

The Herald of Christ's Kingdom

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ACQUAINTANCE WITH GOD

"This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent."--John 17:3

IT will be manifest to the careful reader that there is a profound significance in this expressed desire of the Master, that those who had been or were to be given Him might heartily enter into the fullness of the relationship to which He was inviting them, in fulfillment of the Divine Plan which centered in Himself. The knowledge here implied is not the merely superficial kind that would make one content to affirm belief in the existence of God, and in acknowledging that there should be some measure of conformity to such knowledge; for such as enjoy properly the privilege of communion with God cannot remain satisfied with outward forms and ceremonies--cannot believe that such would be sufficient attestation 'of proper relationship with Him. The thought of our text may be clearly seen by reference to the Master's words elsewhere (John 8:39, 41), wherein the distinction is clearly shown between mere belief and formalistic service, and the more desirable and important understanding of the true basis of spiritual relationship. The Jews boasted of their natural kinship with Abraham, and had arrived at the conclusion that their relationship to him -gave them the fullest assurance of continuance in Divine favor. Surely they could say., "Abraham is our father"; and was that not an indisputable evidence that the promises made to Abraham were theirs, to appropriate unto themselves?--and would this not therefore mean that they were right in thinking, of themselves as being in every way loyal to God, loyal to Abraham, and in line for whatever of blessing or privilege there might be for any in the further developments of the Plan of God? Our Lord, however, very pointedly exposes their false reasoning and reveals the true basis of relationship with father Abraham, viz., the possession of the faith and the obedience that were so beautifully exemplified in Abraham. These they did not have; and they thereby forfeited their right to be considered his seed from the Divine standpoint. Their true relationship is very well suggested in our Lord's prayer (John 17:25), where He classifies those who are merely nominal believers as being outside of the true, real acquaintanceship enjoyed by those who *know* God; for such as really *know* the Father have a *personal knowledge* of Him, and to them He is near and precious. Out of a living faith and honest heart, they have sought to know His will and conform life and character to the standard and principles so grandly and gloriously displayed in Him. Such know Him in the sense contemplated in our text.

IMPORTANCE OF PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP TO CHRIST

How easily this important lesson may be forgotten is clearly demonstrated in the history of God's people, both Jewish and Christian. How disposed many have been to lay special stress upon relationship to or association with sects, reformations,. leaders, or organizations, and to point to their affiliation and

co-operation with such as the most conclusive evidence that they are the special favorites of heaven, and in the sure and certain enjoyment of the Lord's approval! The Lord's Word, on the contrary, makes it clear that individuality, of character, personal relationship with Himself, and individual faith, love and obedience, are the unalterable requirements set before each individual believer, and the one and only basis upon which Divine approval may be expected. This thought must never be lost sight of, while keeping in mind also the, necessity of the assembling of His people in larger or smaller gatherings, for mutual benefit and for the purpose of cooperation in the furtherance of the Message and service committed, to them; and that faithfulness to these requirements will mean prosperity in things spiritual to such assemblies; whereas, their neglect will result in spiritual decline and the loss of much of the blessing reserved for the faithful. But, while recognizing that the association of the New Creation includes such arrangements as will permit of combined effort and service in the interest of the household of faith, and the spread of the Truth, yet for all, the individual requirements are the things of supreme importance, more vital than ceaseless activity in "great works," or membership in any organization other than that where "One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren -- "the true Church.

What marvelous privileges are opened up to those who now have the opportunity of knowing God; those who, their eyes of understanding being enlightened, are permitted to know "what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints," and who, because of vital relationship with the Lord, "may comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." (Eph. 1:18; 3:18, 19.) Surely to such has been given vision of the Lord that must obscure every other object, and rivet the mind and heart upon Him in such a way as to banish every cherished earthly ambition and enthrone Him in the life and affections as Lord of all. To these there has come the blessed realization of the fulfillment of the Master's promise, "He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him." (John 14:21.) And what deep and holy manifestations of "love Divine, all love excelling," the one thus devoted to the Lord may enjoy as he presses on to know the Lord! What privileges of association and participation in the most sacred and lofty relationships and purposes into which he may now. realize himself introduced, as there unfolds before his mind the lengths and depths of the love of God so gloriously displayed in the great Plan of Redemption! This manifestation will discover to him the astounding revelation of the purpose of God to select from amongst men, from such as have ears to hear and hearts to appreciate, a class to be His special treasure, to enjoy the greatest privilege of all that wondrous Plan that has been of absorbing interest, not only to holy men who in all ages have sought to know the purposes of God, but even to angels themselves.--1 Pet. 1:10-12.

BEAUTIFUL ONENESS OF THE DIVINE FAMILY

To be favored with such a vision, to be granted participation in such a privilege, must fill the receptive heart with a joy unspeakable and full of glory. To know oneself as having been admitted into the great mystery "which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints, to whom God

would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery . . . which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:26, 27), is surely to realize every responsive chord of mind and heart strung to the keenest pitch, and all that is within us reverberating with love and devotion, to Him whose love and goodness arranged it all. To enjoy this privilege means that we are being introduced into that blessed oneness expressed by our Master, the oneness of the Divine family of heaven, which is a oneness of purpose, a oneness of confidence, a oneness of sympathy, a oneness of love, a oneness of honor, and a oneness of mutual possession,--a sharing of joys, privileges and positions beyond our power to grasp or to believe possible, were it not that in His own Message to us the Lord has told us that so great is His love toward us, that these are the things in reservation for those that love Him supremely. And the influence of all this upon the receptive heart, as before suggested, is to awaken every proper and noble element in our souls to gratitude 'and the desire to serve and honor Him. We have found in Him the One altogether lovely, the fairest among ten thousand.

"None other could with Him compare
Among the sons of men;
He is fairer, too, than all the fair
Who fill the Heavenly train."

And, oh blessed thought! "I am His, and He is mine, forever and forever." In Him we find the perfection of every grace, every grand and noble quality; every ideal of character is there, and we are captivated by His love, willing and glad to be the bond-slave of Jesus Christ, bearing about in our body the marks of the Lord Jesus; happy in the knowledge that we are not our own, but belong to Him: and into our souls there comes the sweet refrain:

"Since my eyes were fixed on Jesus,
I've lost sight of all beside
So enchained my spirit's vision,
Looking at the Crucified."

This, as all must recognize, is in harmony with what we find set forth in the Scriptures as being the proper viewpoint from which to consider our part in the Divine Plan. It would seem that all who in sincerity of heart have laid hold of the privileges of this Gospel Age, have surely experienced something of these joys of salvation outlined in the foregoing examination of the way the Savior leads us. Not to have had' such an experience would seem to indicate that we have not entered into those real joys that form so important a part of a full, ripe Christian life. How could it be otherwise? Could it be that we could walk by the side of the Master and, possessing receptive minds, hear from His lips -the unfolding of, the truth of our Father's Plan, revealing to us its depth and height and its possibilities to ourselves, and not have our hungry hearts burn within us with a holy joy? Could it be that we could behold in Him, not only a Savior, a Deliverer from the curse and penalty of death, but over and beyond all, our prospective Bridegroom, whose throne and glory we shall share, in, whose presence we shall live--beholding Him as He is and being like Him, and sharing with Him in all the eternal ages to come the privilege of carrying forward the Father's Plan-and still not realize ourselves transported with an unspeakable joy, far beyond the highest sensations of joy or pleasure known to the human heart? Surely we must realize

these results, which are the clearest indication of having entered the way of life -- drawn by the love of God and thereafter constrained by His love to lay bold on all the privileges of the child of God.

KEEPING OUR FIRST LOVE

Strange as it may seem, notwithstanding all of these incentives to love and devotion found in the Word and Plan of God, and the fact that they exercise such a powerful influence upon the life of the one laying hold of them, yet the Scriptures abound with warnings of the danger of losing our appreciation of these priceless truths and privileges. That such warnings have not been unnecessary has been abundantly proven time and again since the Master Himself was betrayed by His "own familiar friend," who after months and years of the closest contact and privileges of friendship, hearing the words of Him who spake as never man spake, see ing all the evidences of, His Messiahship and sharing in His labors, sold his Lord and Master for thirty pieces of silver: and the record of his fall is full of significance to all; for, though we properly abhor such a character and cannot imagine ourselves ever becoming so unappreciative of our Lord as to literally barter Him for a price, great or small, yet how real is the danger of exchanging Him and His love, and all the hallowed privileges of friendship with Him, for the illusive bubbles and transitory pleasures of the present life. Only the Lord may know how many during the Gospel Age have entered the race with unbounded joy and enthusiasm, and a real determination to reach the goal, only to fall by the way when the trials and testings promised overtook them.

Against this danger our Lord Himself repeatedly warns us. How clearly He has sought to give us the proper understanding of the cost of discipleship! He has not minimized the difficulties and besetments to be encountered; rather, His method has been to clearly portray these in their true light, so that the one desiring to follow Him may have clearly before his mind that the way to the Kingdom and joint-heirship with Him is to be gained by way of the cross -- self-denial and sacrifice. While, therefore, appreciating the love that might prompt to enthusiastic zeal in beginning the race, He seeks the love that will be of an enduring nature; the love that will be so centered in Himself that it can never be displaced by any of the enticements of the world, the flesh, or the devil; the love that will become more fixed and unshakable with the passing of time, and that will be made stronger by the trials and difficulties of life which link us so closely to Him as to make us sharers with Him in His cup, His baptism, as members of His Body. Since, then, we find so many references to this danger in -the words of Jesus and the Apostles, it behooves us to give them our prayerful consideration; and this necessity is the more clearly recognized by those who can grasp the underlying truths relative to the importance of that "first love," so greatly desired by the Lord, and which plays so vital a part in the Lord's judgment of His people.

Some months, ago the message of the Lord to the Church at Ephesus was given consideration in these columns, and in treating the importance of this first love, it was there, noted that the Lord reveals how very vital it is as a basic quality of character, without which other admirable qualities are nullified so far as bringing to us His full approval is concerned. The message to Ephesus, it was seen, contained much in the way of commendation. In His inspection of this Church, the Lord found the spirit of labor, of endurance, of hatred of evil, and that

notwithstanding difficulties, they had not fainted; and yet for all that, He had something against them, and His words indicate that the matter is of supreme importance. He found not that which they had 'once possessed--their first love; and because of this, He calls them to repentance, and the regaining of this most important virtue.

Examining the matter further, it was pointed out that this love sought by the Lord, and which had once been in evidence in the Ephesus Church, was that deep, personal love and devotion to the Lord Himself--the love that found in Him that which satisfied every desire of the heart, and enlisted every power possessed in His service, and causes such to sing:

"Though all the world my choice deride,
Yet Jesus shall my portion be;
For I am pleased with none beside;
The fairest of the fair is He."

THE ONE GREAT DESIRE TO PLEASE HIM

A consideration of this subject from this standpoint would seem to be both timely and profitable to all in these days, when issues connected with the eternal interests of all who are the Lord's are under discussion. Such as belong to this class will recognize that the judgment now upon the Church is for the very purpose of making manifest the approved ones, those who will be found acceptable to the Lord in the final gathering together of His jewels. Who that so understands the matter could fail to be interested in the examination of his own heart, sincerely desiring to find the Lord ruling supreme in his life; and to find there the careful observance of those vows of allegiance made in the warmth and ardor of our earliest love, when our minds were illuminated with the vision of the Master and there came into our lives the all-absorbing desire to pour upon Him all-our love and devotion. How helpful, then, the thought gathered from this our Lord's message, that the greatest safeguard against the multitudinous enemies within and without, and the thing most pleasing to the Lord, will be for us to, show unmistakable evidences of our love for Him; to have Him fixed in our hearts as the one above all others, and have as the one great, burning desire of life, to please Him, and to be transformed by contact with Him into His own glorious likeness, and thereby be fitted for His presence and the future association with Him in "the glory to follow." Among the many beautiful word-pictures of photographs of the Bride of Christ furnished us in the writings of our beloved Pastor, perhaps none could be found that more beautifully portrays this quality of 'character than the following:

"The worthiness of the espoused virgin Church to be the Bride, the Lamb's Wife, consists not merely in sinlessness, though she will be holy and 'without blemish'--'without spot or wrinkle or any such thing' (Eph. 5:27), made 'whiter than snow' in the great fountain of redeeming love, her Redeemer's merit . . . But to be the Bride of the Lamb, she must not only be a virgin in purity, and in addition be free from sinful alliance and coquetry with the world, but *she must be more, much more than this . . . She must prove that she possesses a consuming love for the Bridegroom, and an untiring devotion to His name and principles, so*

as to be willing to be despised and rejected of the worldly, as He was, for the sake of obedience to His doctrines."

What language could better emphasize the thought to be borne in mind; that refraining from wrong-doing, and living separate and apart from unholy associations, while essential and commendable, are not the most important features of the life and conduct of the prospective Bride of Christ. The expression, "a consuming love for the Bridegroom," seems so very appropriate when applied to this class, for the reason that it covers all the different phases of the love and service which must be manifest in the devotion and consecration of the believer. Such love would meet every desire of the Savior's heart, who in the very nature of things must always find Himself occupying the chief place in the affections, the heart's most precious treasure; and such love would always be alert to give the fullest demonstration of the completeness of that devotion. Nothing would be undertaken without having Him as the center of it. In the study of the Scriptures, He would be always before the mind, because the end in view would be to know Him better, to become better acquainted with His will and character: and the sure result would most certainly be, to find oneself developing in that knowledge that brings "grace and peace" through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord--2 Pet. 1:2.

"THAT I MAY KNOW HIM"

The desire to know Him in this deeper, grander sense, will become the inspiring incentive to study the Divine revelation, and will make that study the most absorbing and blessed occupation of life. This thought seems clearly expressed by the Apostle Paul (Phil. 3:8, 10) : "Yea, doubtless, and 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 do count them but refuse, that I may win Christ; that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death." With the Apostle, all things were simply a means to this end. Many things might have absorbed his attention--his remarkable visions and revelations superior to anything enjoyed by the other Apostles; or, his special position as a "chosen vessel," more widely used than any of the original eleven, might have inclined Him to clothe Himself in a halo of glory--but not so, Christ eclipsed everything else: he believed Christ; he preached Christ; and he lived Christ. (Gal. 2:20; 1 Cor. 2:2; Phil. 1:21.) What a lesson is here for all Bible students, and more particularly for those in the position of leaders or teachers! What a power for good all such would be, if all were endeavoring to copy the Apostle in these things!

Again we read, as illustrating the same thought, Jer. 9:23, 24: "Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, *that he understandeth and knoweth Me*, that I am the Lord which exercise loving kindness, judgement, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord."

Nevertheless, the Christian life is not to be thought of as a one-sided system of ethics that would be content to simply sit at the Master's feet and contemplate His beauties of character, and -become so absorbed in the study of the "Christ life"

that we would forget to do Him service, or fail to remember that the life of Christ was preeminently a life of service. To have a consuming love for His glorious personality must then exert a powerful influence upon the heart, and inspire the recipient of His grace with the sentiment of the poet:

"I'm not my own, dear Lord -- to Thee
My every power, by right, belongs;
My privilege to serve I see,
Thy praise to raise in tuneful songs.

"And so, beside Thy sacrifice,
I would lay down my little all.
'Tis lean and poor, I must confess;
I would that it were not so small."

HOW MAY WE SERVE HIM BETTER?

Truly, such will assuredly find the fire of love within the heart consuming everything--all we are and all we have or might hope for as human beings--and never being permitted to burn low or become extinguished until every vestige of the offering has been fully consumed. Yea, more; there must be a growing appreciation of such privileges as time goes on, on the part of the sacrificer. Again we quote: "In proportion as His love and zeal for the Lord grow day by day through a knowledge of the Truth and the attainment of its spirit, he will find himself giving more and more of time, more and more of his influence, and more and more of such means as are at his command, for the service of the Truth;--and planning, additionally, how he may curtail the various personal and family obligations so as to be able to increase his offerings and sacrifices.." Truly such are singing, "Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small," in a way that will find a response in the mind and heart of God; and they are numbered by Him among the followers of the Lamb, "who shall walk with Him in white; for they are worthy."

As we think of these things, dear brethren, how do they affect our minds? Do we find ourselves lifting up holy hands in prayer to God that such devotion, love and sacrifice may ever characterize our lives? Do they quicken us to renewed appreciation of the greatness of the privileges enjoyed, and send us forth to glorify our God, and be a blessing to those about us, imparting to them something of the knowledge and the joy that have transported us above the trivial things of earth? Or do we think of this picture of consecrated zeal as being merely a beautiful ideal, and go on our way much as we might do if we were not making claims of special consecration, of self-denials, of giving up human rights and privileges? Do we feel no burning zeal to herald forth the Message of God's grace that we so often sing of as being a theme so rich and so engrossing, that even in the Ages to come it will continue to be our employment and joy to tell "the old, old story of Jesus and His love"? The position in which we may find ourselves in respect to these things, it seems, will be largely determined by the degree of our heart-knowledge of Him, and the measure of that "first-love" experienced in the beginning, before the trials and testings came to prove our characters--before our endurance, and patience, and fidelity, were tried in the fire.

