul," for Christ's sake? Understood as an immortal essence within us, it is an absurdity, but understood according to the scriptural meaning of *soul*, it is quite clear. Jesus explains it at the same time—

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me, FOR whosoever shall save his life (soul) shall lose it, etc . . ."

If we try to keep our life for ourselves, we lose it; but if we give up our life for Christ—denying ourselves—denying our own natural desires and pleasures—yielding our life even unto death if need be, we save it. The unscriptural orthodox idea of an immortal soul confuses all this.

"Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you" (v. 10).

For 4,000 years the children of God looked forward with keen anticipation to the manifestation of the woman's seed who should bruise the Serpent and destroy the power of sin.

Much was written concerning this glorious coming personage. In type, figure and prophecy he was the theme of all the Scriptures. Many prophecies were clear, but much, too, was strange and obscure. Majestic prophecies of royal power and universal dominion were strangely intertwined with those of suffering, humiliation, rejection and death.

Little wonder that God's faithful prophets sought to comprehend these hidden mysteries of godliness—the Seed of the Woman, a Light to the Gentiles, a Priest after the order of

Melchizedek, a Prophet like unto Moses, a Lamb led to the slaughter, a King on Zion's royal hill, a Servant of the people, a Ruler of all nations of the earth, the Root of David, and his Offspring—at once David's son and David's Lord.

* * *

"Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow" (v. 11).

"The Spirit of Christ which was in them." John records—

"The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. 19:10).

The spirit—life, meaning, power—of all prophecy is the Testimony of Jesus. All centers in, and radiates from, him—

"He is the head of the body (the Ecclesia)—the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.

"For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell" (Col. 1:18-19).

How keenly the prophets would desire to know the time, and the manner of the time, of this great manifestation of godliness! Truly, as Paul wrote to Timothy, *great was its mystery—*

"God manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels . . ." (1 Tim. 3:16).

What is the significance of that—"seen of angels?" Paul, in the majestic opening chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, portrays how much greater in honor and glory the Son of God was than any of the hosts of immortal angels that surround the throne of God and fulfil His will throughout the vast universe.

And Peter continues, in the next verse (12) of this chapter we are considering, by revealing that not only all the prophets and faithful of old, but the *angels themselves* earnestly desired to look into the revelation and consummation of this great mystery—the Son of God, the Word made flesh!

As we think upon this aspect that Peter reveals of the keen angelic interest in the fulfilment of the purposes of God, we are given a striking insight into the glories of the future that await the redeemed, who shall be equal unto the angels in endless immortal vigor and interest and joy—working with God in all His future purposes.

"Which things"—the glories enfolded in Christ—"the angels desire to look into," says Peter. "Wherefore," he continues—in view of the infinite and universal greatness and magnitude of

your calling to be part of this God-manifestation that the angels long to see—

"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind!" (v. 13).

What a fitting and expressive form of words! The "*girding up of the loins*" was the gathering together of all the loose folds and ends of the flowing eastern garments—drawing them all up together compactly between the legs and into the waistband, so as to leave the legs free and untrammelled for traveling or strenuous work.

Workmen, pilgrims, runners, wrestlers, soldiers—all "*girded their loins,*" and all are used as types of Christ's brethren. The Israelites were to eat the Passover with "*loins girded*" (Ex. 12:11) vigilant and intent upon their salvation, partaking with alertness, *ready to go instantly* at the given signal. Jesus said (Lk. 12:35-36)—

"Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord."

"*Gird up the loins of your mind.*" This is what we have to KEEP ON DOING, if we hope to make any accomplishment in the way of godliness. Our minds naturally are loose and undisciplined, wandering according to passing fancy or interest, always seeking pleasure, entertainment, diversion.

Particularly in these days of the subtle, demoralizing, stupefying, mentally-degenerating influences of such worldly things as television, we need this stirring exhortation to keep our minds firmly and tightly girded and applied to the things of godliness—not as a matter of enforced and reluctant duty and suppressed desire, but with a spiritually-enlightened, sensible, thankful realization of the stupidity of this creeping form of mental slavery and debasement, and relief that we have been called out of such hopeless darkness into the glorious, purposeful light of eternal reality and godliness.

"Gird up the loins of your mind—AND BE SOBER."

Be sober. Other versions render it "Be vigilant," "With strictest self-control," "Self-restraint." The meaning is a personal, watchful vigilance against the wandering of the mind and interests to things that have no profit as regards salvation. No empty, frothy, shallow lightness, but a serious, intent directing of the mind into profitable and *eternally-satisfying channels*. There is no *real satisfaction and peace* in the ways of the flesh, no matter how desirable and appealing they may

seem to be. There is just a constant, frustrating, elusive *seeking* for satisfaction—“*Seeking rest, and finding none.*”

“*Be not deceived, God is not mocked.*” He has planned life a certain way. We *must* do it *His* way if we hope for satisfaction and success. How stupid of us to think that we can outwit Him—prove Him wrong—find satisfaction and peace where He says there is none!

Men of the world spend years of self denial to obtain a corruptible crown that soon ends in the grave. Peter exhorts the brethren and sisters to constantly keep *their* minds centered on the eternal, incorruptible joys of their great destiny of God-manifestation throughout eternity. Foolishness, fleshliness, worldliness, are a degrading of that which was made in the image of God—a debasing and prostituting of the high calling to which we are called—a mockery of God’s great and holy purpose of forming a pure spiritual Temple to His everlasting honor and glory. Therefore, intensely and prayerfully—

“*Gird up the loins of your mind!*”

“*Gird up the loins of your mind; be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ*” (1 Pet. 1:13).

“*And hope to the end*”— rather, “hope perfectly”— it is the same word translated “perfect” in the verse—

“*Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect*” (Matt. 5:48).

“*Hope perfectly*”—completely, exclusively, all your heart and effort and attention given to it. Paul told the Colossians that Jesus would present them holy and unblamable and unreprouvable before God, provided they were not—

“*Moved away from the HOPE OF THE GOSPEL*”

(Col. 1:23).

—that is, provided they kept their minds girded and vigilant, centered fully upon the One Hope.

* * *

“*Hope to the end for the grace that is to be BROUGHT UNTO YOU at the revelation of Jesus Christ*” (v. 13).

“*Brought at the revelation of Jesus Christ*” corresponds with the “*reserved in heaven for you*” of verse 4, showing Paul had no thought of *their going to heaven* to receive it. He says similarly to the Philippians—

“*Our citizenship—our commonwealth—is in heaven, FROM WHENCE also we look for the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ*” (3:20).

"As obedient children." Peter comes back to the thought of obedience. Their whole calling was, as he has told them—

"UNTO OBEDIENCE and sprinkling" (v. 2).

Everything fails if they do not lovingly perceive *that* as the great purpose of their calling—to "**MAKE READY a people PREPARED for the Lord**"—prepared by obedience and sprinkling. What is involved in this "preparing"—this "making ready?" What *has* to happen to the natural, rough, coarse, earthy mind of the flesh—and *is* it happening to us?

Obedience is such a simple, easy thing! God requires no great accomplishments—just a yielding, a submitting—just the simple love and obedience of an intelligent child to a wise and affectionate Father.

* * *

"As obedient children." We can do God no greater honor, give Him no greater pleasure, than simple obedience—*leave alone* what He says to leave alone, readily and unhesitatingly, without any selfwilled quibbling or temporizing; act in the spirit and manner He desires us to act; occupy ourselves in the way He desires us to occupy ourselves. What could be simpler or more reasonable? No sorrow, no remorse, no regrets. We *know* it is the only sensible way. Then why ever do anything else? But, says Paul (Rom. 7:14-23)—

"When I would do good, evil is present with me. I find a law in my members warring against the law of my mind."

"The law of God is spiritual, but I am carnal—fleshly—sold under sin."

A recognition of this is the greatest half of the battle. That is what the blood of sprinkling is for—

"Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience"
(Heb. 10:22).

—a consciousness of natural evil and corruption. God knows the problem and has provided the remedy—

"We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

"Let us therefore come BOLDLY—confidently, trustfully—unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need"
(Heb. 4:15-16).

"Grace to help in time of need." THAT IS THE ANSWER TO ALL OUR PROBLEMS. We must come to realize that. The whole

purpose of the Law of Moses was to teach man his weakness and need and to point to the source of help and strength. God asks nothing that He does not freely offer the power to accomplish.

* * *

“Not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance.” Fashion is an outward, shallow, passing thing. Paul says, *“The fashion of this world passeth away”* (1 Cor. 7:31), and the point he is making is that those who follow it are to pass away with it. The following of passing fashions is a mark of shallowness and emptiness of mind, especially in those who have taken on the Name of Christ and are related to infinitely greater things. The children of God must examine everything they do from the perspective of their holy and eternal calling.

“The former lusts in your ignorance.” Ignorance is the opposite of knowledge. We are ignorant just to the extent and measure of our limitation of divine knowledge. If we do not have scriptural knowledge, we are IGNORANT—there is no other word for it.

Surveying God’s revealed Word as a whole—its wonderful sixty-six books of glorious, spiritual revelation—what word describes our accomplishments of learning best—*knowledge*, or *ignorance*?

The more ignorant we are, the more our lives will be directed by the “lusts of our ignorance;” the more knowledge we have (if we USE it), the more we shall conform to the image of Christ. Therefore Peter earnestly concludes his epistles with the exhortation—

“GROW in grace, and in KNOWLEDGE.”

We must grow, and keep on growing, as long as we have life and opportunity. Otherwise there is no hope at all of acceptance and salvation.

“As He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation (that is: conduct, living)”
(v. 15).

When the Spirit, in giving these commands, frames them upon the basis of a comparison with God Himself, it is setting a high standard indeed—

“Be ye holy, as GOD is holy” (1 Pet. 1:16).

“Be ye perfect as GOD is perfect” (Matt. 5:48).

“Forgive, even as GOD hath forgiven” (Eph. 4:32).

“Love one another, as GOD hath loved” (Jn. 15:9-12).

What does it *mean* to “be holy?” It is a word that we do not make sufficiently a part of our everyday pattern of thought and activity. Do we make a point of stopping to think throughout the day as to whether what we are doing is *holy* or *unholy*?—for if it is not the one, it is the other; there is no neutral ground.

WE SHOULD. Peter has just emphasized again the issues of *obedience* as the key to life or death, and the FIRST COMMAND that follows is (1 Pet. 1:15-16)—

“BE YE HOLY in all your conduct, even as God is holy.”

It is profitable to note once again the infinite repetition of that little word all—“*in ALL your conversation* (conduct).” In the very essence of it, it *must* be all-inclusive, or it is not true holiness at all.

“Be ye holy”—that is, Be ye SEPARATED, SET APART, SACRED, DEVOTED. Paul declares (Heb. 12:14)—

“Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.”

To be holy is to be separate from all that is fleshly and worldly, to be devoted to God, to act always in a spirit of self-restraint and reverence, as befitting the presence of God. The greatest incentive to holiness is a strong, vivid, living consciousness of the closeness of God.

We must all freely confess that we fail miserably in this matter of holiness, when measured by the divine standard. We so easily forget, and drift into the natural, thoughtless, unholy way of the flesh (for all that is natural and thoughtless is unholy and unclean).

We so easily sink down to the level of mere animal interest and existence, like all the rest of the world that knows not God. How clearly stands out the need for the constant repetition of the exhortation to “*Gird up the loins of your mind!*” (1 Pet. 1:13)

“And if ye call upon the Father, Who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear” (1 Pet. 1:17).

Since you call Him “Father”—since you have taken it upon you to claim such a close relationship with the Eternal Creator of the universe—since you have recognized His authority and discipline and jurisdiction and claim on you as His children—“*pass the time of your sojourning in fear.*”

We note first Peter’s reference to this present life as a “*time of sojourning.*” To keep it before our minds in this light is a great help toward holiness.

To “sojourn” is to dwell at a place *temporarily* as a *stranger*—not a native, not a citizen, not a part of the community. The

literal meaning is even more striking and applicable: it means "to dwell from day to day"—just a day at a time: no roots, no connections, no fixed abode.

We must constantly fight the tendency to get entrenched in the present, to lay up treasure on earth, to build ourselves "*sepulchres on high*" (for all we can build in this life is a sepulchre, and if we are not constantly on guard against the trends of the flesh that is exactly what we shall in the end find that we have done—merely erected a magnificent tombstone of folly and failure.)

We must live in the constant recognition that ours is a day-to-day pilgrimage, that the Master's call—"Leave all and follow me"—is still the narrow, and only, way to life. "*Here we have no continuing city*"—no ties to the present—one day at a time.

"Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear."

John declares, and he describes an intensely beautiful ideal, "*Perfect love CASTETH OUT FEAR . . . He that feareth is not made perfect in love*" (1 Jn. 4:18).

Are we, then, like some who would make man's obedience to God merely a matter of human option and choice, to deprecate the aspect of fear in our mental regard of the Great Creator of all? We are told by the Spirit through Solomon that to—

"Fear God and keep His commandments is the WHOLE DUTY of man (literally the WHOLE MAN)" (Ecc. 12:13).

Nor is this an isolated passage. Nor is its lesson confined to the Old Testament. Many are the New Testament exhortations to a healthy, constructive, reverential fear—

"Work out your salvation with FEAR and trembling" (Phil 2:12).

"Perfecting holiness in the FEAR of God" (2 Cor. 7:1).

"Be not high-minded, but FEAR" (Rom. 11:20).

Our fear must be a deep awesome reverence for the greatness and majesty of God's holiness—a careful, vigilant caution to ever strive against falling short—a realization of constant danger, constant weakness and constant need. This aspect of our salvation is apt to receive too little consideration in these democratic days of human exaltation and self-sufficient presumption. If we are not very careful, we are unconsciously and inevitably influenced in our outlook by the atmosphere of the times, especially when it is so pleasing to the flesh. A deep, inner, inherent, subconscious pride of the flesh is our greatest enemy and peril. That is why enlightened humility works in "*fear and trembling.*"

But fear must NEVER *dominate*. It must always be subordinate to the great and comforting realization that God is infinitely merciful and compassionate toward the distressing weaknesses of those who truly give Him ALL their heart.

"*Perfect love casteth out fear,*" and our lives should be a gradual transition, step by step, ever upward, from the immaturity (though primary necessity) of the one to the full and fearless maturity of the other—"Perfect love casteth out fear." But let us, every step of the way, face with fear and reverence the full reality of the imperfection of our love at its highest and best, and the constant danger of mortal weakness and fleshly deception till the last day's record is made.

* * *

". . . the Father Who, without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's work" (v. 17).

It is hard for us to get the true picture in respect to this matter of "*without respect of persons.*" Our thinking is almost inevitably tinged with the assumption that God will make a special exemption in our case—that He will tolerantly overlook things in us which He would not in ordinary people. We each are so important to ourselves that it is very difficult to regard ourselves as just one more among millions in God's sight. This was the Jews' great and fatal self-delusion—*let it not be ours*. The only thing that will mark us out as anything different in God's sight from the rest of the nameless, forgotten, perishing millions is to BE different, *very* different, in the way He specifies.

There are many in the world who are different from the general run—many who differ strikingly in a devoted, religious way—marvellous examples of utter dedication and self-discipline. Men have given their whole lives—sometimes unto terrible deaths—in devotion to God, in study and translation of the Scriptures, in compiling books of reference, in missionary labors, in works of charity and self-sacrifice.

What is it that will make God look to US, and not to them, confer the eternal divine nature upon us, and allow them to pass into endless oblivion? Certainly it must be something very exceptional.

There is no respect of persons with God. No one has any special consideration because of relationship, or because they happen to be in an ecclesia, or to be brought up in the Truth.

Each of the chosen in the end will be there because of just one reason, because he has manifested something that God desires that He has not found in those vast numbers that are not chosen.

How can this fundamental difference between the way of life and the way of death best be defined? We know, of course, that none will be among the accepted apart from a knowledge and belief of the things that comprise the One True Gospel of salvation, the Scriptures are very clear on that. But, all the rejected will have a sufficient knowledge of God's way to make them responsible, or else they would not be called to judgment at all.

Many, therefore, who believe will be rejected. So a belief of the Truth, while essential to salvation, is not the deciding factor between acceptance and rejection (unless we think of the term "believe" in its fullest scriptural sense which means a belief which is harmoniously and consistently manifested in every aspect of life and conduct—a belief which takes over the entire will and desires).

In the very nature of things, there is *no intermediate between salvation and rejection*. The judged are divided into two classes, just as sharply as the distinction between black and white—the sheep and the goats, the right hand and the left—"Come, ye blessed . . . depart, ye cursed" (Matt. 25:34, 41).

How can such a sharp line of cleavage be cut? Are there no degrees of effort and accomplishment? As to salvation itself, clearly *there are no degrees*—it is all or nothing.

There must therefore be one basic factor of distinction, and that basic deciding factor is defined perhaps most clearly by Paul in the 8th chapter of Romans—

"To be fleshly-minded is death: but to be spiritually-minded is life and peace" (v. 6).

All mankind, therefore, as God looks down upon them, are either *carnally-minded* or *spiritually-minded*. There is no in-between. Each of us here today are either fleshly (or natural) minded, and in the way of death; or we are spiritually minded, and in the way of life. What do we think of naturally? What things interest us? Where is our heart? Where is our treasure?

The apostle, in this same place, in further defining the distinction, declares—

"They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the spirit the things of the Spirit . . ." (Rom. 8:5).

"If ye live after the flesh ye shall die, but if ye through the Spirit do MORTIFY—put to death—THE DEEDS OF THE BODY, ye shall live" (Rom. 8:13).

Here, then, are the two classes—those whose *motives* spring from the flesh, who manifest the "*works of the flesh*": impa-

tience, selfishness, anger, indifference to others' welfare, interest in and desire for present things; and those whose *motives* spring from the guidance and teaching and transforming power of the Word of God: Love, gentleness, calmness, patience, peace of mind, joyfulness, serene and untroubled faith in the care and goodness of God, no thought of self-pleasing or self-advantage, devotion to the good of others and the glory of God through the beauty of holiness, thinking no evil, bearing all things, seeking not their own—not their own desires, *not their own ideas of righteousness*, but God's. It is very possible to be wholly absorbed in scriptural things without being "spiritual-minded," for the latter goes to the very roots of character and disposition.

We can see that there can be no halfway between the two ways of life, for they deal with the central motivating power of all actions, and a man can only serve one master. In scriptural terms, the one group are *alive*, the others *dead*. No greater difference could be expressed. It is not a difference of *degree*, but of a complete opposite.

This is not to say that there will not be repeated failures on the part of those who are dedicated to spiritual-mindedness, but the big distinction is that they *are* dedicated to this way, that they intelligently recognize and joyfully accept it, that they discern and repudiate the way of the flesh, that they recognize its evil and ugliness, that they experience heartfelt sorrow—not only for failures—but for the puny limitations of their highest and best efforts of holiness and spiritual-mindedness.

"*With God there is no respect of persons*" (v. 17) — no arbitrary favorites, no special cases, no exceptions to the rules of supreme and loving wisdom, but all is according to an undeviating divine rule—

"To be fleshly-minded is death, but to be spiritually-minded is life and peace."

* * *

"The Father Who, without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's work" (1 Peter 1:17).

There are many passages that speak of everyone being rewarded according to his *work*. The Bible closes with this warning (Rev. 22:12)—

"Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be."

This is a firmly established scriptural principle. Then there is another class of passages, represented by Eph. 2:8-9—

"By GRACE are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves—it is the gift of God: NOT OF WORKS, lest any man should boast."

Here is illustrated the necessity of "*rightly dividing the Word of Truth*," of taking the time and trouble to be sure we get the true, harmonious meaning. Many close the book here, slumbering under the sad delusion that they can leave all to the grace of God.

Such apparently contradictory passages emphasize the fact that only those who are willing to give their *whole heart and attention* to the Truth will ever comprehend it in a living and saving way. Millions are wrong—only the God-guided few will be right. What do the Scriptures tell us is necessary to obtain this guidance?—*entire devotion*.

The answer and harmony lie in such passages as these—

"Not by the works of the LAW" (Gal. 2:16).

"Not by works of righteousness which WE have done" (Tit. 3:5).

"We are HIS workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10).

"It is GOD that worketh in you" (Phil. 2:13).

"May GOD MAKE YOU PERFECT in every good work" (Heb. 13:21).

Putting all these teachings together, we learn the following facts which are all harmonious with each other, and which explain the apparent discrepancy between "*NOT of works*" and "*judged ACCORDING to works*"—

1. "*By the works of the law (of Moses or of any law) shall no flesh be justified in God's sight*," because the Law was given for the very purpose of manifesting to man that it is impossible for him in his fleshly weakness to render the perfect obedience that the righteousness of God requires. Man has to learn his own weakness and helplessness, that he is by nature and constitution a helpless slave of sin, that of himself it is impossible to *earn* or *merit* salvation by ANY amount of "work" he may do. Salvation to eternal life is purely of the grace and love and mercy of God.

2. Still, *there cannot be salvation without works*—

"Faith without works is DEAD . . . Ye see then how that by WORKS a man is justified, and not by faith ONLY" (Jam. 2:20, 24).