"TRIED SO AS BY FIRE"

The Scriptures abound with assurances that the end of the Age would be a time of special trial, not only upon the false systems of that time, but also upon those most highly favored ones who would have a share in the special light and privileges of the Harvest period. "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required," is a very searching truth connected with the unfolding of God's plans and purposes; and nowhere is this more emphatically taught than in its application to our own day. "Judgment must begin at the house of God." Recognizing this, it is not difficult for the watchful saints to interpret the meaning of the present tests of endurance, alertness and faithfulness now being experienced by the brethren throughout the world; and these trials are being recognized by the faithful as being most appropriate indeed, in view of our Lord's statement, previously quoted, to the effect that such as had been thus highly favored must expect severe testings.

As might be expected, there is a great diversity in the trials peculiar to this our day. Loyalty to Truth, and the possession of its spirit, will surely be on trial. Our love in all its ramifications will also be tested. Our consecration will be proven to be absolute or halfhearted by the experiences through which we pass. Our services will be manifested as being either acceptable or unacceptable by the motives that prompt them. Will they be inspired by a pure, unselfish love for the Lord, the Truth and the brethren, or will they be the results of partisan zeal or consecration to systems, organizations, or great works? "The day shall declare it."

Others, again, are being tried by present experiences on the point of "faithful continuance in well-doing." Many seem to have experienced an interruption in their well-doing that has seemed to amount almost to a full stop, and in whose minds there seems to be the thought that the Lord's providences indicate that all individual or concerted activity on the part of God's people should, cease; that each by himself and for himself must be the attitude of the faithful.

Here we seem to have the two extremes of thought: on the one hand, works and co-operation stressed beyond their true meaning; on the other hand, an apparent oversight of the Scriptures' most emphatic teaching regarding the inseparable oneness of the Body of Christ, and the duties and responsibilities of every member, looking toward the well-being of the whole Body.

REMEMBER THE FORMER DAYS

Therefore, we believe the importance of that "first love" may again be seen as having a very real application to these experiences, and all the ways and means now being overruled by the Lord in the testing of His people. In this instance let us refer to the words of St. Paul (Heb. 3:6, 14), where he has something to say about the importance of first things: "Whose house are we, if we hold fast to the *confidence* and the *rejoicing of the hope* firm unto the end." "For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the *beginning of our confidence* steadfast unto the end." It seems only necessary to turn our minds back to those earlier days of our introduction into the wonderful secrets of our Father's Plan to appreciate these words of the Apostle. How strong was the beginning of our confidence! How firmly fixed our determination! And oh, how great our joy when we realized ourselves in the days of our Lord's presence, and standing in the very midst of the

great dispensational changes that had been the theme of the holy Prophets and Apostles; that we had reached the time of that great event which had been so earnestly and prayerfully hoped for on the part of the faithful Church of Christ-the Second Advent -of our Lord-the hope that had inspired the true Church all through the Age, as she went forth to fulfil her Divinely ordained mission; for it was for this hope that she has endured the fires of persecution, the rack, the dungeon and the stake, triumphant in the faith that the One she loved and to whom she was espoused, would return to take her to Himself and fulfil to her the rich promises of His love. Yea verily, we may read in the signs about us, in the reflecting light of inspired prophecy, the unmistakable evidence that her triumph is all but complete! And the language of the Prophet has found its fulfillment in our hearts: "Oh the blessed ness of him that waiteth, and cometh unto the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days!" What unbounded joy was ours, and how precious and valued were the privileges of knowledge and service then before us; what a delight to spend and be spent in the service of our present Lord! How much would we have been influenced then by the petty opinions of others? How great would have been the trial to find ourselves shut off from participation in service; how disinclined we were then to deprive ourselves or others of the privilege of hearty co-operation and fellowship; and what a blessed kinship, we found in others of like precious faith. In every country and clime, we found ourselves gathered around the same Lord and Master; and He who understands every language, heard in every tongue the same song of joy. "Oh the blessed ness!"

Brethren, think of these things! - Let not the fact that certain circumstances which have been permitted of the Lord, and which will eventually work out our highest good, rob us of the joy and confidence and holy zeal of those days which marked the beginning of our confidence and our hopeful rejoicing; and so long as the door of opportunity for service and suffering stands open, let us do with our might what our hands find to do. What matters it to us where we may be on the stream of time insofar as serving our God is concerned? Whether here or there, sowing or reaping, in earth or heaven, the -sweetest of all privileges will always be, serving Him.

"My highest place is lying low
At my Redeemer's feet;
No real joy in life I know,
But in His service sweet."

LOVE FOR THE MASTER LEADS TO SERVICE

As a concluding thought may we not again refer to that important feature of the various texts that have been given consideration in this article, -putting all the emphasis where the Lord puts it namely, personal contact and association with Him, and an all-consuming love for Him that gives Him absolute sway in our lives -ourselves His willing and devoted servants, and every power of mind and body consecrated to Him. Examining ourselves in the light of our study of this subject will assist every sincere and, honest heart, we trust, in the effort to maintain the degree of love and zeal necessary to a place in the Kingdom. In such examination of our hearts, we may well inquire: Have I maintained my first love? And in view of the fact that I may not point to my works, or my patience, or my

endurance, or my hatred of error and evil, as an indisputable proof that "first love" has been maintained, how searching is the question! Remembering the Master's words that after we have done all, we are still unprofitable servants, do we not feel something of the helplessness of Peter, and with tearful eyes, look up into His face and say: "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee"? We know that He will then read in our zeal, our labors, our endurance and our patience, the sure testimony of true love for Him. Every opportunity then for serving Him in all the ways provided will be eagerly grasped privileges great -or small, for serving the brethren, for proclaiming the blessed tidings of the Divine Plan, for comforting and encouraging those about us. A love as wide as the globe will take in every member of the Body, and these will be carried in the arms of our faith and love before our Father's throne; and our interest in them will be rewarded, we may be sure, with our Master's smile; for has He not taught 'us that every member of His Body in the flesh represents Himself, and the service is recognized as done to Him. Under such circumstances the heart will ever remain satisfied, and will never cease to sing:

"All for Jesus! All for Jesus!
All my being's ransomed powers."

Service will continue to represent true devotion, and will never become mere formalistic service, without the power-such as is evidenced by others less enlightened. It will be devoid of all partisan strife, all vain glory, all effort to make a fair show in the flesh. All will be done to the glory of God and in the highest interests of His people. None may surely know just how few or how many may be the years before us -- perhaps it may not even be a matter of years for some of us; and such meditations make very precious to us the hope which as an anchor holds fast within the veil, and create the desire to live each day as though it were our last day of privilege on this side. How we would want to spend that day, were we to know that its close would finish our life of opportunity here! What zeal and love, and earnest waiting and looking for the Master, it would bring to us! A related thought is well expressed by our beloved Brother:

"Truly 'wise' will those of the consecrated prove to be who, neglecting worldly enchantments, and earthly hopes and prizes, and with hearts yearning and waiting for the Beloved, are found ready and proved worthy of the great exaltation promised, as the Bride, the Lamb's wife."

"Bride of the Lamb, thy charms,
Oh, may we share."

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

SERIES XIV-A

CHRIST'S MESSAGE TO LAODICEA

"And unto the angel of the Church of the Laodiceans write."--Rev. 3:14.

WITH the message to the angel of the Church of the Laodiceans, we come to the close of these solemn epistles of Christ to His professed Church- Applying the messages prophetically, as representing the particular characteristics possessed by

the Church in seven periods of the Gospel Age, there can be no question that the message to this Church and its star or teacher, describes a condition existing in the very closing period of Church history. It is very generally agreed by Pre-Millennial expositors who have written since 1880, that we have now reached the period of Laodicea. JOSEPH SEISS, in a series of lectures on the Revelation, given about 1865, thus wrote concerning this matter:

THE CHURCH OF THE LAST TIMES

"There is yet one other phase [of Church history]. Shall I say that it is yet future, or that we have already entered it? Here are still *some* whom Christ loves, mostly suffering ones, under the rebukes, and chastenings of their gracious Lord. (V. 19.) But the body of Christendom is quite apostate, with Christ outside, and knocking for admission into his own professed Church. . . . Can any man scrutinize narrowly the professed Church of our day, and say that we have not reached the Laodicean age? Is it not the voice of this Christendom of ours which says, 'I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of, nothing'? And is it not equally the fact that this -selfsame Christendom of ours is 'the wretched, and the pitiable, and poor, and blind, and naked'? (V. 17.) Did the '*Mene, Mene, tekel upharsin*' of Belshazzar's palace better fit the ancient heathen, than this modern Christian Babylon? Men talk of it as destined to glorious triumph. They proclaim it commissioned of God to convert the world. They point to its onward march as about to take possession of the race for Christ and heaven. But the '*Amen*' hath spoken, '*the faithful and true Witness*' hath given His word; 'I am about to spew it out of my mouth.'"*

* *Lectures on the Apocalypse ---198, 200.*

PASTOR RUSSELL, writing a half century after these words were spoken, in 1916, said in this connection: "The message to the Laodicean stage of the Church pictures the nominal Church of today as our Lord sees her. . . . Unknown to the Laodicean Church, our Lord has returned., He has stood at the door and knocked. Had they been awake, they would have heard. Our Lord clearly foretold that He would come as a thief; but He did not tell at what hour."**

** Z '16-347, 348.

The fact that our Lord would be really, although invisibly, present, at some time during the Laodicean period, was plainly stated by messengers of the Philadelphian period, as we read:

"To the Philadelphians it is announced, as a subject of comfort and hope, that *Christ shall quickly come*. And to the Laodiceans He is represented as *already present*, knocking at the door, prepared to bless those ready to receive Him, but to

eject with loathing the lukewarm masses who fail in fervency and timely repentance. Laodicea thinks itself all it ought to be, and appropriates to itself all Divine, favor and blessedness; and yet, the very Lord in whom it professes to trust is denied a place in it and is represented as barred out, where He stands and knocks as his last gracious appeal before giving over the infamous Babylon to judgments which are ready to sweep it from the earth. And with reference to the loathsome Laodiceans, He represents Himself as *already present*, appealing to them for the last time, and ready to spew them out of His mouth."*

*SEISS, *Lectures on the Apocalypse*.

In 1914, speaking of his chronological convictions, PASTOR RUSSELL said: "The Scriptures teach us that there is a time for the Parousia, or Presence of the Lord. That time, so far as we are able to calculate, began in 1874. Since that date we have been living in the Parousia of the Son of Man. Is there anything to corroborate this? Yes. In the first place, we look at our Lord's dealing with His people, the Church. We should expect that, at the time of our Lord's coming His people would hear His 'knock' [Rev. 3:20], the knock of the prophecies, and whoever would open his heart and receive the things in a consecrated attitude of mind, the Lord would gird Himself as a Servant, and would come forth and serve him."**

**Z '14-326.

A SECOND DECLINE IN CHRISTIANITY

However, it would seem that we may not be positive in fixing an *exact* date when the periods represented by these messages begin and end; and this is especially true of the last, the Laodicean period. The fact as to when the period is reached, is made known to watchful Christians only; and this by the fulfillment of the *events* predicted. *Exact* dates of the ending of chronological periods may not be known so positively. This seems to have been the thought of PASTOR RUSSELL as late as 1914

"We may not read the *time* features with the same absolute certainty as *doctrinal* features; for time is not so definitely stated in the Scriptures as are the basic doctrines. We are still walking by faith-and not by sight. . . . If in the Lord's providence the time should come *twenty-five years later*, then that would be our will."***

***Z '14-4.

This especially was his thought regarding the different epochs referred to in these messages, as We read: "We are not to think of the different epochs represented in the messages to the various Churches as being exact periods, as though there was

a particular instant of beginning and a particular instant of closing. *Rather we are to understand each to be a general period, which laps over the one on the other.*"****

**** Z 15-199

Two facts seem to stand out prominently in the teaching of the two above quoted expositors--one with reference to the Philadelphian period, and! the other concerning the Laodicean. The first is, that at some time when the Laodicean conditions would be prevailing, the Second Advent would take place; and there is implied the fact that when this event had occurred, it would be known only to a comparatively few; the second, that Laodicea seems to represent or picture what we see all around us--the failure and apostasy of Protestant Christianity--the same condition that Sardis saw, just previous to the sixteenth century in Roman Catholic Christianity.: In other words, Laodicea seems to depict the complete failure of Christendom a *second* time; the *first* time being that of Romish Christianity just before the Reformation and necessitating what might be called a new beginning. It is an indisputable fact that Protestantism sprang out of the bosom of Romanism, as Philadelphia conditions out of the bosom of Protestantism. Other visions of the Revelation that apply to the close of this latter period, and which will be considered later on, depict a great, a general falling of stars (teachers) from heavenly to earthly things, and the shaking of the powers of the heavens, the ecclesiastical systems. Laodicea and its messenger seem to represent the culmination of this; that is, both the clergy class (stars) and laity class, (Lampstands, Churches), fallen from grace, judged and found wanting. While there were some few notable exceptions in both these classes, and still are even at the present time, this, however, seems to be the general picture presented, and described, in the Laodicean message.

THE MESSENGER OF LAODICEA

In our consideration of the preceding messages, it has been our thought, as will have been noted, that these stars or messengers *apply to a ministering class of teachers, rather than* to seven particular individuals; and that the words of commendation, as well as the rebukes and reproofs, are more applicable to, this class than to the Churches themselves. Accepting, after careful examination, the translation of our Common Version, (which is, in fact, the same as that of most all translations), that the word, "*unto,*" or "*to,*" and not "*by,*" the angel of the Church of Ephesus, Smyrna, etc., is correct, we cannot see how, in applying these messages to different periods in Church history, seven single individuals can be represented as stars--one for each period. It does not seem either reasonable or Scriptural to suppose that in the *long* periods represented by the different messages, some of them covering centuries, that the Lord would select and make use of but one individual only, unto whom all the others, living centuries after their death, were to look as their leader. For instance, in the Philadelphian period it cannot be, questioned that Luther was a "star," represented symbolically as held in the Savior's right hand as long as he was faithful to the light given, whose special work was to *begin* (not *complete*) the cleansing of the antitypical

Sanctuary, the Church; so was Reuchlin, Zwingli and Calvin, each doing his part in this Divinely appointed work. Later on came Wesley and others, also accomplishing other needed reforms. Coming down to near the close of the Philadelphian period (about 1829 and on), we have Joseph Wolff and William Miller, leading stars in the predicted Second Advent Movement. It was in connection with the reproach associated with this latter movement that very many stars, teachers, were led astray, fell from heaven, and were caused to despise the prophecies; and others to gradually reject the Scriptures themselves as Divinely authoritative. A few faithful Philadelphians, however, continued to hold fast to, and study the prophecies, thereby obtaining clearer light on the Second Advent and its associated events. All these, as well as those from Luther's day down to about 1880, contributed, under God, their share in causing the path of the just ones to shine more and more unto the perfect day. Does it not seem reasonable and Scriptural to conclude that all these as a class were represented in the one star or messenger of the Philadelphian period? Again, as having an important bearing on the interpretation of some, that seven individuals are represented. and that these were all faithful servants, it needs also to be kept in mind that the words, "Unto," or "To the angel of the Church at Ephesus, Smyrna," etc., *positively require that we understand that the condition of the messengers, as well as the Churches, are described, and both were held responsible for the conditions existing.* 'One noted expositor, already quoted in this connection, when proving that these angels apply to men and not heavenly angels, has said: "I gather from the delinquencies, which are subsequently laid to -their charge, that these angels are but men of like passions with ourselves, nothing more or less than *ministers* of the Churches named, indeed, in the wide sense, of all Churches in every age."*

*SEISS, *Lectures on the Apocalypse, Vol. 1, p. 110.*

Another has truthfully said:

"The personal pronouns *thou* and *thy*, addressed to the pastor, can never be made to refer to a church for an antecedent. The works expressed are [more particularly] *the works of the pastor, not of the church.* It is in this way that Christ indicates His intense personal interest in and superintendence over those whom He had placed as shepherds over the churches which by His divine providence have been organized on earth. Is it not another way of saying, 'I hold thee in my right hand?', 'I watch thy acts and mark thy words, and hold thee responsible for the good or injury those words or acts do to my cause.' So what follows is in reference to the administrative work of a pastor. '*Thou* hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars.' So, far his pastoral work had the Divine approval, and he has still words of praise for him. 'And hast borne, and hast patience, and for My name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted.' These qualities all meet with His unfeigned approbation as being just what should distinguish the labors of a faithful pastor; but here the scene changes, and he is brought face to face with his faults, as seen by His Lord. 'Nevertheless, I have this against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.' "**

CHRIST REBUKES THE MINISTRY OF LAODICEA

That all but two of these messengers were rebuked by the Savior, indeed, were held equally, and probably more responsible than the individuals of the Churches for the wrong conditions existing, is plainly taught in that the words of Christ are addressed to them. We read, "Unto the angel of the Church at Ephesus write; I know *thy* works. . . . I have this against *thee*, because *thou* hast left *thy* first love." We inquire, *Whose works did the Savior know? Was it not the angels or messenger's?* Who was, it that the Master said had left his first love? Is it proper to apply these words alone to the Church, leaving the messenger without rebuke? It would hardly seem so. All the other Apostles were dead when St. John was told to write and send these epistles to the messenger of Ephesus. It will be well that we bear in mind that the condition described by Ephesus which was rebuked by the Savior, applied to *the very close* of the Apostolic age -indeed, to the very time St. John is commissioned to write these messages; and, of course, St. John at this time could not be one of these unfaithful stars, being an exile on the desert isle of Patmos; and this, of course, was true of those who were dead. There doubtless were others, a few, to whom the words of rebuke would not apply, just as there have been in every period. The conditions described were general, both as to rebukes and commendation.

There can be no question, however, that the Church is also addressed in the message, but this is seen, not in the words we have quoted, but rather in the words, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit *saith unto the Churches*," as well as the fact that St. John was instructed to write to them. It therefore seems most conclusive that the Lord's words are addressed and apply, not only to the Churches, but to, the angels or messengers-as well; and as we carefully examine the messages, it cannot but be noticed that the Savior's words imply that the angel addressed is equally and more guilty of the things charged, and held responsible with the Churches for the wrong conditions existing in them. Both the Church of Pergamos and its angel are, as we have noted, held responsible for not testifying against the doctrines of the "Nicolaitans" and of "Balaam." It is both the angel and the Church that are rebuked for suffering that woman Jezebel to seduce God's servants, etc., in Thyatira.

Notwithstanding this, some may say, Is not the Laodicean messenger an exception? Quite a number seem to so believe, and accordingly proceed to apply the Laodicean angel to one of the most devoted, loyal and self-sacrificing teachers that has lived since Apostolic days. In view of all this, it seems quite unreasonable to call this godly, faithful pastor the messenger of the Laodiceans. A careful examination of the address to Laodicea will discover that *it is a rejected, indeed an apostate condition, that is described by Laodicea and its angel*. Christ is represented as altogether outside; and does it not seem reasonable that all those of the Lord's true followers as they would become aware of the evil, Laodicean conditions, would separate themselves from them, and under His leadership, engage in the work that He is engaged in-the Harvest work of seeking to save other of His true followers from the evils warned against and condemned, by

enlightening them concerning the message of the hour? *Does it not seem the more reasonable to interpret this message as describing the utter rejection of both a Laodicean ministry and laity—indeed, the whole system of Protestant Christendom?* However, we would have to admit the few exceptions of those who would have to wait until they heard the voice, "Come out of her, My people."

STARS HELD IN HIS RIGHT HAND

The one and only support that could reasonably be advanced for interpreting these stars to represent seven individuals is, that the stars or messengers are, in the vision of chapter 1, seen as held in the right hand of the Savior. Concerning this symbol, however, we think that all will agree that the fact of their being held in the right hand of the Savior does not prove that the seven stars or angels represent seven individuals; because all through the Revelation, *angels do not represent single individuals, but movements comprehending many individuals*: neither would it imply that they are infallible in their teachings, as were the Apostles. The Scriptures do not encourage the Lord's people to look for infallible expounders of the Word. This was what led to Papal and other usurpations of Divine authority, as all students of the Bible know. What then is the meaning of this symbol of the seven stars being held in the Savior's right hand? We answer: Any interpretation must be in perfect harmony with all other Scriptures relating to this matter. But what other interpretation can be given this symbol that harmonizes all the Scriptures concerning Christ's dealing with uninspired, fallible teachers, both faithful and unfaithful? May it not be that the intention of Christ in this symbol was to call to the mind of believers generally, an attribute of His which needs ever to be kept in mind? that is, *that He had the power to continue, if faithful, or remove, if unfaithful*, these ministering *servants* of His, just as He had the power to remove the Lampstands (Churches) themselves, when they proved unfaithful? This seems to be in harmony with all Scripture, and when held to, *causes His people to hold the Headship of Christ in its proper place*, and to test the teachings of all by the infallible Word itself instead of by uninspired teachers' interpretations. 'In other words, the teaching of the symbol seems to be that of the tender care manifested by Christ in the interest of His' faithful people by raising up among them true teachers, pastors, and protecting such in their ministry; and on the other hand, this care would be manifested in the removal of unfaithful teachers, pastors, or the providential removal of His trusting, faithful people from the evil influence of unfaithful teachers, pastors.

PHILADELPHIAN SAINTS IN LAODICEA

Coming now more directly to consider the words of the message to the angel of the *Laodiceans*, we find that as in the cases of the other Churches, the stars or teachers serving them are equally, if not more, responsible for the conditions prevailing; that in a general sense, *neither the messengers nor Churches are any longer recognized as His mouthpieces*; and that they were about to be spued out of His mouth, i. e., rejected, cast off from favor. All this is taught in the words of Christ: "*Unto the angel of the Church of the Laodiceans write: I know thy [the messenger's] works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth.*" "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches."

As throughout the preceding six stages of the Church's history, so in the seventh -- that of Laodicea -- God has provided those who would minister to the needs of the true saints. Amongst these there has been one whose usefulness has been specially recognized. God called this one, who afterward became known throughout Christendom, to separate himself from Laodicea, and in His wise providence, placed him, in His own School of training, and not in Laodicean schools. But this specially called one, while faithful even unto death, was not infallible in all his utterances. He is not referred to in this message specially, that is, as an individual. He is mentioned, as all of His other faithful ones are mentioned, in the words: "As *many as I love*, I rebuke and chasten." These are not Laodiceans, although living in the Laodicean period. It would be proper to call them Philadelphians, in the sense that they possess the Philadelphian spirit of brotherly love--the spirit that *has* always, and will always characterize the overcomers. This faithful star or messenger, and those who emulate his example in following Christ, while in the Laodicean period;, are not of Laodicea; even as they are not of the world, though in the world.

If the Common Version rendering, "the Church of *the Laodiceans*," instead of "the Church *at Laodicea*," is the correct one (and it is supported by many MSS.), then we have a further support for applying the messenger of the Laodiceans to a rejected clergy class instead of a faithful minister outside of Laodicea. Furthermore, there seems also to be another special significance attached to the words as distinguished from the other messages. Learned commentators of the Philadelphian period accepting this translation as correct, have noted this. The Laodicean Church is not *the* Church in Laodicea, as in the other cases, but the Church of the Laodiceans. One has said that "it would seem as if the Church in its proper character of an elect company, had quite faded from view, and the world had *Dow* become the Church. The confessing body is hardly distinguished from any other *body*." The derivation. of the word Laodicea, of itself supports this thought. There is a very general agreement as to the significance of the word. *PASTOR RUSSELL* gives the meaning as that of "a tried or judged people!"* Another writer on the Revelation defines the word as "the people judging."** Another thus refers to the significance of the word Laodiceans: "It is Laodicean, i. e., conformed to the popular judgment and will--the extreme opposite of Nicolaitan. Instead of a Church of domineering clericals, it is the Church of the domineering mob, in which nothing may be safely preached, except that which the people are pleased to hear--in which the teachings of the pulpit are fashioned to. the tastes of the pew, and the feelings of the individual override the enactments of legitimate authority."***

*Z '16-347.

**MALACHI TAYLOR, *The Revelation*, p. 53.

****SEISS*, *Lectures on the Apocalypse*, p. 199.

--FEBRUARY 19-2 KINGS 5:1-27--

Golden Text.--"Bless Jehovah, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; Who healeth all thy diseases."--Psa. 103:2, 3.

THE Kingdom of Syria bordered the land of Israel on the north and east, and at the time of our lesson was quite influential amongst the nations of the earth. Sometimes it was in conflict with Israel, while at other times these two and other nations combined in their opposition to the Assyrian Empire, a still more influential neighbor farther east. Naaman was the general in chief of Syria, noted for his personal ability as a soldier, and especially recognized by the King of Syria because at his hand the Lord had granted deliverance to Syria and Israel in combination against Shalmaneser II.

Naaman's victory is credited by this verse to Jehovah. (Jehovah is the original word wherever "Lord" is spelled in small capital letters throughout the common version of the Old Testament.) We are not to gather from this that God has supervision of every war and every battle of earth, and that those who win have His favor and those who lose His disfavor. The Lord's favors were with the one particular nation, Israel, from the time of their adoption as the children of Abraham down to the time that, in our Lord's words, their house was left unto them desolate--Divine favor withdrawn from them. The Scriptures, however, explain to us that the Lord did interfere with the affairs of outside nations to some extent--to use them as servants or tools for the accomplishment of His purposes. For instance, we are particularly informed in the Scriptures that on several occasions the Lord brought nations against Israel for the chastisement of His peculiar people, leading them captive into foreign lands, etc., as in the Babylonian captivity.

These interferences on the Lord's part were not by way of bringing salvation or the Gospel Message to the heathen lands, but merely part and parcel of His dealings with Israel--the preparing of Israel to be His peculiar people, to be ready for the coming of Messiah. Again we see from the Scriptures that the Lord, while granting a certain lease of dominion to the kingdoms of this world, in the interim between the overthrow of the typical kingdom of Israel and the time for the establishment of the antitypical Kingdom of spiritual Israel -under the headship of Christ in Millennial glory, has, nevertheless, had a general supervision and figuratively has held operations under control--"Thus far shalt thou go but no farther"--the remainder will He restrain. When the Lord's time shall come for a full interference with the rule of this world, for the full putting down of all antagonistic authority and for the enforcement of righteousness in the world, it will be on a very different scale from anything that has ever yet transpired:

Messiah, clothed with all power and authority, and I having associated with Him the overcomers of this Gospel Age, will be the great King who, as Jehovah's Vicegerent, shall rule the nations with a rod of iron, laying righteousness to the line and justice. to the plummet.

THE LITTLE BOND-MAID

On the occasion of one of the conflicts between Syria and Israel, the Syrians, being successful, carried away some spoil and loot, including young Israelites, who thus became bondservants to the Syrians. One of these, a maid, became a

servant in the home of Naaman, Syria's greatest general. Seeing him afflicted with leprosy-an incurable disease then as now she suggested that in Israel was a great Prophet. of God, Elisha, of whom she had heard wonderful things, miracles, and who she was sure could heal her master, Naaman. We are not informed how serious Naaman's ailment was, but- we do know that lepers, even under unfavorable -conditions, often live long-they have been known to live as long as forty-five years under the affliction. It is a repulsive disease, a wasting away or rotting of the part affected, and eating of the flesh, somewhat like a -cancer, yet it is not generally painful until in the latter stages. It was just such a disease as a man of ability and activity like Naaman would be specially anxious to get rid of. His grasping at the suggestion of a little girl was possibly of the Lord's oversight, for ordinarily a man of his ability would pay little heed to such a suggestion of miraculous power in a neighboring country less in extent and influence than his own. Naaman evidently brought the matter to the attention of the king, who quite enthusiastically grasped the hope for the recovery of his favorite general. So a royal letter was written to the King of Israel, saying, "Now, when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have herewith sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy." We are to remember that the King of Israel, while professedly making some acknowledgment of Jehovah, was really an idolator, fostering in the kingdom false worship such as the Lord had not commanded. We are to remember that under these conditions he had no dealings with, and we may say scarcely any knowledge of, the Prophet Elisha, who made his home in the capital city of Samaria.

When King Jehoram read the letter he saw that it was expected of him that a miracle should be performed, and, rending his garments as an indication of despairing trouble, he declared that the King of Syria was merely making a pretext of this letter, seeking another occasion for war and to invade Jehoram's weaker dominions, to carry off more spoils and captives.

The news of this incident spread throughout the city, but possibly aside from this Elisha had a Divine revelation respecting the status of the matter. Evidently conscious of God's power with him for such an emergency-perhaps directly instructed to this effect--Elisha sent word to the king, Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothing?--wherefore be in despair? Let the Syrian stranger come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet of the Lord in Israel. King Jehoram was glad in such an emergency to direct General Naaman to the Prophet, and doubtless did so with many assurances that the healing of lepers was not in the power of kings or princes. or ordinary beings; but here was the man the little captive maid had evidently referred to, and that he wished for Naaman the best results. So General Naaman's cortege of horses and chariots drove over to the door of Elisha's house and there received a message from the Prophet, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean of thy leprosy."

We cannot wonder that Naaman was angry and indignant that a person of his rank should thus be lightly dismissed. It would be just like any worldly-minded person to be indignant under such circumstances: it requires the grace of humility to accept slights and indignities without appearing to notice them. We feel sure that it would not be the Lord's will that we, its His followers, should in any sense of the word duplicate or copy the manner Elisha displayed on this occasion. On the

contrary, the very essence of Christian grace is declared to be love, which is kind, longsuffering, patient, gentle, and which renders honor to those to whom honor is due, etc. The better the Lord's people can keep this in mind as a rule for daily life the larger generally will be their success in serving the Truth. Meekness, gentleness, patience, kindness, are, all elements of Christian character, and must be cultivated if we would by present experiences be made fit for the Heavenly Kingdom.

We are not in this criticizing Elisha and his course, for Elisha was not a Christian, having lived several centuries before the great Head came, before the redemptive work was accomplished, before the new and living way was opened up for us to walk in His steps. Elisha, as a Prophet, occupied a special position, and we do not know but that his conduct in this case was specially directed of the Lord and was particularly wise and suited to the conditions. Naaman did not comprehend that in calling upon Elisha he was really calling upon God, of whom Elisha was merely the servant. It was appropriate, therefore, that Naaman should learn the lesson, and -he probably did learn it by the experiences referred to. In fact Elisha's course declared, "I am, greater than you, because while! you are the servant of the King of Syria, I am a servant of the King of kings, the Almighty; while, therefore, in harmony with my King's wishes, I shall grant the boon requested, I will do it in such a manner that you shall learn the lesson that you receive it as a favor and not, as you expect, in exchange for the expensive presents and rewards which you have brought with you."

GENERAL NAAMAN OFFENDED

As a general we might suppose that Naaman had considerable combativeness, and it manifested itself in his indignation at Elisha's course. To his companions and servants he expressed that indignation, declaring that he need not have come on a long journey to be told to go and wash himself, and that anyway the rivers of Syria were superior in sparkling purity to the Jordan. The latter was true, for the river, Abana is noted for its crystalline, pellucid purity. Of its waters a writer says: "The Abana is no doubt the modern Barrada, the river to which the! delightful oasis of Damascus owes its beauty and very existence; the Greeks called it the 'Golden Flowing! It has the clearest waters possible, and singularly bright in color; in the morning a full, deep, emerald green, in the evening a sapphire blue. It was impossible not to think of the two jewels, so exactly did it resemble their clear gemlike lines at times."

The offended Naaman offered none of the presents he had brought for the Prophet, but indignantly started with his chariots homeward. Naaman's servants were able to take a calmer and more deliberate view of the situation than himself, because not so acutely interested. To them it seemed as though the Prophet had indeed exercised a great deal of dignity, as though he were the servant of a very great king indeed; to them this seemed all the more to support his claim of ability to heal the disease. Doubtless they reasoned, too, that the Prophet's home was not an extravagant one and he evidently was not greedy of filthy lucre, and asked no compensation for the receipt given. As the chariots rode homeward these matters were discussed, and Naaman greatly cooled off and began to take the more reasonable view of the situation, and was finally persuaded that while they had to pass the river Jordan anyway in their-homeward journey he would follow the

Prophet's directions, which could do no harm if they did no good. He did this, dipping himself seven times, as directed, and with the seventh dip his flesh was healed of the leprosy, and his flesh and skin not only became healthy but fresh as that of a child-better than ever before. He was clean: his leprosy was gone.

LEPROSY A SYMBOL OF SIN

Leprosy is used in the Scriptures to symbolize sin, and was sometimes inflicted by the Lord as a punishment for sin, as, for instance, in the case of Miriam, Moses' sister, who was smitten with leprosy because of her improper attitude and disrespectful language to and about her brother Moses, in answer to whose prayer she was healed. Sin is an incurable disease, and therefore well represented by leprosy; like leprosy it doth eat like a canker and all having it are "unclean." There are many suggestions as to how sin can be gotten rid of : there are philosophies which deny its existence, others which tell us that a moral life atones for sin. But these various philosophies, theories, suggestions, resemble the waters of Syria, which Naaman well knew could not make him clean, could not restore his health. - The Word of God has pointed out to us the only cure for this malady of sin, the only channel through which forgiveness can be had--"There is none other name under heaven given amongst men Whereby We must be saved, but by the name of Jesus." However man may philosophize about the matter, sin is undeniable, and its cure impossible except as the Lord will grant relief.

Another thought in connection with this: the likeness of the healing of Naaman's leprosy to the healing of sin is that the former required seven. dippings into Jordan. We may well presume that each time Naaman dipped himself he looked for results, to see whether or not -the leprosy was departing; but we may be sure there were no results until the seventh dip, and had he desisted with the fifth or sixth, saying, "It is useless, there is no improvement manifest," he would have failed of the blessing. The seven may well represent to us perfection: not that we are to either believe into Jesus seven times, nor to be converted seven times, nor to consecrate ourselves by baptism into death seven times; but that as seven represents perfection, the thought would be that our belief must be perfect or complete, our obedience' must be perfect or complete, our baptism into death in Christ must be perfect or complete, otherwise there is no remission of sins, otherwise we would fail to get the blessings desired and promised. Let us impress this upon our hearts and minds and upon all with whom we -have influence--that half-hearted consecration and obedience are not what the Lord is pleased to honor and to bless'.