"Every man shall be rewarded ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS . . . eternal life . . . (or) . . . indignation and wrath" (Rom. 2:6-8).

3. God will guide and strengthen us to accomplish these *necessary* works IF (and only if) we will *completely* give ourselves to Him, recognizing our own helplessness, and recognizing further that *any good we may ever do is entirely of God* and to the glory of God—never to our own glory and accomplishment. Here again, it is all or nothing. We cannot go half into it and have half a salvation. If we give ourselves ENTIRELY to God's Word, God will work in us and we shall attain salvation. If we do not give it our whole life, He will not help us, and then we have absolutely *no hope* of attaining it. Let us have the wisdom to face this fact.

4. WE MUST DO OUR PART, *and we shall be held responsible for doing our part*. The command: "*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*" clearly shows that although all is of God, still there must be real and consistent effort and striving on our part to overcome. *This* aspect, the most important aspect as far as we are concerned, from a practical point of view, is constantly emphasized in the Scriptures; never minimized or obscured. This is the big lesson that the general religious viewpoint of the world misses—the vital urgency that is necessary in constant *prayer* and *study* and *striving* to comprehend and manifest more and more perfectly the mind of God as revealed in His Holy Word and portrayed in His Glorious Son.

* * *

"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation, received by tradition from your fathers. But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Pet. 1:18-19).

The blood of Christ is incorruptible, where silver and gold are not, because it is related to heavenly, eternal things. And it is related to these things because it represents a PERFECT LIFE—a life of perfect obedience and godliness—"a Lamb without blemish and without spot." *Only perfection is incorruptible*. Everything to do with God is perfect. The foundation of any true fellowship MUST be a mutual recognition that the only acceptable aim and standard is perfection—divine perfection.

We must be united in this aim and desire, or we are not truly united at all.

"Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world" (v. 20).

Peter is showing the greatness of Christ, and the oneness of God's purpose from the beginning. It is one of the great

blessings of the Truth that we are led to discern the continuity of God's purpose, and the relation to that purpose of all that has happened from Eden.

All scriptural history, and much of other history, is given an interest and a meaning because of the workings out of this purpose. Consider particularly our viewpoint of current events compared to the view of the people of the world.

To us the activities of Russia, of the Arabs, of Israel, and so forth, are all seen as relating to a great divine plan—a plan soon to be consummated in a wonderful fulfilment, solving all problems, banishing all fears, and bringing worldwide benefits beyond the dreams of any of the world's troubled statesmen.

But to the world there is just the building up of evil forces, the violence of ancient hatreds, terrible and increasing powers of mutual destruction, constant and increasing fear of a world wide Pearl Harbor when the growing northern aggressor is finally ready to strike; endless, meaningless negotiations for disarmament while more and more fearful weapons are developed.

(The word here translated "foreordained" is everywhere else translated "foreknown." The latter is much better, in that it does not convey the sense of arbitrary predestination.)

* * *

"But was manifested in these last times FOR YOU"
(v. 20).

The power of God's purpose is in its personal application. All was done, says Peter, "for you." It is true that we are told that all things were created for God's pleasure, but we must not interpret this in an arbitrary and an impersonal and discouraging way, as if all flesh were mere cattle in His sight.

It is God's pleasure to be the compassionate Father of a great multitude of beautiful and glorified sons and daughters. All the individual personalities that make up that vast host are elements of God's pleasure. "God so loved the world" is a thought of great power, always to be kept in the foreground, even though the world has made it the watchword of a false system of belief.

* * *

"You who BY HIM do believe in God that raised him from the dead and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God" (v. 21).

Jesus said, in speaking of his sacrifice—

"I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (Jn. 12:32).

"You who *BY HIM* do believe in God." We see another aspect of the glorious mediatorship of Christ. *By him* we believe in God. He is the visible manifestation, the historic manifestation, of God among men. Let us remember that in Christ God drew near unto men, and dwelt among them—

"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Cor. 5:19).

The great meaning of Christ is that God was drawing near unto men, and drawing men unto Himself. We must get increasingly nearer and nearer to Him for love to work its beautiful, eternal, perfect work.

* * *

"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, love one another with a pure heart fervently" (v. 22).

"Ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit." Ye have purified your souls—your lives—your hearts—your inward selves—by obeying the Truth, because thereby you have *repudiated* all the evils of the flesh, all its selfish motives and motions, all its carnal and godless desires, all its ugly characteristics of greed and hate and pride and malice and bitterness, and have dedicated yourselves wholly to LOVE and the GUIDANCE OF GOD, for all your thoughts and actions.

Ye were unclean, but "*ye have purified yourselves*" by accepting and submitting to the cleansing of the blood of Christ, the condemnation of the natural, fleshly way of sin, the repentance of and disassociation from that way, the exaltation of holiness, the covenanted allegiance to godliness. *Have we purified ourselves?* These things are not rituals and technicalities and outward forms; to have any power or meaning or value in the sight of God they must be *strong and living realities*—glorious realities of spiritual transformation.

It is as Paul tells the Romans—

"Ye *WERE* the slaves of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you, and have become slaves of righteousness" (6:17-18).

"Ye were *SLAVES* of sin . . . ye are now *SLAVES* of righteousness." The word indicates the all-comprehensiveness of the service, the completeness of the dedication and ownership. And so it must be. There can be no partial, calculated, limited, reserved service to righteousness.

This principle of total slavery—ALL our time and efforts and interests and energies belonging to God—is the very life and

essence of the Truth. In response to an inquiry about the extensive participation in worldly amusements by a prominent brother in another group (which had been listed with evident approval in the brother's obituary in the group's magazine). I received the following reply from the chief spokesman of that group—

"I am not aware that these activities have ever interfered in any way with bro. ___'s service to the Truth . . . I have never known him in the least way remiss in any duty . . .

"I do not think that a brother who was working during the day would justly have time to engage in the interests that occupied our brother, and I think that therefore IT WOULD BE WRONG IN THEIR CASES to devote time which *ought to be given to the Truth*, but this, as I have said, does not apply in this case."

The cramped and partial viewpoint of the responsibilities of the Truth herein expressed, and the justification, on the basis of it, of worldly activities for brethren who are sufficiently well-off not to have to work for their living, AND FOR THEM ALONE—NOT FOR WORKING BROTHERS, was, I believe, one of the most fundamental and convincing of the many similar expressions of viewpoint that, over the years, forced upon me the unshakable conviction that the spirit and meaning of the Truth as I had learned it, and as the Berean Fellowship has endeavored to present it, on the basis of the example and teachings of brethren Thomas and Roberts, is entirely different from that conception of it held at present by the majority Christadelphian groups.

It was not the action of the one individual that made the incident so affecting. We cannot judge a group by the acts of any particular individual, even though he be very prominent. What was so revealing was the approving publicity officially given to the action, the labored official defense of it, and the assurance that "no criticism" of the action or of its approving official publicity had been received from any member of the *entire* group.

Let us, therefore, hold aloft the old Christadelphian banner of complete and unreserved dedication—ALL the heart and soul and mind and strength—the *joy* and *satisfaction* of ENTIRE devotion, realizing, that even if we did many times more than we ever do do, we would *still* be "*unprofitable servants*," entirely dependent upon God's mercy and kindness.

* * *

"*Unto unfeigned love of the brethren*" (v. 22).

Here is the acid test of the reality of our transformation. And let us never forget for a moment that the "love" of which he speaks is a vast and heavenly thing. It is a quality of devotion that strains the capacities of our puny, fleshly minds to even comprehend, let alone to fully manifest. It is something far above and beyond anything the *natural* mind of itself can conceive. Paul tells us this.

The natural mind has an almost irresistible tendency to cut down its definitions of scriptural conceptions to fit its own cramped range of understanding. Let us recognize this tendency and do our utmost to guard against it. Otherwise we shall never rise to the true and full conception of the glorious way of godliness which Paul describes as being "*changed into the image of Christ, from glory to glory*" (2 Cor. 3:18).

Jesus said (John 13:35), on the eve of his laying down his life for his friends—

*"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples,
IF YE HAVE LOVE ONE TO ANOTHER."*

Now there are many manifestations of deep affection in the world, so it is evident that the love among his disciples of which he speaks here must be something very unique and exceptional and noticeable to others—"By this shall all men know . . ." It is the love of which Paul speaks in 1 Cor. 13, not a common, shallow, superficial affection, but a devotion whose unshakable roots sink deep into Faith, and Hope, and Wisdom, and—above all—Patience. It is the love that caused him to lay down his life for us *while we were yet sinners*—looking, hoping, believing right through all present appearances and disappointments to the glorious end.

Peter's exhortation here is that—seeing that pure and devoted love of the brethren is the agreed distinguishing characteristic of the children of God—they **MUST**, above all things, take care to manifest and build up that love.

John likewise said that love of the brethren was the *distinguishing evidence between life and death*—

*"We know that we have passed from death unto life,
BECAUSE WE LOVE THE BRETHERN. He that loveth
not his brother abideth in death"* (1 Jn. 3:14).

Seeing (says Peter) that the acceptance of this principle was the basis and the actual *means* of your entrance into the purified family of God, take care than you live up to your solemn undertaking. You were admitted freely by God into His family upon the basis of your professed acceptance of a new,

unnatural, unearthy, unfleshly way of life—LOVE. Do not betray that trust, for *God is not mocked*.

Peter's reference to *unfeigned* love emphasizes the great danger of failing to comprehend and manifest the true divine affection in its fulness. It is SO EASY to accept a *form of words*, so easy to talk glowingly and gushingly about "love" without even beginning to realize what is meant and what is involved in this tremendous conception of Christlike, self-sacrificing godliness.

If there is one aspect of the Truth above all others in which we can be said to fall short, it is this aspect of "LOVING ONE ANOTHER WITH A PURE HEART FERVENTLY."

When God speaks of love, He speaks of no light or common thing. He speaks of supreme sacrifice, of a cheerful readiness to lay down the life. The great sacrifice for sin which we have met together to remember manifests *God's* conception of the magnitude of love.

It is not natural. It is the very opposite of everything that is natural. It is the mark of godlikeness.

The natural, fleshly way is irritation, impatience, self-justification, retaliation, petty criticism, imputing wrong motives, thoughtlessness of others. How quick we are to resent a slight, to snarl viciously back at opposition or contradiction, to find fault, to expose and belittle, to repeat anything that is unfavorable, to gossip. *We* never call it gossip. We never think of what *we* say as gossip, but much of our conversation to and about one another is nothing else.

Whenever anything unfavorable has to be said, we must be sure it is necessary for the accomplishment of good, and that its overall purpose and motive is love—to warn, to correct, to build up in love.

* * *

"See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently" (v. 22).