Several things connected with Naaman's experiences show us that the Lord's blessing of healing was conferred upon a man of naturally noble traits. First amongst these was the fact that his wife's maid, a servant, was interested in him and solicitous for his welfare. The love of the young, the innocent, the pure, is not always a sure test of character; but it should be given its weight when thinking of persons of whom we have not the fullest knowledge. Secondly, when Naaman found that his disease was gone, he might have said to himself, "Well, I have received a great blessing and I have gotten it cheaply. If the Prophet had come down to me in a courteous manner and assured me of these results, or proffered to come with me, I fully intended that he should have a liberal gift, if not all the rich treasures which I have brought with me, but now, seeing that he did not put

himself about so much as to come -down to my chariot, I certainly need not put myself about to return many miles to Samaria and proffer him a gift. Perhaps, indeed, he would refuse it. I will go upon my journey and keep the stuff." Such a course would have shown us that Naaman was not a noble man, however successful he had been in winning the confidence of his king, and however much the Lord had used him in delivering Syria and Israel from the power of the Assyrians. Noble minds are not seeking selfishly to get all they can of this present life and give as little as possible to others. The truly great take pleasure in being just, yea in being generous. We may be sure that a generous heart is appreciated in the Lord's sight as well as in the estimation of truly noble men and women. In proportion as we see this let us each watch his own heart and mind and conduct, that each may thus bring himself nearer and nearer to the noble standard which the Lord and the best of His children approve.

HE RETURNED TO GIVE THANKS

We remember that during our Lord's ministry ten lepers cried to Him as He passed, "Have mercy upon us, thou Son of David." They by this expression acknowledged Him as the Messiah, the Root and Offspring of David, and they desired of the Lord healing from leprosy--very much Naaman's situation, only that in the former case most of them were Jews. We remember that the Lord sent them on a journey during which they were all healed, but that only one of them returned to give thanks, to acknowledge His blessing. Our Lord commented on the fact and seemed to be deeply grieved with the ingratitude of the nine, and even pointed out that the one who did return and praise the Lord was not a Jew but a Samaritan-not an heir with Israel in the promises, but one of those outside the covenant favors of the Lord. Similarly Naaman was outside the covenant promises, a fact which is mentioned in the New Testament also as an evidence of God's mercy. We are told that there were many lepers in Israel at the same time that this noble Syrian was, by the Lord's favor, healed.

Let us, dear friends, see to it, being Israelites indeed, "heirs according to the promise," and having received of the Lord. healing, forgiveness and blessing, that we are full of thankfulness, full of gratitude, and that we spare no pains to express -this, and that we do not seek to have it at no cost to ourselves, but rejoice to be able to render unto the Lord a fruit of His blessing and mercy, a thank-offering--even as Naaman desired to do on this occasion, returning to Samaria to the Prophet and tendering him the gifts that he brought for the purpose. They were consecrated beforehand when he was hoping for blessing. Would he, after receiving the blessing, withhold any part? To have done so would have proven him unworthy of the blessing. Similarly the Lord's people. fleeing from sin and desiring forgiveness, reconciliation, etc., are generally disposed to make full consecration of everything to the Lord; but after receiving of His grace, if they attempt to keep back any or all of the consecrated earthly things, how would their course appear to the Lord and to all who had His light and the spirit of Truth. Let us each measure our own hearts by this rule.

The silver and gold taken by Naaman as a present is estimated to have been the equivalent of \$77,540.00, and additionally ten costly or state-occasion robes of considerable value. This was not considered too large a gift for the object desired and for the station or rank of the giver. The gift was proffered to Elisha with the

words, "Behold, now I know there is no God in all the earth but in Israel: now, therefore, I pray thee, take a present -of thy servant." But Elisha answered, "As the Lord liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none. And he urged him to take it; but he refused." Had Elisha accepted the money he doubtless could have used it in connection with his mission as the Lord's prophet, or amongst the poor of Israel; nevertheless, he evidently did better in refusing it. Thus also it is with those servants of the Lord who give of their time and talents to His service. It cannot be said that it would be wrong of them to receive compensation, salary: it could not be said that as servants of the Lord they were worthy of no compensation; yet we believe that as a rule the Lord would be more glorified if those serving Him were more particular to keep the ministries of the Truth entirely separate and distinct from all mercenary considerations. The Lord, who owns all the gold and silver and the cattle on a thousand hills, is able to provide for His work and for all of His servants, and we believe that He is more honored in their looking to Him and trusting in His providences than in accepting anything in the nature of pay for the dispensing of His grace.

SEEKS AFTER THE TRUE GOD

Naaman's acknowledgment of the God of Israel as the only true God was evidently not merely bombast, for forthwith he requested enough of the consecrated soil of Palestine for the building of an altar to the Lord, that he thus might in Syria present an offering on consecrated earth. Moreover, his mind had grasped the situation that now as a follower of the Lord, whose understanding had been opened, he could no longer with propriety do the things formerly done by him in false worship in association with his king. He inquired of the Prophet how the Lord would regard it if he went with the King of Syria into the Temple of Syria's heathen god, Rimmon, the king leaning on his shoulder, and he be expected to bow himself with the king-would the Lord pardon such conduct on his part or must he take still more decided grounds, utterly refusing to accompany the king?

The intimation seems to be given through the Prophet that Naaman would be justified in taking the usual course, as formerly, while in his own heart he would be serving the Lord and offering worship to Him. only. The point at issue seems to be that Naaman was not in all this an Israelite but still a Syrian-still a stranger to the covenant and promises of Israel, still without God and having no hope in the world. He might, therefore, do things with the king that would have been improper for an Israelite to have done, because the latter was under special covenant relationship to the Lord. We are here reminded of Cornelius, the first Gentile convert, mentioned in Acts 10. He was a man. who feared God, gave much alms, sought to live righteously, soberly, and still-not being a Jew-he was an alien and a stranger so far as the covenant of Israel was concerned, as he could not be received into fellowship with the Lord until after the atonement sacrifice, until the end of the "seventy weeks" favor upon Israel, and even then only by hearing and believing the "words" of life and being begotten of the Spirit: so Naaman the Syrian, not living in so favored a time, could not be received at all into covenant relationship.

The noble conduct of this man, his candor, his apparent willingness to sacrifice everything for the Lord, puts to shame the course of many who by God's

grace-have become "Israelites indeed" and have been adopted into the Divine family as sons. Many of them have very much less conscience on such subjects--many are much less careful about sailing under false colors, misrepresenting the Lord and the Truth. Many, for the sake -of earthly fame or position or present prosperity, are willing to sacrifice practically everything. Let us, dear readers, see to it that we place the Lord first in all our calculations, and that if we acknowledge and admire such honesty and sincerity in the heathen general, Naaman, much more should we find it in our own hearts, in our own conduct, and much more should the Lord expect of us in the way of obedience even unto death, obedience to right, to principle, to truth, to Him.

GEHAZI'S DUPLICITY PUNISHED

On the other hand note the ignoble Gehazi, Elisha's servant, who though a witness to God's power through the Prophet had not been really and truly blessed by a proper character development. His heart was full of selfishness, and he grieved that the presents had not been received. He hastened after Naaman's chariot, and, by misrepresentations and lies in his master's name, received presents of considerable value--but he received more. The Prophet of the Lord, discerning the entire matter, pronounced against him as a penalty for his wrong course the leprosy of Naaman. So, we are sorry to say, there are some in daily contact with the Truth and with the Lord's consecrated servants who do not partake of the spirit of the Truth, nor of the spirit of the servants, in whom selfishness is the ruling passion and who will, therefore, eventually not only fail to receive the great blessings, such as came to Naaman, but additionally will receive the Divine disfavor, the Second Death.

Our Golden Text is not particularly related to the lesson, but is very appropriate in connection with some of the inferences we have drawn from it. Those afflicted with the moral leprosy, sin, are here represented as praising the Lord for the blessings of healing and salvation. The Lord made provision for such blessings before we came to Him. Before we were born, yea, before the foundation of the world, He had prepared an answer for our crying; He had prepared to answer the cry of all those who truly seek through Him release from sin and its penalty, for Christ Jesus our Lord is declared to have been the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. Our salvation begins in the moment of our full acceptance of the forgiveness, but it continues through the remainder of the present life and will be completed with our participation in the glorious resurrection of the Millennial morning. Whoever, meantime, goes back voluntarily to sin, to "wallowing in the mire," or whoever meantime rejects the great Advocate, the only avenue of salvation, loses all--for there is no other name given under heaven or amongst men whereby we must be saved, no other way than by hearkening to His voice, His Word.

ELISHA'S HEAVENLY DEFENDERS

--FEBRUARY 26-2 KINGS 6:8-23--

Golden Text.--*"The angel of Jehovah encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them."*--Psa. 34:7.

THE special feature of this Scripture lesson is that there are invisible powers on every hand for the protection and assistance of the Lord's people, while doing His work. As we have already shown, there are "wicked, spirits," invisible to humanity, whose fiendish delight is to deceive, mislead and ensnare mankind. But in this lesson we have the other side of the question presented to our attention. It is an encouragement to know that though beset by evil spirits, the Lord's people are surrounded by other invisible agents no less powerful, whose interest in their welfare is of the! highest order, and who are near to guard us in proportion as our hearts are pure, and loyal to the Lord and His Word.

Though we do not understand the process, we accept the fact, that God has both spoken and written and operated miraculously through holy men of old. We have had illustrations of this in the preceding lessons respecting Elijah and Elisha. But bow these. communications were made to the Prophets, we are not informed. Quite possibly they were made through the invisible spirit beings who serve the Lord and His people. Concerning these invisible spirit beings, angels, the Apostle says, "Are they not all ministering [serving] spirits, sent forth to minister unto those who shall be heirs of salvation?" It may be that they ministered to Elijah and Elisha the information which they possessed, and which therefore constituted them prophets. For instance, in this lesson, we are informed that Elisha sent word in advance to the King of Israel respecting the movements and intentions of the King of Syria, and that his fame as a seer 'had extended to Syria: so that the counselors of Syria's king explained the matter to -him, saying, "Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the King of Israel the words that thou speakest secretly in thy bedchamber."

Is it unreasonable to suppose that it was these invisible ministering spirits which were the Divine instrumentality in making known to Elisha the things proper to be told to the King of Israel for his protection? We think it not unlikely; we think it probable. In one of our previous lessons we saw that, when the Shunammite woman came to Elisha to inquire about her son, Elisha said, "The Lord hath hid it from me, and hath not told me." (2 Kings 4:27.) From this it is evident that it was not by any power that the Prophet himself possessed that he had any special knowledge, but by revelations from the Lord. And this agrees with the testimony of the Apostle Peter, who says, "Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." (2 Pet. 1:21.) Our suggestion is that the Holy Spirit of God communicated information -to the Prophets through the holy angels, the invisible spirit beings who encamp round about them that fear God. But for God to use this instrumentality in communication would make it no less His power, just as He may use the lightning or the storm to do, His work, and it be none the less His work; just as we may speak by telephone or telegraph or cable, and it be as really our word and deed as though done without those agencies of communication.

The folly of humanity attempting to cope with the spiritual powers is well illustrated in this lesson by the conduct of the King of Syria in sending an armed -company to capture Elisha. He might well have reasoned that if the Prophet had information of his most secret plans respecting the King of Israel, he would none the less have information respecting the proposed capture of himself. But the King of Syria and some of his people were to be taught a lesson respecting the power of the God of Israel, and of any man whom the God of Israel might choose

to use as His channel or mouthpiece. Here the foolishness of man was made to show forth the wisdom and power of God.

TRUE SPIRITUALISM OF THE SCRIPTURES

Elisha's servant, (not Gehazi, we may feel assured, but another more worthy), seeing the armed host surrounding the city, was in terror, but the Prophet, who likewise saw the armed host, also discerned another host, more powerful, more numerous; and he entreated the Lord on behalf of his servant that he might have an opening of the eyes, to see that all the mountains round about them were filled with spirit beings--horses and chariots of fire," or like fire, as all spirit beings are described in Scripture. (See Ezek. 1:13, 14; Dan. 7:9; Rev, 4:3-5.) The Lord answered the prayer: and then the young man saw what Elisha had already told him, that "they that be with us are more than they that be with them."

It is important that every Christian should have the eyes of his understanding opened, that he may see by faith that which was -shown to Elisha and his servant literally. During this Gospel Age the Lord does not open -our natural eyes to see the wonderful provisions He has made for us, and His power for our protection; but instead He gives us a still better knowledge of the subject through His Word of grace and truth, so that **we** are enabled to walk by faith and not by sight; to see the armies of the Lord encamped around about us and to recognize their protection of us, without any miracle being performed upon our natural sight. None of us are sufficiently strong to pass through the fight of Christian warfare without just such assistances as these which the Lord has provided, and which faith beholds, accepts, lays hold of, rests upon and is strengthened by.

Shall we call this faith in invisible spiritual powers and agencies of God the true spiritualism of the Scriptures-in contradistinction to the evil spiritualism which is of Satan and his fellows, the fallen angels, the "wicked spirits in exalted positions?" We believe that this is so, and spiritualists admit that there are both good and evil spirits. They are sure that there are evil spirits, because they know how these have ensnared them in evil, enticed them into sin. They know that they are what the Scriptures term "lying spirits," because they have been lied to by the spirits which communicated with them; but they insist that there are good spirits, and they think that sometimes they have had communications with these. But this proposition we dispute: we hold that all the rapping, wonder doing and other manifestations of so-called spiritists are from the Evil One and his consorts entirely.

OUR GUARDIAN ANGELS

A very small amount of common sense should convince anyone that the holy angels must have something better, higher, nobler, to do than are the various practices of these so-called spirits who speak through mediums and by obsession. Indeed, we hold that the good spirits, the holy angels, make no communications with man now; that these communications belonged to a previous time, when they were appropriate and necessary as the channels of Divine communication. We do not need their ministry through mediums today, and are especially forbidden to seek communication or knowledge through such channels: this for the same reason that we do not need the testimony of the inspired seers and Prophets today; because God has made an abundant provision for us through the prophetic

utterances of the past, to the intent that we of this Gospel Age should walk not by sight nor by communication with the angels, but by faith. - We may realize no less clearly, but even more clearly, than did the ancients that He who is on our part is more than all they that be against us; we may discern by the eye of faith that the "angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them;" we may realize that all the powers of heaven--"more than twelve legions of angels"--although invisible to us, are nevertheless present, and fully subservient to every will of our glorious Lord; and that thus surrounded and protected, we are living "under the shadow of the Almighty" and, as it were, in the hollow of His hand.

In this connection we are reminded of our Lord's words respecting his faithful disciples, His "little ones." He assures us that the very humblest of those who are His have high connections with the Heavenly Throne, saying, "Their angels do always behold the face of My Father in heaven." (Matt. 18:10.) That is to say, as the angels are all "ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who, shall be heirs of salvation" (the Gospel Church), there are some of them who have a charge, a watch, a care over each member of the Body of Christ--perhaps one guardian angel to each, saint, perhaps more than one; but we have the Lord's assurance that His provision is "sufficient." One thought that our Lord's words give to us is, that these holy angels, charged with ministering to and caring for the elect, are in no danger of being detained so that they must wait for a long time on more important business before having access to the Father: on the contrary, they always have access to Him, they can always see His face; and through the Redeemer, and by these agencies, God is ever ready to respond to our cries and to cause all things to work together for good to them that love Him.

BEST VICTORIES ARE BLOODLESS ONES

Turning to the host of Syria, the Prophet prayed to the Lord that they might be smitten with blindness, our Common Version says; but from the original text the thought would appear to be not the loss of sight, but a bewilderment or hallucination, somewhat similar to that produced by hypnotism, when a person sees or imagines that he sees things differently from what they actually are. Exercising this power upon the host, Elisha guided them to the city of Samaria, saying, "This is not the way, neither is this the city; follow me, I will bring you to the man whom ye seek." And this was true, for Dothan was not Elisha's city: his home was in Samaria, and thither he took them: and he did indeed bring them to the man they sought; namely himself, but not after the manner that they had expected. The narrative proceeds to say that when he had led them into the city of Samaria (under the influence of some power like hypnotism), he then said, "Lord, open the eyes of these men, that they may see," and then they understood where they were. They were completely in the hands of their enemies, surrounded by the King of Israel and his soldiers.

The King of Israel inquired whether or not he should smite them with the sword. Such, an inquiry seems to indicate a considerable change of the kingly attitude towards the Lord and His representative. The reformation work was taking effect: Israel's kings were learning gradually that the will of the Lord was to be considered, and that to neglect His counsel would be unwise indeed. Elisha, in* his reply, shows a large and benevolent heart, in full accord with the highest teachings of the New Testament. He showed the king that these men should not be put to death, but that instead a better way would be to return good for the intended evil. Accordingly, the king made a great feast and entertained his enemies and sent them home. We cannot doubt that they marveled at their peculiar experiences, and the happy outcome of what seemed for the moment so great a disaster. We may suppose, too, that they had a higher degree of respect for the Lord and His Prophets and the king upon the throne of Israel than they ever before had.

There is a lesson in this for us also: The best victories are the bloodless ones-the ones in which the spirit of righteousness and mercy and benevolence gains the victory over the spirit of rivalry, ambition and selfishness. This, in the Christian life, among the soldiers of the cross is known as fighting the good fight and overcoming evil with good. It may not succeed in fullest measure in the present time, but nevertheless it will develop in -ourselves the peaceable fruits of righteousness, and prepare us for a share in the strong government of the future, which with one hand will restrain the wicked and all the powers of evil, while with the other hand it blesses, washes, refreshes and anoints with the oil of gladness and blessing all the willing and obedient of the entire groaning creation.

LETTERS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

THE FATHER PLACES ALL THE MEMBERS

Dear Brethren in the Lord:

Have been going to write you for some time-in fact, ever since the August HERALD came, which said you were going to try to publish Volume I of Scripture *Studies*. This seems to me to be a grand work for the Lord, if it can be done, and I should like to co-operate with you in the good work. I cannot go out and sell books, as I am in bed all the time and expect to be for some time yet, but I would like to pay for fifty copies and keep a few on hand to give away-but most of them you would have to dispose of as you thought best.

Since *receiving my* December 1st HERALD and reading the article, "Discerning the Lord's Will," I realize more than ever just how much you feel the great responsibility of serving the Lord as Directors of the INSTITUTE. In that article I can see plainly how you feel the weight of responsibilities, as you say, more than your friends or critics *realize*, and I pray you may always be kept in your present attitude, *meek and humble* -- the only safe attitude, for the meek will He guide in judgment; the meek will He teach His way.

I believe some were delighted with the articles on Chronology and some were displeased.- For my part, I must say I am pleased with all. Chronology is not a subject I can get myself excited about. I must say I enjoyed a quotation from April 1st HERALD which said we should think more of the fulfillment of prophecy than of the time, *One thing we do know*, the Kingdom is near at hand; and be the time long or short, I will need it all, for having a good deal of cross-grain in me, I do not *take to* polishing as readily as I should like: but I hope the "Great Lapidary" may not throw me away as unworthy in these days of great temptation. But I was glad to read the Chronology, as it was so reasonable, and I knew it would please some very much. We should not expect all to like the same articles to the same degree, any more than we should expect all to fill the same position in the Christ-Body. How grand the thought that the Father does the placing of all the members and no mistakes can be made!

We are looking forward to a visit in the near future from Brother Blackburn. I will settle with him for My HERALD and save changing to American money, also my Good Hopes; and any time you need my share of the money to publish Volume I, I can send it.

With much Christian love, and hoping some day soon to see face to face those we cannot see in the flesh. But what a satisfaction will be ours if we can only prove worthy and see our Savior and Elder Brother face to face in Glory!

Yours in the One Blessed Hope, L. A. M.-Ont.

LET US WITNESS BY WORDS AND DEEDS

Dear Brethren:

Loving Greetings. Please send me one dozen mottoes for the year 1922 and one dozen Scripture text postcards. I enclose money order for \$----as remittance for same.

I feel that I must take this, opportunity for again expressing to you my deep appreciation of the HERALD. We surely thank the Giver of every good gift for this splendid little journal. I always find its articles are very reasonable and encouraging, and they are a comfort and blessing to those who would hear the call of the Gospel bell in these latter times, when so many jarring sounds are abroad. I am glad to note that the spirit of love and liberty is plainly shown in its articles and Bible lessons, many of which are reprints from the pen of our late Pastor.

Another good feature is the feeling of brotherhood and fellowship which brethren in various parts of the world have by the regular visits of the HERALD, for this is a means of uniting brethren who are isolated by distance or other circumstances over which they have no control. It is my earnest prayer that the precious truth contained in its pages will bear fruit in the daily lives of all who read them, thus helping us to grow in the character likeness of our dear Master.

I sincerely trust that you may-in the strength of the Lord, continue to minister to the needs of the faithful, and still continue to give forth the Message--the grand old Gospel, ever new.

Let us all, dear brethren, witness by our words and our deeds to the saving power of Jesus Christ, and tell of His wonderful love; till our loving Heavenly Father shall, in His own good time, grant unto us, and unto all who, love and serve Him to the end, a place in the glorious, everlasting Kingdom, where we shall be at rest in the presence of our dear Lord and Savior.

I am your brother in Him, by His grace,

H. J. F.-Eng.

OUR LORD CONFRONTED WITH ORGANIZED OPPOSITION

Dear Brethren:

Loving greetings!

We notice that Sister H-----'s subscription to the HERALD expires this month. As we are not needing the two copies at present we are not wishing to renew this, We take this opportunity of expressing our thankfulness for the blessing the HERALD has been to us, and our wishes for the future; so long as the Church may remain in the flesh, we pray that the Lord's continued blessing may rest upon your labors and that you yourselves may be refreshed and encouraged in and by your ministry.

Noticing a reference to the picture on the motto cards for 1922--"Christ before the Doctors"--I wondered if it is Holman Hunt's famous picture you speak of, and if so, if the following from an English annual would interest you-not as being in Opposition to your remarks, but another point of view:

"Confronting the new Teacher are eight types of ecclesiastical bigotry marvelously individualized. There is (left to right) the Blind Bigot, the Indifferent Bigot, the Bigot not yet hardened against Truth, the Sneering Bigot, the Fretful Bigot, the Self-complacent Bigot, the Sly Bigot and the Easy-going Bigot. On the face of them all is the easily recognized seal of sacerdotalism. The like of these form an organized opposition to every new upward movement in human thought and progress."

We have much enjoyed your reply to Brother G-----'s letter. It seems quite clear that you have a correct view of the matter.

We are considerably isolated from the brethren in this remote spot, but still find opportunities to tell out the Glad Tidings, and trust that we may still be privileged to do so. With loving wishes and prayers for continued guidance from the Lord,

Yours by His grace, E. H.-Eng.

EARNESTLY DESIRES TO ASSIST

Dear Brethren:

Your January 1st HERALD contains a splendid Editorial, especially the paragraphs under the heading "Intolerance Belongs to the Past," and impressed me very deeply as being an appropriate New Year's message.

I am very glad that my attention has been drawn to the fact that you purpose publishing the First Volume Of SCRIPTURE STUDIES, and the enclosed is sent with the earnest hope that it may assist, if only in a small way, to give "a fresh impetus to bring the Message of Divine Truth and grace before others."

I shall endeavor in the future to do what I can to assist in this work as I believe more can be done along this line, than by intensive campaigning, drives, etc., although we must look with Christian charity on those whose zeal impels them (not according to knowledge, however), to engage in such operations. Yours very sincerely, M. M.-Ont.

The Herald of Christ's Kingdom

VOL. V FEBRUARY 15, 1922 No. 4

OUTLOOK FROM THE WALLS OF ZION

"SEES CLOSER BONDS WITH CIVIC BODIES"

THE Rev. Roy B. Guild, secretary for the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, in an interview yesterday declared himself in favor of permanent newspaper publicity in placing the work of the federation before the public.

"He also declared that there will be closer co-operation in the next ten years between churches and civic bodies, which will result in the improvement of government and business ethics.

"Publicity a Requisite"

"He said: 'Publicity must be made a permanent part of federation work, that the public may be continually informed and stimulated. The time for spasmodic evangelism is passing, and is fast being replaced by efficient recruiting methods. The church will use up-to-date methods from now on, and results will follow as surely as results follow a well conducted business.'

"Of the new methods used, in federation church work he said: 'The true revival of the church is at hand, and the signs of the times are many; chief of which are facts and figures demonstrating the application of scientific, efficiency methods of work. The haphazard, go-as-you-please, spasmodic endeavors of individual churches and denominations are being replaced by carefully thought-out plans based on data extending over many years by the best trained religious minds in the country.'

"Closer Affiliations"

"Mr. Guild has been instrumental in organizing forty-five metropolitan districts into federations, and today, he declared, there are scarcely half a dozen cities of any size without close working affiliations, between all Protestant parishes; and after effective working understanding between Protestants, Catholic and Jewish.

"Two immediate results, he said, can already be noted, the power of religious bodies in influencing the conduct of local government and in raising the standard of business ethics. Church membership is also increasing in a way it never could without this form of larger affiliation. In Detroit last year 22,000 acquisitions to the various churches were recorded; in Cleveland 12,000 and in Pittsburgh 24,000.

"Such figures show, said Mr. Guild, what united plans can accomplish. These new members are coming not as the result of any great drive or from the spasmodic efforts of an evangelistic revival, but from careful, persistent, essential and legitimate methods."--*The Boston Herald, January 23, 1922.*

St. Paul states that the natural man does not disconcert nor reason along the lines of the spirit. The, Rev. Mr. Guild in the above statement would appear to be choosing and following the wisdom of this world in laying' plans for the prosperity of the Church in what he thinks to be her present mission -that of world conquest for Christ. Not seeing the great Plan of Divine revelation and the remedy that God has provided for all human ills, this Christian leader, with many others, is following the reasoning of the natural man, whose philosophy is that human uplift and redemption must come through a general association and co-operation of the powers of Church and State. Hence his urgent appeal to both of these phases or sections of Christendom for closer affiliation.

In marked contrast with the foregoing, however, are the claims and interpretations of other Christian gentlemen of some prominence, who appear to be ignoring the various human schemes and panaceas and are searching the Word of the Lord to find the better way and the more successful plan of dealing with the world's problems. It is refreshing to read in this connection several extracts from lectures recently delivered in Winnipeg by Mr. Sidney T. Smith. His remarks give evidence that he has been looking carefully into the "more sure word of

prophecy," and that he has been endeavoring to hear the voice of the Lord with regard to present world conditions and events.

We are submitting below a number of his statements, believing that the friends will read the same with interest and will rejoice that, though the number is small, yet there are a few who are earnestly endeavoring to direct the attention of the people aright. The extracts which follow were taken from Toronto papers under dates of January 11, 14 and 16.

"TIMES OF GENTILES LAST UNTIL ADVENT"

"Speaker Deals With God's Plan for World as Revealed in Bible"

"Addressing last night a large audience in Knox Presbyterian Church on the subject of 'Man's Day and God's Plan for the World,' Mr. Sidney T. Smith, of Winnipeg, in the third of a series of addresses he is delivering there, dealt with that period of time known in Scriptures as the 'times of the Gentiles.'

"Beginning in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar and stretching to an unknown period of time in the future, Gentile supremacy, the speaker declared, would last until the close of this' age, and be terminated only by the second advent of Christ. In the dispensations of the past, he said, God had dealt peculiarly with the Jewish people until they finally apostatized, and were put aside by God until the times of the Gentiles were fulfilled.

"In the image seen in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, and interpreted by the Prophet Daniel, according to Mr. Smith, was given a preview of Gentile supremacy in the world.. Portrayed there, he said, were four, great world empires which would arise on the stage of the world and pass away, except the fourth, which in a revived form would exist at the close of the ages and be ground to powder by the stone 'cut without hands,' which, falling from heaven, would constitute the fifth' world empire and which would never pass away. It was for this reason that the speaker believed the attempt of the Kaiser to found a world empire was doomed from the beginning to failure.

"We are now, the speaker thought, at that point in the stream of time represented by the feet of the image, or the iron and clay period, There were many signs, he believed, that indicated that the present age was approaching its close. Notable among these was the Church sign, the apostacy of a large section of the Church, and their denial of the fundamental truths of the Christian faith; the Jewish sign, the national aspirations among the Jews to found again a Jewish colony in Palestine.

"It was neither the business of the Church, the speaker said, to look for signs, nor to put their faith in them. Their faith was to be grounded in the Word of God, and their hope in Him!"

"DETAILS THE JOYS OF MILLENNIUM"

"At Mere Touch of Man Earth Will Yield Fruit Abundantly"

"In that great period, said the speaker, all the tribes of Israel would revere the Messiah, and they would wonder how it was that their ancestors rejected Him.

The earth, which now lay under the curse, of sin, would blossom with the blessings bestowed by God.

"He described some of the broader features of the Millennium, as he interpreted them, such as the absence of wars, famines and pestilence, that there would be no death, except to those who disobeyed God, and their punishment would be banishment from the earth. Mr. Smith declared that, in his opinion, God had a special reason in withholding at the present time the exact nature of the blessings in store, except in telling of them in a symbolic way. This was because it was intended that the wonderfulness of the joys to come were to be a 'delight and surprise.' To reveal them now would only emphasize the trials of present-day life and add to the burden of bearing them.

"He gave Biblical quotations to show that in the Millennium there would be no more thorns or thistles, and that at the mere touch of man the earth would yield, its fruit in a wonderfully abundant way.

"In speaking of the reference in Revelation to the tree of life, the preacher declared it was a fortunate thing for mankind that Adam had eaten of the tree of knowledge instead of the tree of life, because otherwise he would have been able to live on in a state of sin indefinitely."

"HOPE OF ADVENT BURNS BRIGHTLY"

"Speaker Tells of How Second Coming Should Inspire Believers" "Its Happening Is Sure"

'There never was a day in which the hope of the second coming of Christ burned so brightly as it does today,' said, Mr. Sidney Smith, of Winnipeg, in an address at Knox Presbyterian Church last night on the subject of 'The Second Coming of Christ.'

"Before the service commenced the church was packed to the doors, and, although every available inch of space was utilized, many were unable to secure a seat. This is the concluding address in the series that Mr. Smith has been giving in Knox Church during the past week on prophetic themes. Outlining first the many prophecies in the Old Testament that spoke of the coming Messiah, Mr. Smith showed that these had only a partial fulfillment in the first advent of the Lord, leaving by far the larger part of the prophecies yet to be fulfilled at His second advent.

"The Two Advents"

"There was an advent of suffering and an advent of glory, he said, and these two were so blended in many prophecies as to constitute a problem even for some of the prophetic writers who-sought to know '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 which should follow.' When He came the first time He came, not according to expectations, the speaker said, but in lowliness and humiliation, but in that coming, Scripture was fulfilled in' the minutest detail. In like manner the speaker believed would the prophecies relating to the second advent be fulfilled.

"There should be nothing so sweet to the human heart, Mr. Smith declared, as the 'blessed hope' of the return of the Lord, yet there were many Christians who opposed it. 'It is amazing to me why men should be opposed to this truth, but it does not matter, whether opposed or not, Jesus is coming again, and there is nothing more clear in the Word of God than that!

"Hope Never Burned Brighter"

"There never was a time, the speaker continued, when this hope had burned so brightly, nor a day when so many signs I pointed to the fulfillment of the prophecies relating to the second advent. In the hearts of men, everywhere, Christian and non-Christian, was the conviction that 'something is coming.' According to the speaker, the midnight cry had gone forth, 'Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet Him!

"Speaking of the practical aspect of the hope of Christ's coming, Mr. Smith said it should be A energizing hope, sending those who held it with renewed consecration to work for the evangelization of the world. It was a purifying hope, and if given its right place in the heart and life should inspire all who professed it to keep themselves 'unspotted from the world,' and make them in every - sense of the word better men and better women."

"THE REVIVAL IN SCOTLAND"

In *The Boston Herald* of January 14, 1922, we have an editorial Which makes an interesting observation concerning a wave of religious enthusiasm that is spreading over northeastern Scotland. While we: may not know the significance of this and similar religious awakenings that have associated with them a general agitation concerning the Second Coming of Christ, yet we cannot but be reminded of the sacred record that states that at our Lord's First Advent, "All men were in expectation of Him." The editorial follows:

"Professional psychologists are collecting in northeast Scotland to observe and interpret in terms of their science the great outburst of religious emotion, which is said to equal the famous revival in Wales in 1904.

"In many ways the story is remarkable. The movement began at Yarmouth and Lowestoft among the Scottish fishermen in November. They went home, like the Galilean fishermen of old, to become missionaries. Now the country is 'afire' from Wick to Aberdeen. No preacher is leading the revival. It is not a reaction from the eloquence of an evangelist. It is a mass movement, with a large number of preachers of only ordinary capacity. Thus far some 15,000 profess conversion.

"Children in the streets are singing hymns and holding prayer services. Amusement places are closing their doors . Fishermen are selling their boats and giving the money to the poor; shopmen are selling their stocks reckless of real values. In one place a thousand persons threw away pipes and tobacco pouches, playing cards and checker boards, dancing shoes and gewgaws, and piled them in front of an organ in a mission hall , later to be burned in a public bonfire.

"The one theme that underlies the thinking, praying-and pleading of the whole movement is that the end of the world is at hand, that 'the times' are nearly 'fulfilled,' that repentance in view of the near approach of the Kingdom of heaven

is in order. The 'signs' and 'tokens' of the imminence of the 'time' are in the newspapers every day. The Jews are returning to Palestine, the Hebrew commonwealth is about to be established, the war verified all the predictions of Armageddon, turnings and overturnings have prepared the way for the final verification of the Biblical prophecies.

"This is no new thing in the world. Many times multitudes have abandoned the vanities of life in expectation of the immediate appearance of the earthly Kingdom. Based upon a literalistic interpretation of the Bible, rating Old Testament writings and New Testament utterances as equal in value, thousands in many parts of the world and in many centuries have reached absolute faith in the imminence of the end of the earth and have arranged their lives accordingly. Savonarola led such a movement. The second coming has been a favorite theme with many modern evangelists.

"The marvel now is that this tide of religious fervor should swell so high in communities so grave and severe as those of the Scottish coast."