Is this love the deep and controlling feeling of our heart toward all our brethren and sisters? We must constantly ask ourselves about everything we do: Is this reaction *Spirit-guided*, or is it just the natural reaction of the flesh? Is our motive truly love? Peter says again, later on in this epistle—

"Above all things—ABOVE ALL THINGS—have fervent love among yourselves: for love shall cover the multitude of sins" (4:8).

And there are a multitude of sins that must be covered—both our own and others. Again, the Spirit saith (1 Cor. 13)—

“Love is longsuffering and kind, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things” (vs. 4-7).

If we could, as a Body, get closer to this beautiful, divine ideal, most ecclesial problems would solve themselves.

This divine love does not depend upon the lovingness or loveliness of the recipient. It is in its essence universal and unrestricted in its radiation and warmth like the life-giving light of the sun. To plead unloveliness as an excuse for not loving is to miss the whole meaning of scriptural love. It is the least lovable that are the most in need of love. Jesus said—

“If ye love them which love you, what thank have ye?

For SINNERS also love those that love them”

(Lk. 6:32).

What is the virtue in such a cheap, common, natural thing as that? To be nice, and kind, and friendly, and cheerful, when things suit and please us, means *absolutely nothing*. It is how we react when things do *not* please us that counts. It is so easy to think we are a kind, sweet character because *most* of the time we do not show our teeth and temper. But our reaction under provocation and annoying circumstances is the *real* test of our character, however we may attempt to justify and belittle and rationalize and treat as “exceptions” these evil outbursts. They manifest the ugly rottenness that lies beneath the artificial surface. **THEY ARE THE REAL, NAKED “US,”** and unless we face this mortifying fact and bend every effort and prayer toward doing *something about it*, that is the “us” that will stand shivering and exposed and ashamed at the judgment-seat of Christ.

When Jesus said here, *“If you just love those that love you, what THANK have ye?”* he used that same beautiful word that Peter used in a similar expression—*grace*. “What *grace* have you if your so-called “love” is restricted to just those that please you?” That is just a pleased animal reaction, like the purring of a cat.

* * *

“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible—the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever” (v. 23).

This he gives as the basis of his exhortation to love. Ye have been reborn. Ye are new creatures. Your natural birth was of

the defiled and corruptible seed of Adam. Through him you inherit sin and corruption, mortality and death—evil desires and evil reactions.

But you have been reborn by the power of the Word of God, and the Word of God is incorruptible and ever-living. It is pure and wholesome and life-giving. It teaches the greatness and beauty of the power of love. To illustrate the contrast between the natural and spiritual births, Peter quotes a very appropriate passage from Isaiah—

“All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away; but the word of the Lord endureth forever” (1 Pet. 1:24-25).

The Word of the Lord—the wonderful revelation of Himself which He has given us; the Word of salvation which He has “magnified—made great—above all His Name.”

What did the Psalmist mean when he said that God had magnified His Word above all His Name? God’s *Name* is all His works and attributes. His *Word* is His purpose in Christ Jesus. Christ is the Word made flesh—

“He hath magnified His word above all His name.”

This statement occurs in Psa. 138:1-3, a psalm of intense praise and thanksgiving to God for His manifestation to man of His infinite goodness—

“I will praise Thee with my whole heart for Thy lovingkindness and for Thy truth, for THOU HAST MAGNIFIED THY WORD ABOVE ALL THY NAME.

“In the day when I cried Thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with STRENGTH IN MY SOUL.”

We must realize the value of this living Word of Truth that we have in our hands, that is able to transform us to the mind of the Spirit, and give us an inheritance with the saints in light—

“This is the word”—says Peter, v. 25—

“which by the gospel is preached unto you.”

The Last Terrible Forty Years

“Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe” (Rev. 14:18).

In this particular subject, even more than in others, we are completely indebted to bro. Thomas. We are truly indebted to him for all our knowledge of the Truth, but especially so as to prophecy and the last days. Though he wrote over one hundred years ago, his writings are still right to the point, and there is NOTHING produced since to compare with them.

CURRENT SPECULATIONS EMPHASIZE VALUE OF BRO. THOMAS' SOUND TEACHING

The long intervening time that has passed since he wrote has served to put Eureka to the acid test where most human works fail: in this case the passage of time has infinitely added to and strengthened our confidence in bro. Thomas' scriptural teaching. The various strange and piecemeal current speculations that keep sprouting up only serve by contrast to give added force and power to bro. Thomas' balanced and consistent picture.

In the preparation of these notes I have again read much from Eureka, and found it more satisfying than ever. All the following is either from Eureka or Elpis Israel, or thoughts derived from reading them. Bro. Thomas does not dogmatize on details, but he has woven together a picture of the developments of the last terrible forty years of man's rule that no one has been able to come remotely near to improving on.

Bro. Thomas was successful in understanding and interpreting prophecy because he gave weight to EVERY WORD of scripture, and always fitted in the literal as well as the symbolic whenever possible. The results he achieved, which time has so marvelously confirmed, are a complete vindication of his method. No other writings outside of scripture have the life and warmth and power and depth of bro. Thomas' exposition.

VAST CHANGES IN ONE HUNDRED YEARS, BUT BRO. THOMAS WONDERFULLY VINDICATED

Vast and unforeseen changes have occurred in the earth since bro. Thomas' day. Two tremendous worldwide conflicts have torn the world's political maps to shreds, over and over. Most of the great nations of bro. Thomas' day are no longer major factors on the world scene, but the lineup of nations is more and more as he foresaw from prophecy that it must be:

Britain, US, France, Russia, Israel, Arabs, etc., are all falling into line for the last great scene that will climax and end the play.

Some details are not yet worked out, and this adds deep interest and suspense. Some parts of the puzzle do not yet fit into place, but the great sweep of events in the century since bro. Thomas fell asleep is all in the right direction.

Some of bro. Thomas' applications of prophecy strike us at first as strained and far-fetched, but if we examine the context we shall find that in most places it greatly strengthens bro. Thomas' exposition, for often, when he points it out, we find the context is inescapably Millennial. And this **MUST** be all through the prophets, for Peter declares in Acts 3:21 that God has spoken of these times by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. This is the great common focus of all their prophecy, and no one has brought this out so beautifully as bro. Thomas.

EUREKA AN INSEPARABLE PART OF THE TRUTH IN THESE LAST DAYS

Eureka is an inseparable part of the Truth in these last days. Truly some parts are not first principles, but it is impossible to separate its general teachings from the Gospel. It is impossible to reject Eureka and still retain the Gospel in its fulness and depth, as many have tried to do, and made shipwreck. Bro. Roberts used to print over and over on the covers of the magazine: "Read Eureka! Read Eureka! Read Eureka!"

Eureka, by tracing the six thousand year war of the Seed of the Serpent and the Seed of the Woman right down through the ages to the great culmination in the Battle of the Great Day of God almighty, shows us our true relation to the world and to Christendom: The embodiment of the enmity and the flesh. It is sad to note that the modernists who set bro. Thomas aside because of his clear delineation of the Enemy, become more and more confused in this relationship. They cannot see the issue clearly of the deadly Rome vs. Zion enmity, and therefore they partake in various ways of the intoxicating Roman wine.

BRO. THOMAS WAS THE ROOT OF THE TRUTH'S LATTER-DAY REVIVAL

We must never forget that bro. Thomas was, in the providence of God, the root of the current revival of the Truth in the earth. However we may endeavor to twist or obscure it, this is a basic, immovable fact in the development of God's purpose in the earth.

There is a great host of separate prophecies on this subject of the events of the last days. We are nowhere given a complete chronological or consecutive outline—this has been divinely concealed for the faithful to endeavor in zeal and interest to work out. From an examination of Eureka, we shall try to present bro. Thomas' suggested outline of the forty years that transforms the earth from its present manmade hell of war and wickedness to God's Paradise of righteousness and peace.

ISRAEL'S HISTORY IS THE KEY TO PROPHECY: THE FORTY YEARS

Israel's history is typical in very many respects. It is the key to prophecy. And when we consider the forty years of travail that marked their birth as a nation—the complete destruction of a wicked generation so that a new generation might enter God's Kingdom, we are more and more impressed with its significance and importance in the prophetic scheme. In dealing with Israel, God was always typically dealing with mankind.

Bro. Thomas, who from much study was saturated with the spirit of prophecy, builds the events of the last days (the setting up of the worldwide Kingdom) on the type of Israel's forty years (the setting up of the typical Mosaic nucleus of the Kingdom). This foundation he puts together from several converging lines of evidence. First the words of God to Israel through Micah—

“According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I show unto him marvelous things.”

“The nations shall see and be confounded at all their might” (7:15-16).

Then the “hour”—the thirty years—of the kings of the earth giving their power to the Beast to make war with the Lamb (Rev. 17:12-14), preceded by the necessity of a reasonable and practical period for the proclamation of the Everlasting Gospel to all nations of earth (Rev. 14:6).

Then the fact that so often in Scripture forty marks a period of trial, transition, testing and judgment.

THE NECESSITY OF A LONG TIME TO ACCOMPLISH THE TRANSITION

And then the actual fitness and necessity of things. God truly could set up the Kingdom overnight if He chose: consider the vastness of Creation in six days. But He is dealing with men, and adjusts Himself to their limitations, and He has revealed a sequence of events, and purposes to be accomplished, that will require time as far as man is concerned.

The purpose basically is to offer salvation to all, to call for individual submission, to present opportunity, to gradually thresh out the wicked and rebellious while extracting the potential wheat as the human nucleus of the subjects of the Kingdom. This, in dealing on apparently natural principles with the earth's enslaved and drugged and benighted billions, will take time.

The more we consider the magnitude of the undertaking, the more we are impressed that forty years—a generation—is a suitable and fitting time to accomplish these things, and God's ways are always suitable and fitting. We come, in fact, to wonder if forty years is enough, and we conclude that only the almighty power of God could accomplish this purpose in forty years, considering the present state of mankind. If it were just destruction, that would take no time, but it is not: it is transition, education, orderly reorganization, complete renovation.

The present corrupt, debauched, benighted population of the earth cannot be just ushered into the Millennium just because they happen to be alive when Christ comes. We know that character and development must be formed in childhood. We know, as prophesied of the last days and as we see before our eyes, that the present population of the earth is increasingly violent, self-willed, rebellious, animalistic and pleasure-seeking.

The present population is mentally, morally and physically unfit for the blessings and peace of the Millennium—too immoral, too high in their own esteem, in the pride and glory of man. Surely forty years is not too long to prepare a population fit for God's Kingdom.