* * * * *

We would add that it is indeed to the credit of Christians that throughout the Age they have been watching, waiting and hoping for the Master's return. They were taught by Him to keep that hope burning brightly. True enough, many faithful souls have been disappointed in that their expectations concerning the Coming of the Lord and the end of the Age were not realized in their day; yet this fact can by no means be consistently or reasonably urged as an argument to discredit our present hope concerning the close proximity of the revelation of the Master and the close of the Age. We can now readily look back and understand why and how our brethren during earlier times failed to realize the fulfillment of their good expectations. It was not the due time. Our advantage over the past is great in every way. Everywhere about us now are the incontrovertible evidences of the close of the Age and of the approach of the Kingdom. The words of our Lord, the Apostles and Prophets, so clearly depicting scenes and conditions associated with the end of the Age and the Presence of the Son of Man, are being fulfilled; and for our comfort the Master said, "When ye see these things begin to come to pass, then know that the end is nigh."

"GOD'S HOLY WRIT NEEDS NO DEFENSE"

"Parkdale Branch of Bible Society Holds Annual Meeting"

"I have never felt called upon to defend the Word of God. It has never needed that. If we preach it and inculcate it, it will defend itself," said Pastor P. W. Philpott of the Gospel Tabernacle, Hamilton, in a stirring address last night to a large audience in the Church of the Epiphany at the initial meeting of the Parkdale branch of the Upper Canada Bible Society.

"During the last few years the enemies of the Bible had been taken far too seriously, Pastor Philpott considered. 'The Word is in no danger, although in recent years we have seen a determined effort made to set it aside in the name of science and scholarship.' What was the most serious attempt to undermine the foundations of the Bible was of a more subtle nature and sought to claim equal inspiration for other books as for the Bible.

'The effort is to bring down the Word of God to the level of other writings or to elevate other books to the level of the Bible. In either case the result is the same--to destroy the authority of the Word, and when you have accomplished that you have taken away the greatest safeguard to society.'

"The Bible, Mr. Philpott said, was in a class by itself. As be read it (be saw that men were saved or lost according to their attitude to Jesus Christ. They were! lost because -they believed not in Him.

'That puts Jesus Christ in a class by Himself. Imagine a Plato, a Socrates or a Shakespeare saying: "Come unto me and I will give you rest" or "I am the way, the truth and the life." Even His enemies said that never man spake like this man, and--I say it reverently--He is either the Son of God or the greatest imposter the world has ever known.'

"There were two things in life that never changed, Mr. Philpott said -- the human heart and the Gospel; and the Gospel met the need of the human heart. There were distinguishing features between Christ and all other men, that set Him apart, and the same features distinguished the Bible from all other books."--The *Globe (Toronto)*, January 12, 1922.

BEREAN STUDIES IN THE REVELATION

STUDY CXII--FEBRUARY 12

THE POURING OUT OF THE SEVENTH VIAL (Cont.)

REV. 16:17-21

(606) What is represented by the Lightnings, Voices and Thunderings that are connected with the pouring out of the seventh Vial? H 20-232.

(607) In what previous vision of the Revelation have we found the symbol "Earthquake," and what does it signify? Wherein does the Earthquake of our lesson differ from the one preceding? H '20-232.

(608) What is the result of this great Earthquake? And what is described by the statement, "The great City became three parts"? H '20-232.

(609) What is referred -to in the expression, "The Cities ,of the nations fell"? H.'20-232, 233.

(610) Upon what phase of Christendom would we reasonably expect the severity of the judgment to fall?-' H '20-233.

STUDY CXIII--FEBRUARY 19

THE POURING OUT OF THE SEVENTH VIAL (Cont.).

REV. 16:17-21

(611) What is the symbolic significance of Islands and of Mountains as employed in the Scriptures? Cite Scriptures that assist in understanding these symbols. H'20-233.

(612) What condition is described in the expression , Every Island fled away and the -Mountains were not found"? H '20-233.

(613) What is the significance of verse 21: "There fell -upon men a great hail out of heaven"? Give brief review of other expositions. H '20-233.

(614) How will this judgment represented by the Hail from Heaven affect humanity and conditions on the earth? H '20-234.

(615) Who are the "men" referred to, and what is signified by their. "blaspheming God because of the Plague"? H '20-234.

PULLING DOWN STRONG HOLDS

"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling *down* of strong holds." 2 Cor. 10:4.

THE King James translators made of our text a parenthesis. It would seem that they should have included the two following verses also within the parenthetical portion. The cognate expressions "pulling down" and "casting own," as well as "strong holds" and "every high thing," link together verses 4 and 5 in the same chain of thought, thus: "pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God." The use of cognate terms is also shown in 2 Tim. 3:17: "That the man of God may be perfect [perfected--see margin], thoroughly furnished unto all good works." In this way the same train of thought is continued.

Recurring to the parenthetical feature of our text, we note that verse 6 is required to. complete the Apostle's digression from his main line of thought that began with verses 1-3; verse 7 continuing the subject with which he commenced the chapter. Thus, verses 4-6 constitute a parenthesis in which some very important doctrinal teaching is incidentally set forth for our learning.

While the Apostle mentions "weapons of our warfare," he does not here designate or describe those weapons. He says that they are not carnal, yet mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds. Another rendering has it: "For the arms of our warfare are not fleshly, but are divinely powerful for the demolition of fortresses." A most important question is, What are these strong holds to which the Apostle makes reference? The following verse throws considerable light upon this question.

LOCATING THE STRONG HOLDS

By way of continuation of his thought, the inspired writer proceeds with some explanatory remarks to the effect that the pulling down of strong holds has reference to "casting down imaginations [reasonings-see margin] and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God." There are certain imaginations, or reasonings, and other heights which may be demolished by the use of the arms Divinely provided. In another place the Apostle informs us that when men "knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. . . . And even as they did not like to retain God in their -knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient." (Rom. 1:21, 28.) These imaginations are within the mind of man. When an individual comes to

the, Lord Jesus Christ to walk in His footsteps, he contracts to put away the old fleshly mind with its vain imaginations and to have instead the mind which was in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 2:5.) Vain indeed have been the foolish imaginations which have fortified themselves within the fleshly mind. It requires a power above the human to dislodge them from the strong holds upon such mind obtained by reason of long established habits of thought and expression.

A little child may imagine or "play like" it is something different or doing something different from what it really is. It may straddle a broom, for instance, and assume that it is riding a horse. We of course very properly excuse the child, when it playfully assumes to be or to act like something different from what it really is; but when children grow up to years of maturity, they are supposed to put away childish things. (1 Cor. 13:11.) Yet many adults cease not to ride "hobby horses If a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." (Gal. 6:3.) Some go to such extremes in their imaginations as to be insane. The fleshly mind becomes obsessed with certain vain ideas and on this account becomes concerned in a work that it vainly imagines is of paramount importance. The selfish deceived heart assumes a leadership as foolish reasonings come in and occupy the fortress of the human brain, because self must have some place of prominence. Worse than empty is the mind filled with the, vain displays of human reasonings where thoughts of God are not. (Psa. 10:4.) Therefore, "Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established." (Prov. 16:3.) The human reasoning has generally pushed God aside, and when it does this, the imaginations of the thoughts of man's heart have been only evil continually.' (Gen. 6:5.) Surely "vanity of vanities; all is vanity." To the child of God it is said: "Be not conformed to this world:but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and, acceptable, and perfect, will of God. For I say, through the grace given unto 'me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." (Rom. 12:2, 3.) The arms of our warfare are Divinely powerful for the casting down of vain reasonings which occupy the highest vantage ground at the very top of the human structure; but no matter how strongly entrenched, how strong their hold on the throne where God should reign, the Lord's armory is sufficient to thoroughly equip the man of God for the good fight of faith. It may require the campaign of a lifetime to rout these imaginations so strongly fortified within one's own mind. It will doubtless require much diligence to continually renew one's mind. Yet the Lord has provided the grace to help in every time of need. His weapons are powerful to the attainment of the victory.

OTHER HEIGHTS TO COME DOWN

Not only are the arms of our warfare Divinely powerful to the demolishing of human, worldly reasonings in one's own mind, but are also thus powerful to the casting down of every height which exalts itself against the knowledge of God. There are many-devices which man has sought out in his vain imaginations as he has attempted to cast God aside. (Eccl. 7:29.) The heathen world is full of idols and vain inventions. In one way or another they are worshiping and serving the creature rather than the Creator. (Rom. 1:215.) In the more civilized lands we also find many inventions by which in some manner things other than God are

worshiped. False religious systems have aided in supplanting the true worship of Jehovah. In due time every height of whatever character, everything which has exalted itself against the knowledge of God, will be demolished. "He hath scattered the proud in the imaginations of their hearts." "He maketh the devices of the people of none effect." (Luke 1:51; Psa. 33:10.) Ultimately, every creature shall be found praising Jehovah.-Rev. 5:13.

Since these high places have fortified themselves against the knowledge of God, and since the things Divinely powerful for pulling them down are designated as "the weapons of our warfare," it will be seen that such weapons are thus identified with the knowledge of God. Knowledge is power. God's knowledge is Divinely powerful: "According as His Divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the *knowledge of Him* that hath called us to glory and virtue." (2 Pet. 1:3.) The knowledge of God is an armory from which the soldier of the cross is equipped for the good fight of faith.

DIVINELY POWERFUL WEAPONS

Elsewhere the Apostle designates the weapons with which the soldier of Christ Jesus is supplied. (Eph. -6:1317.) All these weapons are identified with the knowledge of God, which is a knowledge of the Truth.

The girdle: Our "loins girt about with truth" represents the fact that we are privileged to be servants of the Truth. The Truth itself helps us to be faithful servants. We are to bear witness to the Truth. The service of the Truth under the Captain of our salvation aids us in overcoming our inherited weaknesses, the strong holds entrenched within us.

The breastplate of righteousness: This represents our justification, which would not be possible without a knowledge of God. This justification affords us a vital protection in our conflict with the "imagination" so that despite our shortcomings we do always triumph in Christ and make manifest the saving power of the knowledge of God. -2 Cor. 2:14.

The sandals: Our "feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace" affords us the necessary qualities of loving kindness, patience, meekness, gentleness, forbearance, long suffering, etc., as we endeavor to develop the fruits and graces of the spirit, none of which would be possible without a knowledge of God. We are to grow in grace and knowledge.

The shield of faith: This shield protects us from the fiery darts of the wicked, who would keep implanted within the mind the poisons of doubt and unbelief. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God," and thus again we see that the knowledge of God is the armory or storehouse from which the man of God is supplied.

The helmet of salvation: An intellectual equipment is absolutely necessary in the pulling down of false, human reasonings which control the natural mind. Such equipment is the knowledge of God, which means salvation. "And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou has sent."-John 17:3.

The sword: The sword of the spirit is the Word of God in an aggressive aspect, and positive action surely is necessary in the pulling down of the strong holds that

once dominated us and would still dominate us unless we use our weapons effectively. We must apply this weapon, which is quick and powerful, piercing to the dividing asunder of the soul and the spirit, and of the joints and the marrow, and which is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (Heb. -4:12.) The flesh must be crucified, with its affections. But this sword should not be used to cut off the ears of others, as Peter once essayed. The new creature's battle ground is mainly within his own territory.

A WARFARE IN TWO STAGES

Having informed us that strong holds within and without the mind may be pulled down by the Divinely powerful weapons, the Apostle again takes up a twofold thought, referring first to the struggle within the mind, particularly within the mind of the Christian in this present evil world, and then with reference to disobedient things in general in a time of Divine vengeance. Verse 5 should have closed with the word "God," and then verse 6 would read: "And bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of God, and having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled." The, "obedience of Christ" is also "*your* obedience," so that we see that the warfare of the soldier of the cross in this present life is alluded to by the statement, "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

The greatest and most important work of the follower of the Master at this time is to bring every thought of his mind captive as a prisoner of Jesus Christ, into the same loving submission that, Christ Himself manifested. The vain imaginations of the fleshly mind are to be routed and the fortifications of the mind formerly occupied by these imaginations are to be, as it were, prison cells to hold his thoughts into the obedience of Christ, the Head. As a prisoner of the Lord he holds his thoughts captive, until finally, when clothed upon with the new body from heaven, he shall enter into the glorious liberty of the children of God. The bringing of the very thoughts of the mind captive to Christ at this time when evil abounds and when evil imaginations stand continually crowding at the door, requires that certain restrictions, according to the circumstances involved, may need to be placed upon one's habits of thought. The mind must not be allowed to roam around and browse in the fields of foolish and vain thoughts and human reasonings, or possibly be victimized by demons. One's thoughts should be disciplined. The mind should be daily or hourly or momentarily renewed in order that the transformation process might be complete. Human power alone is not sufficient for this task. The Divinely powerful arms of assistance are necessary and sufficient. Let us take unto ourselves, therefore, the whole armor of God and fight the good fight of faith, casting down these imaginations from the mind, where thoughts in obedience to Jehovah should be.

Now then, when the transformation process is completed, and the Bride, the Lamb's Wife, shall have made herself ready and attained unto her glorious reward, having brought captive every thought into the obedience of Christ, will this end the warfare of the soldier of the cross? Ali, no! Every high thing exalted against the knowledge of God must come down and make way for the filling of the whole earth with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the great deep. Though men have tried to forget God and cast Him aside in their thoughts, the time will come when the knowledge of God will find its way into every

human heart, for God wills that all shall be saved from ignorance and superstition and come to a knowledge of the truth. (1 Tim. 2:4.) In the case of the Christian during this present Age, the knowledge of the Lord has won its way into the heart and mind by persuasive methods, by appealing to and constraining the believer. The imaginations and false reasonings of the Christian's mind have been pulled down with his own co-operation. In the case of the children of disobedience (Eph. 5:6), the situation will be somewhat different. Violent methods will be employed. Their own imaginations, and also the evil systems and devices which have aided them in their disobedient course, will be pulled down *with a vengeance*. The Divinely powerful weapons are prepared to revenge all disobedience. The truth, in this aspect of vengeance, comes as hail: "The hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies." (Isa. 28:17.) Having refused the gentle rain drops, which distil as the dew (Deut. 32:2), it will be necessary for the knowledge of God to come to the disobedient ones in the form of hail, in a violent manner.

REVENGING ALL DISOBEDIENCE

Seeing that violent means must be employed to pull down some of these strong holds and heights, a very important question arises as to *when this violent pulling down shall take place*. It is also proper to inquire *whether the saints today who are still in the flesh are authorized to employ the weapons of their warfare in an effort to pull down religious or other systems of error*. The Apostle settles this matter beyond any doubt when he says that these weapons are "in a readiness to revenge all disobedience *when your obedience is fulfilled*." The next important question, therefore, would be, Has our obedience been yet fulfilled or completed? The answer is found in consideration of the fact that "your obedience" is identified with "the obedience of Christ," and that Christ Jesus became obedient *unto death*, even the death of the cross. His followers must also be obedient unto death, because they partake of His obedience. The obedience of the saints will not be complete until the last member shall have finished his course with joy. That time has not yet arrived, because the whole creation is still travailing in pain, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God in glory. (Rom. 8:19, 22.) "And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." (Rom. 8:23.) We ourselves are still waiting for the deliverance of "our body" in spirit birth. The Body will not be fully born until the feet also are delivered. The Marriage of the Lamb has not yet transpired, and consequently, the reign of Christ has not yet begun, for the saints shall reign with Him-not part of the saints, but all of the saints. (I Cor. 4:8.) The time has not yet come to avenge the blood of the saints. (Rev. 6:9-11.) Soon, however, we believe, the last member shall pass beyond, and then all disobedience shall be revenged, the obedience of the saints having been completed.

Let it be noted that ALL disobedience shall be revenged. This would include, not only disobedience on the part of the human family, but also disobedience among the heavenly hosts. We remember that certain of the angels were disobedient in the time of Noah, and that they have been reserved unto judgment. (1 Pet. 3:20; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6.) "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment *to be punished*." (2 Pet. 2:9.) The disobedient spirit beings have - been more or less identified with the "heights

exalted against the knowledge of God," and we know the battle of the soldier of the cross has been, in part, with spiritual wickedness in high places. (Eph. 6:12.) The extent to which the wicked spirits have gone in erecting barriers against the knowledge of God we may never know until we 'know even as we are known: but we do know that the saints shall judge both men and angels. (I Cor. 6:2, 3.) But let us consider that we are not qualified- to judge now. "Therefore, judge nothing before the time." (1 Cor. 4:5.) It would be a serious mistake to attempt to judge before we are qualified to do so, and it is a serious error, therefore, *to attempt to revenge all disobedience before our obedience is completed. We dare not attempt to punish disobedience now before we are qualified. We cannot and we must not attempt to Pull down such strong holds as the religious and social systems -not until we are given that honor after our obedience -shall have been fulfilled.*

But let us not be misunderstood in this connection. While it is emphatically true that the Lord's people, while in the flesh, have not been commissioned to perform a smiting work on any of the human systems that compose the present order of things, and are not to wage war or encourage others to battle against the present arrangements, either civil or ecclesiastical, yet we are to recognize the facts as to the object and results of the proclamation of the Truth by God's children while still in the flesh. The effect of -the Divine message of Truth has always been to expose the error wherever entrenched, and thereby to weaken the power and influence of false and counterfeit systems. As an illustration, we have the words of Daniel (7:26) concerning the Papacy: "But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end." Likewise, St. Paul instructs in 2 Thes. 2:8: "whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and destroy with the bright shining of His presence. Moreover, as we have seen -in our discussion of the Revelation symbols, the Divine message of Truth setting forth the character and Plan of God, as proclaimed by the saints while still in the flesh, is to have more or less the effect of uncovering the error and of unsettling *confidence in the systems that have been propagating it. (Rev. 16.) This part, which we believe the saints have, is really no part of the battle of the great day; nor are those who engage in proclaiming the simple message of Truth to be classified in any sense as members of the Lord's great army, which will really be His agency in tearing down the present order of things. But, as we find the Scriptures to teach, so long as error and counterfeit systems exist, the proclamation of the Truth by the Lord's people is described as a consuming process. Indeed, ever since the Reformation opened, there has been a gradual weakening of Papacy's power and influence, which is but the logical result of Truth exposing error; and this has been increasingly the result as the Truth has been shining more brightly during this Harvest period. But we are to make a distinction between the proclamation of Gospel Truth by the saints and the actual pulling down and destroying of the present counterfeit systems by the forces of anarchy later on.

JEHOVAH IS NOT SLACK

"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness." (2 Pet. 3:9.) *It has been a human weakness to want to hurry things.* Some have thought that this present Age is the time to convert the world; but God's Plan has reserved a future Age for that herculean task. Men have tried ever and anon to establish the Kingdom before the time. How often misguided ones have tried to do things BEFORE THE TIME, AND FAILED! God has a due time for every feature of His Plan. In due time everything shall be fulfilled. As students of the Word of Truth, we should rightly apply that Word. We should not think of doing things now which are so evidently reserved to be, done when all the, saints shall have passed into glory. And yet, it would seem that those who do so think, mean well and are sincere. Perhaps it were better to be engaged in some work that has for its object the betterment of mankind in some way, though it be not in accordance with the thoughts of Jehovah, who thinks not as man does (Isa. 55:8, 9), than to be doing nothing at all. We would not obstruct the way of those who are conscientious and zealous in any cause. It is our business to seek earnestly to know and to do the will of the Lord, and to beckon to those who would inquire for the old paths. So inquiring, we find that the time is still future when the saints shall be authorized to revenge all disobedience, and that they will be supremely qualified to do so then, without error or failure. In due time all remaining strong holds of error shall be pulled down.

We are still in "the day of His preparation." One of the arms of our equipment has to do with "the preparation of the gospel of peace." The saints must be perfected for the work of the ministry that shall begin when they enter into their glorious reward. Not all the saints have yet passed into glory. But soon the day of preparation will have ended: the hour to strike will have arrived. That will be a rapturous moment. The reign of righteousness will have begun, which means that the reign of evil will then be over. For that glad hour, so near at hand, we can afford to wait. ,Wait, I say, on the Lord." In the meantime we should put our house in order, pulling down with the help of the Divinely provided and Divinely powerful arms every strong hold of error from our own minds, and assisting others in so doing. "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time."

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

SERIES XV-A

CHRIST'S MESSAGE TO LAODICEA (Cont.)

"These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."--Rev. 3:14-16.

WE learn from history that the name Laodicea was given to the city where the last of the seven churches was located by Antiochus II, after his enlargement of it, in honor of his wife Laodice, and is a compound of two words--*laos*, "people," and

dike. A noted writer has said: " '*Dike*' is given by the dictionaries as having three meanings closely connected: (1) of 'manner, custom, usage,' (2) of 'right'; (3) of 'requirement,' and so , 'vengeance,' punitive justice. We have thus three possible meanings: 'custom of the people,' 'people's right,' judgment of the people.' And these three things have equally plain and solemn connection with one another."* The writer next goes on to make application of these three related meanings of the word to the different features contained in this message to the Laodiceans, and it can hardly be questioned that they fit perfectly the general conditions existing in Protestant Christianity today; "for," he proceeds to say, "it is indeed the 'people's custom' that is here [in this Laodicean message] unfolded. If under Popery it is rather the usurpation of the leaders that is the question, in Protestantism, with its open Bible, the *people* [who profess Christianity] are tested as never before." This responsibility of the people is on account of the wonderful privileges of our day.

**The Revelation of Christ--GRANT, pp. 210, 211.*

LAODICEA'S KNOWLEDGE AND RESPONSIBILITY

In the early centuries of the Gospel Age, the art of printing was unknown, and the people of the world as well as the people of God were necessarily dependent upon the slow, toilsome labor of copyists - for the multiplication of copies of the Word of God. To possess a 'copy of the entire canon of the Sacred Writings was a rare, an extremely rare privilege. When, in the sixteenth century, the Reformation was instituted, the printing press, although crude and deficient when compared with that of the present time, had come into use. This made possible the greatest factor in the Reformation movement-the scattering of various portions of the Bible. Since the opening years of the nineteenth century, Bibles have become extremely plentiful, and are found in nearly every home today. The responsibilities that are associated with a knowledge of its contents have been brought home, as never before, to the professed people of God; indeed to all people. It is true, men may be, and indeed still are, ignorant of the teachings of the Bible, but it is now more assuredly a willing ignorance.- They may, as they have in the past, seek to place the responsibility of their ignorance upon the fallen stars, the blind leaders, but their doing so has now necessarily another character from what it had in former days. As this noted writer has said:

"Hence it is the *people* who are now being manifested--their way which is being made apparent; and judgment, however delayed, must at last follow with proportional energy. Thus two significant applications of this word 'Laodicea' are made evident.

"But again, and connected with this, there is a feature of the last days which Scripture puts prominently forward -- the self assertion, which indeed on man's part has never been lacking, but which now pervades in a manner not before seen, the masses of the population. That Protestantism, has favored this, is one of the reproaches of the Romanists. And it is undeniably true that in one sense it has favored it. The breaking of ecclesiastical yokes-the yoke of a tyranny, more prostrating than any other-with that awaking of the mind of man which is ever found where the light of the Word of God has penetrated-has produced a state of

things in which, if Christ's yoke be not accepted, man's will, will assuredly assert itself [even over the false guides] as never before. And so- it has proved; and so Scripture long before declared that it ,Would be. 'Laodicea' in its . . . sense, of 'people's right,' has become, morally, spiritually, and politically also, the watchword of the times. On the one hand, there is an immense march of civilization, a predicted running to and fro, and increase of knowledge; on the other, an uprising of what threatens [Christian (?)] civilization, and is ominous of an approaching end of the whole state.

THE DOOM OF LAODICEA

'People's right!' The rights of the masses! and which the masses themselves mean to define and pronounce upon. . . . Rights! what scale have you of rights? Listen to the voices from a lower level than you desire, which will interpret for you, and enforce their interpretation,--socialism, communism, nihilism --dread names, not merely for the monarch, but for the man of property also, and for the law abiding citizen. . . . This Laodicea of politics is destined to be the rock upon which all governmental reform will end in anarchy and chaos. He who can read the great typical book of nature, may read the Scriptural presages upon a scroll written with lamentation and mourning and woe: 'And there shall be signs in the sun., and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth, distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming upon the earth: for the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.'--Luke 21:25, 26.

"But the removal of the things that can be shaken will only make way for a Kingdom, not such as they anticipate, absolute [however it will be] beyond all the tyrannies of old, a 'rod of iron,' which shall break as potsherds all the opposing powers of man, yet be the Shepherd's rod under which the poor of the flock will lie down at last in peace, and none shall makethem afraid."*

* *The Revelation of Christ*--GRANT, PP. 211-215.

How refreshing to turn from the consideration of present conditions to a contemplation of that coming rule such as the world has never seen! Hear the Prophet concerning that glorious time:

"He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment. The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness. He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. In His days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. Yea, all kings shall fall down. before. Him: all nations shall serve Him."--Psa. 72:2-4, 7, 8, 11.

In considering this Laodicean message, it is impossible to separate political from ecclesiastical conditions -the world and the Church are so closely allied, so mingled together. As a matter of fact, "people's right," which is one phase of Laodicea, has become in ecclesiastical matters as well as political, the watchword of the times. The masses of the people are rising up and claiming their rights in

ecclesiastical matters as never before. It needs to be remembered, however, that while the laity may dispossess the clergy, and dominion pass from one to the other, it will do this without reverting to the hands to which it belongs. Christ is the one Master, not clergy and not people. Ministers are indeed servants, but not servants of men, as the Apostle so emphatically asserts. "Ye are bought with a price; be ye not the servants of men: if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." As one has truthfully said: "Christ needs to be in His true place,--a thing which so marks Philadelphia, but from which Laodicea excludes Him, as does Thyatira. Bring Christ in and the ministers are *His* servants. Bring Christ in, and the people are *His* people. His service on the part of all alike, is true and equal freedom at once to all."

We now consider the *particular*, the *special* marks pointed out by the Savior which distinguish the Laodicean message from all the others and describe so vividly the condition of Protestant Christianity, both clergy and laity today.

THE FAITHFUL AND TRUE WITNESS

"These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God."--V. 14.

The Word Amen means true, certain, faithful. -Our Lord announcing Himself as the Amen, seems to signify that He was the One who was true, and whose word could be depended upon. The thought seems to be that although both, the clergy and the Church of the Laodiceans had proved themselves so untrue, so unworthy of representing Him, He was the same, and His words both of promise and threatening would be carried out. The expression, the faithful and true witness, is evidently designed to give emphasis to that which is implied in the word *Amen*. The significance also seems to be that He is a witness for God and can approve of nothing which the God of truth would not approve.

The name or title, "the beginning of the creation of God," is a very important one as bearing on the rank or dignity of the Savior, and has been variously interpreted. Some have applied it in the sense that He is the *author* of all things. MR. BARNES is authority for saying that the word translated 'beginning' is not in accordance with the thought of authorship, but that it has reference, rather, to the *commencement* of a thing, denoting properly either primacy in rank or primacy in time. This author applies it to primacy in rank, and his words to this effect are:

"He is 'the beginning of the creation of God,' in the sense that He is the head or prince of the creation; that is, that He presides, over it so far as the purposes of redemption are to be accomplished, and so far as necessary for those purposes. This is (a) in accordance with the meaning of the word, Luke 12:11 [where the word *beginning* is translated *magistrates*] ; 20:20 [where the word is translated *power*], *et al ut supra*, and (b) in accordance with the uniform statements respecting the Redeemer, that 'all power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth' (Matt. 28:18) ; that God has 'given him power over all flesh' (John 17:2) ; that all things are 'put under His feet' (Heb. 2:8; 1 Cor. 15:27) ; that He is exalted over all things (Eph. 1:20-22). Having this rank, it was proper that He should speak with authority to the [messenger, pastor and] Church at Laodicea."*

**Notes on Revelation--BARNES, P. 122.*

Other writers apply the expression to the New Creation, begun with Christ Jesus raised from the dead, the Son of God with power, the Head of the Church. PASTOR RUSSELL'S interpretation, however, which seems the most reasonable, and harmonizes all the Scriptures referring to Christ's dignity and honor, is that He was the only begotten Son, the first and only *direct* creation of God the Father: "Note also that our Lord (referring to His own origin), declares Himself to be, 'The faithful and true witness, *the beginning of the creation of God.*' **"

Studies, Vol. V, p. 87.

THOU ART NEITHER COLD NOR HOT

The Savior continues to address the messenger of the Laodiceans, in the words: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert either cold or hot." (V. 15.) This expression is, of course, figurative. To be "cold," in the sense here suggested would imply a condition where there was no pretension to religion. To be "hot" denotes the very opposite--a state of fervency, warm and zealous in the love and service of the Master. The state or condition reproved here is that of a profession of Christ with no warm-hearted love and service which He desired and had a right to expect of those who professed to be His ministers, His followers. Lukewarmness is the word in the next verse. I would that thou wert either cold or hot is used to express this condition. The meaning is that Christ would prefer no profession at all to one that was of a hypocritical character, where there was no glow of warm affection. The reason is most obvious. Evidently a cold state was more preferable to Christ than that of lukewarmness. The cold, non-professing unbeliever represents a more honest state; he could not be specially responsible in his state of ignorance and would not therefore be blameworthy to the extent of the one who had some enlightenment and professed to be a follower of Christ, but was not living up to his profession. It would be far better to be even antagonistic to Christ, than to make a profession to be His ministers, His followers, to make vows of consecration, and then manifest indifference in fulfilling them. On the part of the non-professor, there is no concealment, no pretense. The one is a condition of either being deceived or of insincerity, if not hypocrisy. The other is generally, at least, honest. Honesty is one quality absolutely necessary to become a true disciple and have the Word of God take root, as Christ taught in parable: "But that on the good ground are they-, which, in an *honest* and good heart, having heard [understood] the Word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience."--Luke 8:15.

LACKING IN HONESTY AND SINCERITY

It has been truly said of insincere ones or hypocrites: "Of a man who is false to his engagements; who makes professions and promises never to be realized, we can make nothing. There is essential meanness in such a character, and there is nothing in it which we can respect. But, in the character of the man who is openly and avowedly opposed to anything; who takes his stand, and is earnest and zealous in his course, though it be wrong, there are traits which may be, under a better direction, elements of true greatness and magnanimity. In the character of Saul of Tarsus, there were always the elements of true greatness; in that of Judas Iscariot, there were never. The one was capable of becoming one of the noblest men that has ever lived on the earth; the other, even under the personal teaching of the Redeemer for years, was nothing but a traitor--a man of essential meanness. . . . The, most hopeless of all persons, in regard to salvation, are those who are [profess to be] members of the Church without any true religion; who have made a profession without any evidence of personal piety; who are content with a name to live. This is so, because (a) the essential character of anyone who will allow himself to do *this*, is eminently unfavorable to true religion. There is a lack of that thorough honesty and sincerity which is so necessary for true conversion to God. He who is content to profess to be what he really is not, is not a man on whom the truths of Christianity are likely to make an impression. (b) Such a man never applies the truth to himself. Truth that is addressed to impenitent sinners,, he does not apply to himself, of course, for he does not rank himself in that class of persons. Truths addressed to hypocrites, he will not apply to himself, for no one, however insincere and hollow he may be, chooses to act. on the presumption that he himself is a hypocrite, or so as to leave others to suppose that he regards himself as such. The means of grace adapted to save *a sinner*, as such, he will not use, for he is [professedly] in the Church, and chooses to regard himself as safe. Efforts made to reclaim him he will resist, for he will regard it as proof of a meddling spirit, and an uncharitable judging in others, if they consider him to be anything different from what he professes to be. What right have they to *go back* of his profession, and assume that he is insincere? As a consequence, there are probably fewer persons by far converted of those who come into the Church without any religion, than of any other class of persons of similar number, and the most hopeless of all conditions, in respect to conversion and salvation, is when one enters the [professed] Church deceived. (c) It may be presumed that, for these reasons, God Himself will make less direct effort to, convert and save such persons. As there are fewer appeals that can be brought to bear on them; as there is less in their character that is noble and that can be depended on in promoting the salvation of a soul; and as there is special guilt in hypocrisy, it may be presumed that God will more frequently leave such persons to their chosen course, than He will those who make no professions of religion. Compare Psa. 109:17, 18; Jer. 7:16; 11:14; 14:11, Isa. 1:15; Hosea 4:17."*

*Notes on Revelation--BARNES, PP. 123, 124.

DIVIDED BETWEEN CHRIST AND THE WORLD

It would not be proper or correct to say that all those who profess Christ in and of Laodicea, are hypocrites, although from all the facts and evidences, the number of such must be considerable. There are varying degrees of hypocrisy, however, in Christendom. Some know more, and are more guilty; many are deceived; and it would be our thought that a goodly number are to a considerable extent sincere believers, but have never come to understand the requirements of discipleship, never possessed the qualifications necessary to have revealed to them those requirements, and therefore they could not possibly warm in affection for Christ as a person, or zealous in His cause. Nevertheless, the general condition described by the Savior here is that of lukewarmness; that is, that of profession without, possession; and as the appointed time for judging is come, such are spued out of His mouth. Another writer better expresses the meaning of lukewarmness as used in this message. His words are:

'It is lukewarm--nothing decided--partly hot and partly cold--divided between Christ and the world-- not willing to give up pretension and claim to the heavenly, and yet clinging close to the earthly--having too much conscience, to cast off the name of Christ, and too much love for the world to take a firm and honest stand entirely on His side. There is much religiousness, but very little religion; much sentiment, but very little of life to correspond; much profession, but very little faith.'*

* *Lectures on the Apocalypse*-SEISS, PP. 199, 200.