THE COMPLETE DESTRUCTION OF ALL MAN'S RUBBISHY, UNGODLY WORKS

Think of what is involved in pulling down all man's ugly buildings, demolishing to the ground all his crowded and vice-ridden cities, cleaning off the face of God's earth all man's rubbishy edifices and constructions, and building an entirely new, permanent, sound social fabric in harmony with nature and with the mind of God.

Even ignorant man himself is suddenly realizing that he is approaching the dead end of environmental disaster in all the destructively blind "progress" and "civilization" that he has been so obsessed in and so proud of. Think of the pollution problem—can this be taken into the Millennium?

ALL the works of ignorant and foolish man must be swept away—demolished—scraped to the foundation. The Kingdom in its transitional, millennial form is to be built for cleanliness and health and one thousand years' duration. How could any of man's flimsy, rickety, tinker-toy productions have a place in that?—for even now man's proudest works are so quickly obsolete and superseded.

And the earth is full of idols—human memorials, churches, temples, mosques, synagogs—how could all these polluted things stand in God's glorious Kingdom of purity and wisdom and holiness? There must be a thorough and drastic cleansing and purging of the earth itself and of the whole human race.

THE VINE OF THE EARTH IS FULLY RIPE: GREAT
IMPENDING JUDGMENTS

The harvest of the earth is ripe. The angel cried to him that had the sharp sickle (Rev. 14:18)—

"Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe."

"Her grapes are FULLY ripe!" This is very significant as to worldly conditions at the return of Christ—

"The iniquity of the Amorites is FULL."

There must be a universal destruction (Psa. 46:8)—

"Come, behold the works of the Lord, WHAT DESOLATIONS HE HATH MADE IN THE EARTH."

The context of the whole psalm make it clear that this is in the last days at the setting up of the Kingdom, especially the next two verses—

"He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth.

"He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder. He burneth the chariot in the fire.

"Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."

The Seventh Vial poured out in the Air is the last forty years of the kingdom of men—a judicial period—the most important and most terrible time of all the earth's long dark human history. This forty years is foreshadowed in the reign of David—preparing for Solomon, for the era of peace, for the building of the Temple, the "House of Prayer for All Nations."

We are told that at this time Israel will be God's threshing instrument, to thresh the nations (Isa. 41:15). Here is a picture of a processing operation that will take time—a separating of the wheat from the chaff. The whole population of the world must be progressively threshed in such a way as to give

individual opportunity and choice. Otherwise there is no scope for the proclamation to every nation and kindred and tongue and people—

“Fear God, and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment is come” (Rev. 14:6-7).

THE CONFLICT AND DESTRUCTION WILL LARGELY APPEAR NATURAL

The forty-year process of subduing the earth will largely appear to be natural. Truly there will be adequate evidence for those with eyes to see, as there was when Christ was among men the first time, but it will be all done in an apparently natural way to the extent that those who, like the Pharisees, CHOOSE not to see, will be able to deceive themselves. Bro. Thomas refers us to Zechariah 14:6-7, which he translates (Eur. II:319) as follows—

“Yahweh my Elohim shall come in; all the Saints with Thee.

“And it shall be in that day there shall be no brightness, the splendid ones drawing in.

“And it shall be one day that shall be made known by Yahweh: not day nor night, but it shall be in time of evening there shall be brightness (Ur).”

And bro. Thomas' comments on this are (Eur. II:319-320)—

“From this we learn that when the Lamb and 144,000 enter upon their work of judgment at eventide, they will not ‘shine as the brightness of the firmament and as the stars’” (Dan. 12:3).

“They will not be manifested as URIM: but, though capable of so doing, they will draw in their brightness, and appear as men.

“But when the judgment is over, and the Kingdom established, and the time is come for them to rest from their labors, then they will no longer draw in their splendor, but ‘shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father’” (Matt. 13:43).

Similarly he says, speaking of the Little Open Scroll (Eur. II:543)—

“The supernatural element is now introduced, which wonderfully quickens and consummates the end. But the infusion of this into the situation does not supersede the free action of the enemy, and the counteraction of him by the symbolic angel upon SEEMINGLY ORDINARY PRINCIPLES.

“The fourth Beast, or Nebuchadnezzar's Image, which covers the whole area, will contend against them, as if they were a Zinghis or Tamerlane, until defeat and destruction on every side give mankind a practical understanding of the opening of the Seven-Sealed Scroll.”

WICKED MANKIND, SELF-DECEIVED, WILL RESIST CHRIST AND THE SAINTS

So mankind will resist and contend against Christ and the Saints under the impression that they are a natural human power arisen in the Mideast to seek control of the world (though the supernatural "Antichrist" concept will be part of the delusion). Two factors will help the enemy to deceive themselves—

1. Christendom's false theory that the prophesied Antichrist is a latter-day Jew who rises up against the Pope (instead of as it really is—the Pope himself). The essence of Christendom's age-old traditions of "Antichrist" are that: he is a Jew, he arises at the last day, he appears in Jerusalem, he demands worship and submission, and that the Roman Church is the great defender of the world against him.

2. Man's scientific developments. For their own destruction, God has so allowed them to increase knowledge and develop such awesome weapons of mass murder that they will easily believe that Christ is merely a human impostor who has developed some new "secret weapons." We read with increasing frequency today of many fantastic weapons at present in vision or development—deadly laser beams like controlled bolts of lightning, and increasingly dehumanized electronic, computerized, push-button warfare.

THE JEWS ARE THE NATURAL MEANS USED: THE "BATTLE-AX" AND "WAR-HORSE"

The Jews will provide the natural means. This is prophesied in many places (Mic. 5:8; Jer. 51:20-23; Isa. 41:15; Zech. 9:13; 12:6; Num. 23:24; Deut. 33:17, etc.). All will look very natural. During Gentile times, the Jews have always been a strange, feared, separate people, hated by mankind. And they have been disproportionately prominent in scientific and nuclear development in these last days: we have only to consider such names as Einstein, Oppenheimer, Teller, etc. It will look like the Jews are trying to take over the world.

Both horns of the Beast—Gog and the Papacy—are viciously anti-Jewish. The Pope has fawned on the Arabs and has never recognized Israel. He demands, with Russia and the Arabs, that they get out of Jerusalem.

The latter-day development of nuclear warfare fits perfectly into the world's fatal self-deception about Christ when he comes. We are told that he will cause them to use their own weapons against each other, as Zechariah 14:12-13. Consider

these verses (and the whole context of the chapter) in the light of nuclear war and the real and terrible example of Hiroshima (the present sufferers still ten's of thousand's).

When the judgments on the earth are exhausted and have done their work, when the earth is fully purged and the wicked and rebellious destroyed, when the smoke of divine wrath and retribution has at last cleared from the Temple (Rev. 15:8), then the Saints no longer "draw in," or withhold their glory (Matt. 13:40-43)—

"So shall it be in the END OF THIS WORLD. The Son of man shall send forth his angels (messengers) and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire . . .

"THEN shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, LET HIM HEAR!"

And Daniel gives the same picture—

"At that time shall Michael (Christ) stand up for the children of thy people, and there shall be a TIME OF TROUBLE such as never was."

"And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever" (12:1, 3).

"Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? I will tread them in mine anger and trample them in my fury" (Isa. 63:1, 3).

"YAHWEH CAME FROM SINAI": MOSES AND HABAKKUK PARALLEL

We now begin the detailed consideration of the subjugation of the world by Christ and the immortalized Saints, as they set out from Sinai as "Yahweh, the Man of War." Bro. Thomas has written on this in Eureka II:545-554 and III:581 forward. Our attention is called to two parallel passages by Moses and Habakkuk—

"The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them. He shined forth from Mt. Paran, and came with ten thousands of saints" (Deut. 33:2).

"God came (shall come:JT) from Teman, and the Holy One from Mt Paran . . . Before Him went the pestilence . . . He stood, and measured the earth: He beheld, and drove asunder the nations" (Hab. 3:3-6).

Two things are to be noted: (1) This has never yet happened, and (2) the context, especially in Habakkuk, is clearly millennial. These Mosaic and Habakkuk visions are obviously identical

with the Rainbowed Angel of Revelation 10, and the blood-stained One who comes from Edom of Isaiah 63. Habakkuk continues—

"I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction: and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble" (v.7).

MIDIAN AND CUSHAN SUBDUED AND BLESSED FIRST

Bro. Thomas reasons from this that Midian and Cushan (the Arabian Desert north and east of Sinai) are among the first to feel the sword of the King who is now setting out for world conquest, after the type of David who executed judgments in the southern desert before obtaining the sovereignty of Judah. The wild people of the Arabian Desert between Sinai and Israel are subdued; the desert is made to blossom like the rose, and the people glorify their conqueror for the blessing he brings upon their land. This is the first beginning of the establishment of the Kingdom.

Bro. Thomas believed that the blessing of the land and the removal of the curse would immediately follow Christ's conquest wherever he went. If we think upon it, we realize that this is how it would have to be—both from the point of view of reasonableness and fittingness, and also to fit the prophecies. We know that the curse must be removed, the earth blessed, and the people taught righteousness—that all must be changed from present worldwide human ugliness and corruption and misuse to worldwide divine wisdom and beauty and goodness.

WORLDWIDE BLESSING: INSTANTANEOUS, OR GRADUAL?

But have we thought HOW it will be done? Do we expect it to happen suddenly all over the earth? Or will it be gradual, orderly and progressive, like the opening up of a flower to the fulness of its beauty? Surely the latter.

The kingdom will begin from a small central nucleus, and then grow and grow until it fills the whole world. This is the picture that prophecy gives us, as in the case of the leavening of the bread, or the Little Stone that struck the Image.

We see too that, in fittingness, wherever Christ advances he must transform. To pass through he must conquer, for he recognizes no human authority. He must be supreme wherever he goes. He cannot pass through and leave a land as it was, under the old human dominion. Nor can he devastate without transforming and restoring. This would be wholly out of harmony with his mission of filling the earth with the glory of God.

So we realize, as soon as we think about it, that the picture bro. Thomas gives us of a gradually expanding Kingdom, bringing transformation and blessing as it extends, is the only fitting one. To reach the Holy Land from Sinai, Christ must pass through the Southern Desert. He must therefore make it his own dominion, begin his work in it, subdue its inhabitants, abolish all human institutions in it, beautify its land, lift the curse, and fill it with God's glory.

The Kingdom of God has begun. A door has been opened in the political heavens. Christ and the Saints have a headquarters and a base of operations.

Once he has entered an area, he has taken rulership over it as its rightful owner, the heir of the earth. And once he has taken the rulership and responsibility for it, he must abolish human evil and begin his reign of righteousness and justice and blessing. The Old and the New cannot coexist in the same place.

So first the Southern Desert—Midian and Cushan—is possessed and glorified: BEFORE Armageddon. Then all the Covenant-Land (from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates), AFTER Armageddon.

THIS WILL CAUSE WORLDWIDE INTEREST AND CONCERN

But, says bro. Thomas, can such a Power begin to be developed in the area, and the rejected from the judgment seat be sent back into the world, and the wilderness and desert be transformed, and the wild Arabians be tamed and enlightened—without being a topic of burning and primary interest throughout the whole world?

It was bro. Thomas' conviction, from various prophecies, that the Tarshish Power, the friend and defender of Israel, would be the first to be aware of the divine nature of the New Power in the Southern Desert, and would submit to it and enter into secret alliance with it.

He wrote long before Britain had entered and occupied much of the Mideast, as he saw it would have to do to fulfill its appointed work of establishing the restored remnant "*in the midst of the land.*" Since his day we have seen Britain come in and fulfill in marvelous detail what he saw laid out for her by the finger of prophecy.

However, with the passage of time, both Britain's world power and her presence in the Mideast has of late greatly diminished, as the principal part of her work was completed.

But as Britain has receded from the area, the activity of one of the "young lions" (Eze. 38:13) has grown there, and today both Britain and United States have close ties with the basic areas involved—Jordan and Saudi Arabia: sufficiently so that bro. Thomas' expectation of a secret alliance with the New Mideast Kingdom of Christ in the transformed deserts of Arabia are quite reasonable.

But the reaction of the enemies of Israel—the Europe-Papal-Russian alliance—is very different. They will not know of the true nature of the New Power in the earth, nor of the relation of Tarshish to it. All they will know is that it is an expansive, dictatorial, aggressive Power with a new religion that is subversive and intolerant of all other religions. They will know that its power is gradually being extended.

THERE MUST BE A TARSHISH POWER PROTECTING THE LAND

Bro. Thomas, writing over fifty years before Britain liberated and occupied Palestine, expected Britain to still be in control of that land when these things were happening. He did not foresee the further development of Britain's removal and Jewish independence. He knew from Ezekiel 38:13 that there must be a Tarshish power affording protection, and that Israel herself must be (v. 11)—

"Dwelling safely; without walls, bars, or gates."

He expected that Britain, under the instigation and protection of Christ, would cleanse Jerusalem of all the Greek, Roman and Moslem idols and shrines, and that this would arouse the Beast, False Prophet and Dragon to great fury.

Though Britain is no longer the governing power there, it is quite possible the same course of events may develop. "*All nations must be gathered against JERUSALEM to battle*" (Zech. 14 :2). This is before Christ reveals himself to the Jews as their rejected Messiah and takes possession of Jerusalem. Why then do the nations come against Jerusalem, if it is the New Arabian "Antichrist" they are enraged at?

It is possible that the Jews themselves, increasingly antagonized by the Papacy and Russia, will do what bro. Thomas expected Britain to do—clear the idols and idolators out of Jerusalem. They, too, will surely know of the New Arabian Power allied with their Tarshish friends and protectors, and while they will not know or believe it is the Christ they crucified two thousand years ago, they will be aware it is both friendly and powerful.

PAPACY WILL CRY "ANTICHRIST!": RUSSIA WILL HEAD ALLIANCE

To the Papacy, the New Arabian Power will have all the expected characteristics of the long-anticipated Antichrist of their perverted theology, and this will be their rallying cry against him.

It is clear from both prophecy and the present world picture before our eyes that Russia will be the leader and master of this latter day crusade against Jerusalem. It is clear today that Russia's path to its long-coveted control of the world and remolding it to a manmade millennium, lies through the Mideast. And it is clear that Israel is the great stumbling block there, like Mordecai sitting in the gate of the King. Tarshish opposes the invaders—

"Art thou come to take a spoil?" (Eze. 38:13).

—but is overwhelmed and driven back across the Jordan into Edom, Moab and Ammon, while Russia and her allies sweep on into Egypt (Dan. 11:41-43).

CHRIST BRINGS A REMNANT OF ISRAEL FROM EGYPT

It is at this point that bro. Thomas believes the requirements of various prophecies necessitate the fitting in of a descent into Egypt by Christ, to deliver and bring out the Jews that are there—to bring them, as an earnest of the whole nation, again through the Red Sea and into the Covenant.

In the meantime, Jerusalem is captured by the invader, and its people are in the process of deportation into captivity (Zech. 14:2). In World War II, both Germany and Russia shifted around great masses of captive people like cattle—to death camps, to slave labor projects, or simply relocated them—to suit their own political ends.

JACOB'S LAST AND WORST "TIME OF TROUBLE"

Today Russia and the Arabs and the Papacy denounce the nation of Israel as usurpers of Arab lands, and it is clear their first step as soon as they were able would be to destroy or deport them, so Zechariah 14: 2 and 13: 8 are right in line with the present picture and probabilities.

This last *"time of Jacob's trouble"* is clearly the worst and most terrible of all its bloodstained history—worse than the Assyrians, Babylonians, Romans and Hitler. For years the Arabs, egged on by Russia and the Papacy, have sworn to completely destroy Israel from the face of the earth. We are told that in the last invasion two thirds of the people in the land shall be cut off and die. It is clear therefore, both from prophecy

and from present utterances, that the Papal-Gogian confederacy proposes to "solve" the Jewish Question once and forever. It is at this point God's words in Ezekiel 38:18 are fulfilled—

"Then shall My fury come up in My face" (Eze. 38:18).

This is the *"eyes as a flame of fire"* and *"countenance as lightning"* of the Multitudinous Man, the Rainbowed Angel (Zech. 14:3)—

"Then shall Yahweh go forth and fight against those nations,

" . . . with whirlwinds of TEMAN" (Zech. 9:14).

BOZRAH: THE FIRST CONFRONTATION OF YAHWEH AND THE IMAGE

From Isaiah 63:1-6, it is obvious that Bozrah is a very important, key battle—the first encounter with the Gogian forces. It is at Bozrah that the garments of the Rainbowed Angel, of Yahweh the Man of War, are stained with the blood of Gog.

There is an added significance to this in the fact that Teman and Bozrah are in Edom. Edom ("red"—standing for the flesh of sin) is the typical enemy of God's people. This comes out clearly in Ezekiel 35, just preceding the group of chapters (36-39) describing Israel's regathering and blessing in the last days. Edom is to be a perpetual desolation *"when the whole world rejoiceth"* (Eze. 35:14). Edom is apparently to be a perpetual, desolate, burning memorial to the subjugation and destruction of the flesh during the Millennium.

Yahweh, the Man of War, confronts Gog at Bozrah, in the northern part of Edom, about twenty miles south of the Dead Sea. (Teman is about thirty miles further south). Here He turns *"every man's sword against his brother"* and *"pleads against them with pestilence and with blood."* Thus begins the War of Armageddon, the *"War of the Great Day of God Almighty"* (Rev. 16:14-16).

Though Israel is God's *"battle-ax and weapons of war"* against the nations of the world, it is emphasized (Isa. 63:3) that in this initial encounter the nation of natural Israel has no part. It is the work of the Man of One—Christ and the Saints—alone. It occurs before Jesus reveals himself to Israel as their rejected and crucified Messiah.

AFTER BOZRAH VICTORY: CHRIST ADVANCES TOWARD JERUSALEM

From the slaughter of Gog at Bozrah, the Multitudinous Christ advances toward Israel, *"traveling in the greatness of his*

strength.” The natural route, and the one in harmony with both type and prophecy, would be up the east side of the Dead Sea through Moab to the Jordan opposite Jericho. Here is where the Valley of Achor (by Jericho) becomes a “*door of hope*” (Hos. 2:15) for the typical remnant of Israel that Christ has brought with him out of Egypt, as firstfruits and earnest of the whole nation’s deliverance.

The Gogian enemy in the land meanwhile is destroyed and reduced to one sixth of his forces by his own mutual self-slaughter and by the pestilence and judgment of the elements brought on him by God. The sixth retreats into Assyria, and God’s land is at last completely freed of its enemies.

In the judgment on Gog there is a—

“Great shaking in the midst of the land, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and every wall shall fall to the ground” (Eze. 38:19-20).

“And the Mt. of Olives shall cleave in the midst . . . ”

—and leave a great east-west valley, as the halves of the mount move to the north and the south (Zech. 14:4). And through this newly formed valley Christ and the Saints come, fulfilling Ezekiel 43:2—

“And behold the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east. And his voice was like the noise of many waters. And the earth shined with his glory.”

Jesus had said to them as he closed his first ministry among them—

“Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.”

“Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord” (Matt. 23:38-39).

“LIFT UP YOUR HEADS, O YE GATES, FOR THE KING OF GLORY!”

Approaching the gates of Jerusalem, now suddenly relieved from the occupying and desolating forces of Gog, they cry (Psa. 24:7-10)—

“Lift up your heads, O ye gates: and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors: and the King of glory shall come in.”

And the enquiry comes from within—

“Who is this ‘King of glory?’”

They know that their destroyer has been destroyed, and that they have been saved at the very last moment of imminent extinction, but they do not know who the Savior is. The strange answer comes—

"Yahweh of hosts, He is the King of glory. Lift up your heads, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in."

So they realize that here at last is their long-promised and long-awaited Messiah, delivering them when all hope seemed gone, and they cry—

"Hosanna to the Son of David!"

—and there is great rejoicing throughout Jerusalem and the land.

But when their glorious King comes into the city, and they present themselves before him, the question is soon asked, doubtless with great fear and foreboding (Zech. 13:6)—

"WHAT ARE THESE WOUNDS IN THINE HANDS?"

(Zech. 13:6).

And the terrible answer—

"Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends."

JOY TURNED INTO DEEP NATIONAL REMORSE AND MOURNING

And so, like Joseph, he is made known to his brethren, and they are filled with fear, and joy is turned to national mourning—

"And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son.

"In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem . . . and the land shall mourn, every family apart" (Zech. 12:10-14).

And so, first by great oppression and tribulation, and then by great national humiliation and repentance, is the remnant of Israel cleansed and purified—

"It shall come to pass that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein.

"I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried:

"And they shall call on My name, and I will hear them. I will say, It is My people; and they shall say, Yahweh is my God.

"In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness" (Zech. 13:8-9, 1).

This is very beautiful and very fitting. It is Israel's most terrible and yet most glorious experience. With a sudden, shocking flood of realization they learn they have been utterly

wrong and blindly fighting the divine light for twenty centuries, and that all their sorrow has been because they rejected and killed the Son of God who had been sent to them in gentleness and love to call them to glory.

THE BEAUTY OF GOD'S WAY: ISRAEL BROKEN
AND PURGED

Surely no imaginable experience could be more traumatic and transforming. Nothing could so thoroughly and deeply shake and purge and humble and enlighten them—break the hardness of their blind self-sufficiency and prepare them for the ministration of redemption and love. Human nature must be crushed and broken and shaken to its foundations before it can begin to learn divine holiness and wisdom.

In the marvelous contrivance of His love and wisdom, God shall—

"Pour upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of supplication" (Zech. 12:10).

And the New Covenant will be made with the House of Judah—

"Written in their inward parts and in their heart"
(Jer. 31:33).

For seven months thereafter (Eze. 39:11-16) they are cleaning up the land from the wreckage of the invader, and burying the multitude of dead he has left behind in his flight.

As elsewhere in the extension of Christ's power, the curse is lifted and the land beautified, and the people blessed in wisdom and love and firm, righteous rule. The Little Stone Power now encompasses all the territory from Sinai to the north limits of Israel. The—

"Kingdom has come to the daughter of Jerusalem,"
and

"No strangers shall pass through her any more"
(Joel 3:17).

But she still has the joyful and glorious task before her, under Christ, of establishing herself as the "first dominion" of the world (Mic. 4:8).

"I will send those that escape of them—sounders of the Truth—to Tarshish, Pul, Lud, Tubal Javan, the Isles afar off . . . and they shall declare My glory among the Gentiles" (Isa. 66:19).

Following the destruction of Gog's host, and the deliverance of Jerusalem, and the revelation of Jesus to Israel as the Messiah, and the setting up of his throne in Jerusalem—comes

the seven months it takes to bury Gog's dead and cleanse the land (Eze. 39:9-16).

In the meantime the remnant of the enemy that remains is pursued back into Assyria (modern Iraq), which is judicially laid waste by the sword (Mic. 5:6). Iraq is among the most vicious of Israel's present enemies, and closely allied with Russia. As the original Assyria, it must be allied with Russia at the end, and with Russia's expulsion from Egypt (where she does not at present belong), Iraq is more and more likely to become Russia's Mideast foothold.

The next step is the completion of the conquering of all the lands promised to Abraham, from the Nile to the Euphrates, and from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean. This completes the disciplining and regeneration of Egypt, Israel and Assyria—

"In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians.

"In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: "Whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt, My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel Mine inheritance" (Isa. 19:23-25).

The whole original Eden, the Paradise (Garden) of God, has now been restored to its former condition of peace and fruitfulness and beauty (Eze. 36:35; Isa. 51:3).

This, in the main, completes the subjugation of the first three Beasts—Lion, Bear and Leopard—the Babylonian, Persian and Greek dominions, bringing them under the rule of Christ. These are not destroyed as nations, but completely subjugated (Dan. 7:12)

But there still remains the worst and greatest—the Roman Beast—which not only is to be conquered, but utterly destroyed from the earth, his body given to the burning flame (Dan 7:11). Every vestige of Roman Catholic influence is to be completely annihilated from the earth. Today that influence is universal—

"All nations drunk with the wine of her fornication"
(Rev. 17:2).

Not only in all the Harlot Daughter Churches of the world, which are today flowing back to Mother Rome, but everywhere we turn, in every department of life, Romanism is stamped on every facet of society and civilization, and unless we are

eternally alert and vigilant, we are inevitably and unconsciously contaminated by it in the simplest, commonest and most unsuspected ways.

This is the great climax and crisis of the whole book of Revelation—the final settlement of the age-old enmity between Rome and Zion—the slaying of the Latin Catholic Beast and the complete destruction of its body-politic. Catholic Europe is the heart of this system—that territory that existed for one thousand years from Charlemagne to Napoleon as the “Holy Roman Empire.”

But before the Rainbow Angel (Christ and the Saints) advances against the demon-worshippers of Europe, he—

“Cries with a loud voice, as when a lion roars”

(Rev. 10:3).

This is the proclamation of the Everlasting Gospel—

“Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment is come” (Rev. 14:7).

Isaiah 66:19 refers to the same event. Verse 18 tells us God will:

“Gather the nations, and they shall come, and see His glory.”

This is accomplished in the attack by Gog and his European hosts, and their destruction (Eze. 39:21). Verse 19 continues—

“I will set a sign among them.”

—the setting up of the throne at Jerusalem, the *“ensign upon the mountains.”* Then follows the proclamation to the world—

“And I will send those that escape of them, to Tarshish, Pul and Lud, that draw the bow (bro. Thomas: ‘Sounders of the Truth’) . . .

“To Tubal and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard My fame; and they shall declare My glory among the Gentiles” (Isa. 66:19).

A certain period is involved in carrying this proclamation to all the earth and allowing time for its effect throughout all the benighted millions of the world. This period is referred to in Isaiah 18:4. There, in verse 3, is the call to all inhabitants of the world to see when God lifts up an ensign on the mountain, and to listen when He blows the warning trumpet. Then verse 4, which bro. Thomas renders—

“I will be still, yet in My dwelling place I will be without fear—as dry heat impending lightning, as a cloud of dew in heat of harvest.”

And then verse 5 goes on with the breaking of a storm—the terrible divine *“harvest”* of the *“sour grapes of the earth.”* Compare this with Revelation 14:19—the harvest of the *“Vine*

of the Earth" that follows the preaching of the Everlasting Gospel in verses 6-7.

How long is this period of proclamation, and waiting for it to take effect? We know in the very nature of things it cannot be instantaneous: the proclamation one day, the destruction the next. That is not how God gives fresh invitations and opportunities. There must be SOME period of time for the message to reach all mankind, for them to hear, and learn what it is all about, and perceive the evidence, and decide. How long a time? We are dealing with the whole world: a world to which divine things are universally foreign.

In the present utterly corrupt, animalized and benighted condition of the earth's population, how long would it take to get the message through in any kind of an understanding way to all the earth's teeming and ignorant millions—most of them either steeped in idolatry and witchcraft, as in Catholicism and pagan Africa, or completely brain-washed and robotized, as in China and Russia, or immersed in lust, greed, immorality and pleasure-seeking, as in the "gentle and enlightened" Anglo-Saxon lands?

The length of time required will be measured by God's mercy in giving opportunity, and by man's present depravity and ignorance in relation to divine things. Both the mercy of God and the ignorance of man are very great.

Bro. Thomas suggested it would be a ten-year period, on the combined evidence and indications of several scriptures. It was ten days from the great blowing of trumpets that inaugurated the Feast of Tabernacles, to the Day of Atonement itself, which was a great climactic day of affliction and purging and cleansing and beginning again of the whole Jewish year or cycle. And certainly the judgments of God upon the earth are to be a Day of Atonement and purging in every sense.

Ten years for the trumpet-proclamation of the Everlasting Gospel would leave (of the overall forty years) an "hour"—a month of years—one twelfth of three hundred and sixty—thirty years—the "Hour of Judgment" for the actual war between the Lamb and the kings of the earth (Rev. 17:12-14), for we are told (and we know from history and experience) that the arrogant rulership of the earth will not submit peacefully.

Man will not without a terrible struggle give up his power and privilege and fleshly wickedness and wilfulness, to submit to the galling divine demand of humility and purity and holiness.

Christ will demand the total and abject surrender of all wealth and power and privilege, that all positions of rulership and authority may be bestowed on those who are worthy—Christ's friends—for the just and divine administration of the earth. Clearly the greater the power and the more entrenched the privilege, the fiercer and more tenacious will be the resistance.

Doubtless, as in the days of his first appearance on earth, the "common people" will "hear him gladly," though they too will resent the divine restrictions on their fleshly lusts, and the abolition from the earth of their godless, corrupt, infantile worldly sports and pleasures. They will resent the summons to grow up and put away childish things, and act like mature adults—divinely mature.

It will be the time of which Hannah sang (1 Sam. 2)—

"Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth. For the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed.

"The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength.

"They that were full have hired out themselves for bread: and they that were hungry ceased" (vs. 3-5).

"The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces: out of heaven shall He thunder upon them. The Lord shall judge the ends of the earth, and He shall give strength unto His king, and exalt the horn of His anointed" (v. 10).

Note the expressions "His King" and "His Anointed." This is the first time the term "King" is applied to Christ, except in Balaam's remarkable prophecy (Num. 24:7), and the first time "Anointed" (Messiah) is applied to him at all. In fact, the word Messiah does not occur before, except four times (Leviticus) applied to the High Priest.

Mary spoke on a similar occasion with remarkable similarity:

"He hath shown strength with His arm, He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.

"He hath filled the hungry with good things: and the rich He hath sent empty away. He hath helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy. As He spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and his seed forever" (Lk. 1: 51-55).

When we consider all the circumstances, and what is to be accomplished, and put it into the perspective of the long sweep of all human history which has deeply ingrained a way of thinking into all mankind, we shall realize that ten short years is in no way too long a period for this great final preaching of the Truth to the world before the final war of worldwide destruction and purification.

It could well be divided, by its nature, into sub-periods of three and seven years each—both of which are deeply significant numbers: of resurrection and perfection.

Ten was the number of commandments proclaimed by the voice of God to Israel under Moses from the burning and thundering mount of Sinai. So ten may fittingly mark the proclamation of God to the world from the glorious mount of Zion, when Christ and the 144,000 shall stand upon it and sing the song of Moses and the Lamb.

Mainly, the time is required for gradual, worldwide education, so that the world's people can be in a position to decide intelligently. The world is deeply sunk in ignorance of any true spiritual things, and rapidly sinking deeper and deeper. Education must have some basic foundation of understanding to begin with, or it is a terribly slow process.

There will inevitably be a tremendous propaganda campaign by all the entrenched political and ecclesiastical and editorial forces of the world against the claims of Christ and the Saints. These forces control all the facilities of communication and opinion-forming, which God will doubtless permit them to continue to use so all the world will be faced with a choice.

This is a time when all the inhabitants of the earth will be forced to turn their animal minds away from fleshly excitements and amusements and awake to face eternal reality, and (Josh. 24:15)—

“Choose ye this day whom ye will serve.”

Mankind have always largely “thought” and moved in blind, stumbling masses, like sheep. What the mass does, the individual does unthinkingly, in most things. Most people are frightened to death to be different from their group. Even present protest movements, pretending to be thoughtful and individual, are mostly blind, mass, group movements, following the fads.

Then, too, time must be given for the confidence of the hierarchy of the wicked to be restored after Armageddon, that they have a chance to fight Christ successfully, and for them

to marshal their forces against him—to perhaps develop some new “secret” weapon that they feel will counter the “secret” weapons he appears to have. Man’s scientific arrogance will contribute to his destruction.

It took several years for the United States after Pearl Harbor to marshal its forces and convert its industrial capacity to full wartime production. God will give them the time needed to fulfil His purposes.

And many will remember, in the same connection, the so-called “phony” war of propaganda and eerie, misleading, lulling, disarming quiet and inactivity that preceded Hitler’s terrible blitzkrieg, the “lightning-war” by which he came perilously close to accomplishing his avowed purpose of “settling the course of Europe for one thousand years.” Christ’s enemies must be given a period to develop their confidence and plans, so that the final issue may be the utter destruction of the entrenched and incorrigible forces of wickedness.

And there must be ample time for the picture to develop in the eyes of the world’s peoples, so the right people may be called out on right basis, for right reasons.

“Sing and rejoice, daughter of Zion, for I will dwell in the midst of thee . . . And many people shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and shall be My people”
(Zech. 2:10-11).

This proclamation period comes after the smiting of the Gog Image on its feet, and before grinding it to powder (Dan. 2:34-35). It is between the Armageddon overthrow of the sixth Vial and the commencement of the pouring out of the seventh Vial into the Air.

The “Air” is the ruling elements of the earth. It is upon them primarily that the wrath is poured, and it is these that will blindly and stubbornly resist unto the end—like evil, arrogant, power-mad, judicially-hardened Pharaoh, though his servants cried to him—

“Knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed?”
(Ex. 10:7).

The messengers sent throughout the earth have a three-fold message—

1. *To declare the power and glory of the Lord*
(Isa. 66:19).

2. *To proclaim the Everlasting Gospel—the Good News of the Kingdom* (Rev. 14:6).

3. *To demand total submission, on pain of death*
(Rev. 14:7).

Before Babylon's destruction there is a people to deliver (Rev. 18:4)—

"Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."

These "My people" are not the Saints. The Saints (the faithful of the present dispensation) have already been assembled and judged and glorified. These "people" are those being called to become God's people by believing the Everlasting Gospel then being preached, and by obeying its call to come out. We remember Christ said to Paul regarding Corinth, as Paul first started to work there—

"I have much people in this city" (Acts 18:10).

They were still at that time in heathen darkness, but they were his people in prospect, for they would come out and take their places as his people by the instrumentality of the preaching of Paul. This is the period of which the Spirit said in Zechariah 2 :10-11—

"Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord.

"And many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and shall be MY PEOPLE" (Zech. 2:10-11).

In Revelation 18, where the judgment and destruction of Babylon is announced, we are told (v. 4) that it is "another voice" that calls for God's prospective people to come out of Babylon and escape her pending plagues. This is the voice of the messengers of the Everlasting Gospel of Revelation 14:6-7.

The proclamation of the Everlasting Gospel is in "Midheaven" (Rev. 14:6). This is the political aerial of the world upon which the impending judgments of the seventh Vial—the final, culminating, completing Vial—are to be poured out (Rev. 16:17). Long have the Sin-Powers of the earth—the present "heavens"—ruled the world in wickedness according to the mind of the flesh. Now a door has been "*opened in heaven*" (Rev. 4:1), and a new heavenly power has burst in on their dominions, and is about to sweep them all out into oblivion—to "*cast them out of heaven.*"

It is "MIDheaven" because it has now ceased to be the supreme political heavens, now that Christ has begun to set up his Kingdom and has been established in Jerusalem as the true and rightful and sole King of the whole earth.

Bro. Thomas interestingly and instructively draws a parallel between the "Angel in Midheaven" and the incident in 1 Chronicles 21:16 where David sees an angel "*standing be-*

tween the earth and heaven" with a drawn sword of impending judgment over Jerusalem. David is being punished for having disobeyed God and taken pride in the arm of the flesh in numbering the manpower of Israel. And as the angel stands with his sword poised, David is instructed what to do to avoid the threatened destruction of the city.

The introduction into this picture of Ornan, a Gentile, and his four sons (who hid themselves at this time of judgment) adds to the significance of the parallel. The Gentiles at this epoch of judgment submit and give their wealth to the Lord. (The ones who do not submit—though they appear to be the majority—cease to exist and cease therefore to be of any account in the picture.)

The Gentiles at Christ's coming, like Ornan ("as a king"—2 Sam. 24:23—a strange expression), offer their riches freely, though their gift is not accepted without recompense, for the temporal and spiritual blessings they receive infinitely outweigh the wealth they relinquish to the new and greater David, who in turn dedicates it to God and His Temple.

The four sons of Ornan who hide themselves at this time of judgment are clearly the four-fold Sin-Powers of the world, the four Beasts—

"Every island fled, and the mountains were not found" (Rev. 16:20).

"And the kings of the earth, and the rich men, and the mighty men, hid themselves . . . and said to the rocks, Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne" (Rev. 6:15-16).

"And they shall go into the holes of the rocks . . . for fear of the Lord when He ariseth to shake terribly the earth" (Isa. 2:19).

The nations of the Gentiles are separated into two classes on the basis of their reaction to the proclamation—the Goat-nations and the Sheep-nations. The Goat-nations are all of Europe—all the Catholic nations—all the nations of the ten Horns, Beast, False Prophet and Dragon—including Russia which is historically Orthodox Catholic (like Greece) and which will have been reunited under the papal banner in that day. All these we know are Goats, for they are represented in actual warfare with the Lamb, and are destroyed by him.

The Sheep-nations are those who are allies of the Shepherd of Israel. They are primarily the Tarshish nations—Sin-Powers, truly, like all the rest—but rewarded at this time with lesser

punishment and quicker reconciliation because of their historic better treatment of God's people, both natural and spiritual. This will be the Tarshish nations and those few if any who have the wisdom to stand with them.

Bro. Thomas in his day, viewing the boastful arrogance and wickedness of the United States, did not expect it to submit to Christ without terrible judgments and desolations. Today the arrogance and wickedness are even greater, but for the present United States has largely assumed the historic Tarshish role of Israel's friend and protector. Apart from the protecting arm of United States, Israel long since would have been wiped off the map, to the mutual joy of Russian, Catholic and Arab.

United States and Russia are equally fleshly and worldly and animalish, but while United States gives freedom and protection to God's Word and to His people, Russia suppresses and persecutes both, after the fashion of the Roman Beast in all its blood-stained history.

Zechariah 6 gives us a similar picture of distinction of treatment between the Goat and Sheep nations, in the vision of the two Mountains of Brass. These two mountains are the two great fleshly powers of the last day—King of the North and King of the South—Gog and Tarshish.

From BETWEEN them issue forth four chariots. Here is the Bozrah picture of Christ stepping in between them. These are the Chariot of the Cherubim—the Elect of God in judicial war-chariot manifestation for the subduing of the earth, and the leveling of the two great Flesh-Brass Sin-Mountains.

The four Chariots are drawn by horses of four different colors—red, black, white, and grisled (grey or spotted). The horses are the "goodly" Israel battle-horses (Zech. 10:3), made "goodly" and thus useful to God by the purifying judgments of the last days, and their deeply repentant conversion to their true Messiah.

It is the different colors of the horses which gives indication of different treatment—different degrees of punishment and destruction—visited upon the different areas to which each goes. To the north (Gog) first go the black horses, and then the white follow them. Here appears to be indicated a double operation, or an operation of double intensity, which is at first all black—complete woe and destruction; then all white—complete victory and purging.

To the South (Tarshish) go the "grisled" horses, an indication of mixed and milder treatment. The red do not go anywhere

specifically. They, listed first, appear to be a general type of the warlikeness of the whole operation, in contrast to Christ's first mission on earth. The bay (or "strong," or "swift") horses go through all the earth, after the operations of the black, white and grisled in the North and South.

Again, the same Sheep-Goat distinction appears in Zechariah 10, in the very context in which the "goodly horse" symbol appears—

"The idols have spoken vanity, the diviners have seen a lie. Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds, and I punished the goats:

"For the Lord of hosts hath visited his flock the house of Judah, and hath made them his goodly horse in the battle . . . They shall be as . . . mighty men . . . they shall fight because the Lord is with them" (vs. 2-5).

The False Prophet—the Papacy—is the "Idol Shepherd" (Zech. 11:17), the Shepherd of the Goat-nations, blasphemously claiming to be God on earth, and stirring up the nations against the true Shepherd of the Sheep.

The Sheep and Goat concept has many degrees of application: the Saints, Israel, the nations, and the individual inhabitants of the earth. In each case there must be a day of separation: some on the right hand, and some on the left. Brother Thomas (Eur. III:408) makes a double application of Matthew 25:31-33—individual and national.

Another indication of the separation of the nations into Sheep and Goat powers in relation to Christ appears in the various references to the actions of some nations as voluntarily bringing gifts. One group of nations—the Beast nations—we know unite to fight Christ, and their defeat and destruction is given in terms that appear to eliminate any possibility of rulers bringing gifts of peace—

"And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.

"And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet . . . these were both cast alive into a lake of fire. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat on the horse" (Rev. 19:19-21).

This is one picture. Then we have such prophecies as—

"The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts" (Psa. 72:10).

"The daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift" (Psa. 45:12).

"Tyre's merchandise and hire shall be holiness to the Lord" (Isa.23:18).

With all the foregoing, the warning and promise of Psalm 2 would also seem to give a strong indication that there is expected, and will be, different degrees of wisdom and submission manifested by the world's rulers—

"Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings . . . serve the Lord with fear lest ye perish from the way. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him" (vs. 10-12).

Similarly Isaiah 60 seems to carry the same implication that nations as such will react differently, and will consequently be treated differently. Addressing Israel in the day of her blessing and glory, it is promised—

"The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, THOSE nations shall be utterly wasted" (v. 12).

This would surely imply that some will submit and some will fight. Just previously, in verse 9, we are told—

"The isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish FIRST, to bring thy sons from afar."

"First" here again points to different degrees of order and alacrity in recognizing and submitting to the power of Christ.

Thematical Index

Amos	177
Colossians	302
1 Corinthians 10:1-4	273
1 Corinthians 10:5	276
2 Corinthians 1-7	280
Daniel 3	165
Ecclesiastes 7:2-4	108
Exodus 12	13
Ezekiel 1	129
Ezekiel 1-44	147
Galatians 5:22-23	293
Hebrews 1-2	319
Hebrews 8-10	311
Hosea 4:6	169
Isaiah 7-9	111
Isaiah 40	125
John 17:3	248
1 Kings 17-19	49
1 Kings 20	57
2 Kings 11:3	64
Leviticus 23	24
Luke 4	214
Mark 11	239
Mark 16:15-16	222
Matthew 20	198
Micah 7:15-16	366
Numbers 15:4-5	207
Numbers 24:21-22	35
1 Peter	326
Proverbs 1-3	97
Psalms 1-2	1
Psalm 19:1-2	82
Revelation 14:18	366
Zechariah 14	366