In the Savior's words, "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked," we have the Laodicean spirit of pride and boastfulness described. One of the many evidences of a loss or lack of spirituality, of character likeness to Christ, on the part of those who continue to profess His Name, is that of a spirit of pride and boastfulness. This is manifested on the part of religious leaders and organizations today in the eagerness to give statistics, to advertise their doings. Meetings and -conferences are convened for this purpose rather than for ministering to the people the Word of God- In not a few cases, the caucuses of political gatherings are mild indeed as compared with some of the methods of the professed followers of Christ in the conduct of business matters of the Church. In Laodicea most of the attention is given to the externals of Christian life, and to securing the approval and applause of the world. The principal cause of all this is that the conscience is not sensitive and tender before the Lord; the life of faith and trust has never been entered upon; and the heart, the affections, has never been occupied with a personal Christ. The writer last quoted above, who may be considered to be a Philadelphian believer, but who lived over into the Laodicean age, made application of this message to present conditions of the professed Church, and very truthfully said,* "it is self satisfied, boastful and empty. Having come down to the world's tastes, and gained the world's praise and patronage, the Laodiceans think they are rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing. Such splendid churches, and influential and intelligent congregations, and learned and agreeable preachers! Such admirable worship and music! Such excellently manned and endowed institutions! So many missionaries

in the field! So much given for magnificent charities! Such an array in all the attributes of greatness and power! What more, can be wanted? And will it answer to say that all this is not largely and characteristically the state of things at this hour?"

WRETCHED, POOR AND BLIND

Again we observe the statement of a faithful teacher outside of Laodicea:

"The Scriptures draw to our attention the fact that the nominal Church of this present time, symbolical Laodicea (Rev. 3 -17, 18), claims also to be very rich. 'Thou sayest, I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing.' Alas! this seems to be the prevalent condition of nominal churchianity on every hand. Only the few in her who are Israelites indeed, and who have not yet heard and obeyed the voice speaking in this harvest-time, and saying, 'Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins and that ye receive not her plagues'-only these very few know of the true riches;, the remainder are. deceiving themselves with a counterfeit wealth. They look with pride upon their numbers, and count them -by millions: they rejoice in this wealth of numbers, not realizing that nearly all are 'tares,' not begotten by the good Word of the Kingdom;--indeed very few of them know anything about the Kingdom at all, not being begotten of the Truth, but begotten of error."*

Z '01, p. 56.

The Savior's words , "Thou art wretched," do not' denote that those thus rebuked are actually conscious of that condition. The words refer to the condition itself, rather than the consciousness of it. The word *miserable*, as here used, means a pitiable state, rather than one actually felt to be so. The word *poor* refers, of course, to their spiritual state: they are altogether lacking in those graces which are always the fruit of Christ's spirit. They are *blind*; that is, blind to their true condition, blind to the signs of the times, blind to What constitutes true Christianity, and blind to the fact that their judgment is impending. They are represented as *naked*; that is, not only void of what constitutes true righteousness in God's sight, but without the robe, the merit of Christ's righteousness, which alone is secured through faith in His ransom-sacrifice, faith in His precious blood shed once for all.

"And so the Lord declares to Laodicea, 'Thou *knowest* not that thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.' She is poor, in that she has so little of the Master's spirit, so little of the Truth and the spirit of the Truth. . . . Laodicea is blind, in that the god of this world hath blinded her perceptions of God's character and plan, and is leading her further and further away from confidence in His Word, under the *guidance of her chosen and well-paid lords and masters, the clergy* [fallen stars], who under the name of Higher Criticism and Evolution are rapidly taking away from her every good possession and thing which would be estimable in the sight of the Lord, and who are thus denuding her, making her naked, taking from her the robe of Christ's righteousness, and leading her to trust, not in the precious blood of the redemption, the death of the Redeemer, but to

trust in an evolutionary process which needs no Savior, which denies an atonement for sins, yea, denies that there is, or has been any sin to make atonement for; and claims, on the contrary that humanity has ground for pride in its own progress, which will be quite sufficient eventually to bring to them every desired blessing, without any Savior and without His Kingdom, which God has promised as the hope of the groaning creation."*

Z '01, p. 56.

JEHOVAH'S MERCY TO A HEATHEN CITY

MARCH 5--JONAH 3:1--4:11

Golden Text.--"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto Jehovah, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."--Isa. 55:7.

THE Book of Jonah is unique among the prophetic writings of the Old Testament, being a story and not a prophecy, and being interwoven with miraculous elements. Jonah, however, who may have been the author of the book, was a historical character, named with full particulars in 2 Kings 14:25. If, as some scholars think, the book of Jonah is not true history but merely a religious allegory, it is hard to see why a Jewish writer should write such an allegory, placing in so unfavorable a light one of the Hebrew prophets.

Skeptics have long been inclined to treat as a seaman's yarn the story of Jonah's experiences in the belly of the great fish. Many pulpiteers even laugh at the account of Jonah's experiences as suitable only for the credulous, and not for wise Higher Critics. Nevertheless, the Great Teacher refers to Jonah and his experiences in the belly of the great fish; and those who believe the Scriptures will seek no better ground for their faith in the story than this.

Nor is Jonah's account without a considerable parallel. Some years ago one of the New York journals gave a detailed account, profusely illustrated, showing how a sailor 'was swallowed by a great sulphur whale, but escaped after several hours, his skin made purplish from the action of the digestive fluids of the whale's stomach. So far as we know, Jonah's case was the only one in which any one spent parts of three days and nights in the belly of a fish. True, the throats of the majority of whales seem too small to admit a man. We remember, however, that they are quite elastic. The great sulphur variety is of enormous size and is said to have a throat capable of swallowing a skiff, which is much larger than a man.

Besides, the Bible description of the matter tells us specifically that God prepared a great fish. No one who has a proper appreciation of the powers of the Almighty would question for an instant the ability of God to prepare a special fish, either at the moment or, foreknowing Jonah's course, long in advance. The exceptional character of Jonah's experience constituted him a type of our Lord Jesus, who in death was swallowed up of the earth as was Jonah by the fish; and as our Lord was liberated from His prison-house, so was Jonah.-Matt. 12:39, 40.

PREACHING TO THE NINEVITES

Today's study, however, is connected with the Prophet Jonah's preaching to the Ninevites. Nineveh was a great city outside the pale of Judaism and therefore, at that time, outside the lines of Divine favor; for from the giving of the Law Covenant at Mount Sinai until three and a half years after the Cross, God's favors were exclusively confined to the nation of Israel, under the terms of the Law Covenant. At the close of Israel's period of exclusive favor, Cornelius the Centurion was the first Gentile to receive evidence of Divine favor.

In the cases of the Sodomites, the Ninevites and the Amalekites, Divine Justice decreed that their iniquity had come -to the full; that for them to live longer would be unwise; and that for them to be cut off in death would not only hinder them from further degradation, but also furnish to mankind a general lesson, to the effect that there is a limit to the Divine permission of evil. The fact that these people were thus condemned and overthrown did not signify that they had ever enjoyed salvation or even an offer of salvation'. Like all Adam's children, these people were under the sentence of death--"Dying, thou shalt die." They were merely cut off from further life under present conditions. Their opportunity for future life by resurrection was not interfered with, for neither they nor others had yet been redeemed.

Hence the future life, secured by the redemptive work of Jesus, was in no sense interfered with by the sentence of death issued against them *en masse*. Indeed, even the Jews were not saved. The offer of salvation made to them under the Law Covenant did not give them eternal life. As St. Paul declares, "By the deeds of the Law shall no flesh be justified in God's sight." (Rom. 3:20.) If the Jews were justified by the Law, 'then Christ died in vain. The Law made nothing perfect.

The offer of life given to the Jew was merely to prove to him, and ultimately to all, the impossibility of any one's obtaining life under the Divine Law without Divine assistance -without the Savior and His work at Calvary and, additionally, His work for the world as the Mediator of the New Covenant, during His Messianic Reign of a thousand years. In harmony with this the Apostle declares, "Christ brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." And again, "There is none other name under Heaven given amongst men whereby we must be saved." And again, "This great salvation began to be preached by our Lord and was con-firmed by those who heard Him."--2 Tim. 1:10; Acts 4:12; Heb. 2:3.

THE NINEVITES REPENTED.

Jonah's preaching was that within forty days God would destroy Nineveh. But the people, impressed by his message, repented of their -sinful course and sought Divine forgiveness. The king's proclamation was that "neither man nor beast, herd nor flock' taste anything; let them not feed, nor drink water; but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God; yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their bands." The Lord hearkened to the Ninevites, accepted their repentance, and permitted their national life to continue for a time.

We are, of course, to understand that God knew the end from the beginning--that He knew that the Ninevites would repent, and that He would not blot them out within forty days, in accordance with the Prophet Jonah's preaching. Nineveh did

pass away utterly, great city as it was, but not within forty literal days. Possibly the time meant by the Almighty was what is sometimes termed prophetic or symbolical time--a day for a year; 40 days, 40 years.

The lesson shows us how much greater is the compassion of the Almighty than that of His imperfect servants of human kind. God was pleased to have the Ninevites turn from their sins to hearty repentance. He was pleased to grant them an extension of earthly life. But Jonah was displeased. His argument was, "There! God has made a fool of me. He told me that this great city would be destroyed within forty days; and I preached it. God has brought discredit upon me, and I am now to be regarded as a false prophet."

Jonah was more interested in himself and his own reputation than in the Ninevites and their interests. The servants of the Lord must not be so. Self should be lost sight of. As the great Apostle Paul advises, "Love seeketh not her own", and again, "Even Christ pleased not Himself."--1 Cor. 13:5; Rom. 15:3.

"GOD REPENTED OF THE EVIL"

In some minds the query arises, How can God repent and change His mind if He knows the end from the beginning? The answer is that the word repent has a wider meaning than is generally appreciated. Humanity uses it only in respect to a change of purpose. But, as modern dictionaries show, the word may mean either a change of action or a change of purpose, or both. God's purposes do not change. He never repents of them. But He does change His conduct.

Thus Israel, for centuries His favored people, were cut off; and God's dealing toward them changed. But His purposes never changed. He had foreknown and had foretold their rejection of Jesus and His rejection of them, and also had foreseen that later on they would be regathered to their own land and would be forgiven and blessed by Messiah, when He assumed His Messianic Office as King of kings and Lord of lords--"The Prince of the kings of this earth."--Rev. 1:5.

The Lord taught the Prophet Jonah a lesson respecting his sympathy for a gourd, an inanimate thing, and his lack of sympathy for the Ninevites, So it is with many preachers and others. They have sympathy for the flowers, for the birds, for the lower animals, for children and, to some extent, for all mankind under the distresses of the present time. Nevertheless, such people become angry at the bare suggestion that God does not purpose to roast the Ninevites, the Sodomites, the Amalekites, or anybody else to all eternity; and that His gracious purposes for the world in general will be manifested, in giving all an opportunity to attain unto human perfection, a world-wide Eden and everlasting life, if they will hear and obey the great Messiah, whose Head is Jesus and whose members, the elect Church, have been in process of preparation throughout this Gospel Age.

Our Lord declared that the Gospel was to be preached no longer to the Jews only, but to all nations. (Luke 24:45-48; Acts 1 :8.) The preaching was not intended to convert all nations, and has not done so. It was intended to gather a saintly few from all nations; and this it will soon have accomplished.--Acts 15:14-18.

AMOS WARNS ISRAEL

--MARCH 12--AMOS 6:1-8--

Golden Text.--"Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler; and whosoever erreth thereby is not wise."--Prov. 20:1.

AMOS means "Bearer," a name well suited to a shepherd and also to a prophet who bore on his heart the burden of his nation. He prophesied in the reign of Jeroboam II. His home was at the village of Tekoa, about ten miles from Jerusalem. His calling was the common one of his village, for he tended sheep, and perhaps owned his flock.

The education of Amos was obtained in part from the grandeur of his surroundings; in part from his simple and active life, strengthening his body and giving him leisure for thought; in part from the knowledge of the written law of God which he evidently had; and in part from business trips which he may have taken to Jerusalem, Bethel, Damascus, and even farther, noting the evil customs of the times and hearing strange tales of the cruelty and iniquity of other lands. All of this varied training is reflected in his book.

As the simple, sincere, and keen-eyed shepherd pondered over what he had seen and heard and contrasted the luxury, vice, and heartlessness of the merchants and rulers with the poverty, the sufferings, and the wrongs of hard-working men belonging to his own social level, he became conscious of an irresistible appeal to forsake his flocks and go forth as a prophet of the Lord.--Amos 7:15.

Our lesson thus tells of a time in the history of Israel when the prosperous class had become wealthy--when many of the nation's wisest and most brilliant people had settled down to ease and luxury--to self-gratification. They considered that they had won in the battle of life, and would now take their ease and enjoy the fruits of their strife and diligence. They would let the other fellow do the worrying for awhile, and they would live on Easy Street.

The Lord through the Prophet upbraided them, assuring them that He was not pleased with such a course. He tells them that woes are to be expected as a result. It was made the mission of Amos to call attention to the fact that aggressive selfishness had accumulated great riches, that the wealthy were living in great luxury, and that these conditions fostered pride and moral laxity amongst the wealthy; while the poor were being filled with avarice, losing respect for God and religion, for truth and mercy, and the desire for further knowledge of God. Society was on the edge of a great volcano, and God declared that an eruption was near at hand. Amos was His mouthpiece. Today's lesson is part of the message he delivered.

HUMANITY UNBALANCED--NEEDING REDEMPTION

It is safe to say that everybody is seeking good and not evil. Everybody is seeking pleasure, and not misery--happiness, and not woe. The difficulty is that all of our judgments are more or less perverted. Some have greater wisdom than others; but there is none perfect, "none righteous, no not one." All come short of the glorious standard which God has set. The difficulty is that we have all been born in sin and are all misshapen. Not only our bodies are imperfect, but likewise our brains are unbalanced--some one way, and some another. Consequently young men and maidens, looking forth from childhood and youth upon the problems of life, have

various conceptions of happiness, pleasure, joy, and make various resolutions and endeavors respecting the filling of their cup with blessings-long life, riches, ease, honor, etc.

The teachers of our public schools and colleges have a most wonderful opportunity for influencing the course of humanity. We rejoice in the thought that the teachers of the world in general are striving nobly for the fulfillment of ,gracious, benevolent ideals, and they are using their opportunities for the blessing and uplift of their pupils. And yet evidently many of them have but a slight appreciation of their great privileges. And some, of course, like the remainder of the. world, are selfish, and think, of their work from the standpoint of business-so much effort, so much pay.

Fain would we encourage the teachers of the world to took not entirely to the reward of the present, but especially to the still more important reward of the future. It is growingly the view of Bible students that our every act and word, yea, and our very thoughts, our motives, have to do not only with our present experiences, but also with out future life-secured for all through the redemption Sacrifice at Calvary.

Of course, the first and chief responsibility for children rests upon their parents. And no doubt the majority of parents, to some extent, realize their, responsibility in God's sight and man's, for the children they bring into the world. But they labor under the difficulties of their-own ignorance. They knew not the proper course to take in life themselves. Their lives have been a succession of blunders-some more, some less, serious. They presume that their children must blunder similarly, and that success will be largely a matter of luck. Not seeing the principles underlying life's experiences, they are unable to guide their children intelligently. Here teachers, moralists, religionists and humanitarians, find their opportunity. But how little anyone seems able to accomplish along any line! And how discouraged the philanthropic become!

On the whole, however, a broad view, contrasting the present time with fifty years ago, shows that progress is being made in many directions. Our cities are cleanerboth physically and morally-so far, at least, as outward appearance and standards are concerned. However shocked and shamed we may be at occasional disclosures of corruption and vice, those whose memories go back half a century can tell that no longer do we have the vile "doggeries" of old, with poor sots sitting, lying, in various degrees of intoxication inside and outside the premises. No longer does vice flaunt itself in the face of society. The battle against intoxication and the social evil has made much progress in that, at least, it has made former conditions impossible.

In, some states the progress has been more than in others. The "doggeries" have been transferred into gilded palaces. The sot is disdained, even by the man who contributes to his fall by tempting his appetite beyond the power of his will.

PRESENT DAY CONDITIONS CORRESPOND

Our lesson in today's study is not inappropriate to our times. Notwithstanding the progress that has been made in many good lines, and notwithstanding the philanthropic, sentiments of many, inside and outside the Christian denominations, nevertheless there is danger. First of all, let us consider the danger

of the rich. The wealth of our day to a certain extent reaches to the very humblest and scatters blessings to all.

But the bulk of the world's wealth is in the hands of the few. The inordinately rich are in great danger of injuring themselves. Some of these, cannot devise ways and means by which to consume even their incomes. Luxuries of every kind are tasted in the hope of finding rest, happiness, joy, peace. Not finding these, mankind still pursue them, seeking new avenues to happiness. Wealth brings increased opportunity for sin in its various forms, including debauchery,

The influence upon the poor is notable. The latter, seeking pleasure, imagine erroneously that the rich and indolent are finding it, while they themselves are seeking in vain. Thus the poorer, surrounded by the wonderful blessings of our day, are often miserable, because their minds are discontented. They want happiness, joy, pleasure, and believe they can obtain these only through wealth. The result is that their hearts are filling with anger and malice, and jealousy of the rich. The way is thus paved for most evil and atrocious conditions, and many are fully persuaded that our present favorable social conditions are maintained only through police and military power, backed by all the assistance of modern times--the telegraph, telephones, etc.

"WARN THEM THAT ARE RICH"

These words of the Apostle never were more in season than now. Those trusting in the uncertainty-of riches need to arouse themselves. They need to learn the lesson that the pleasure they seek lies not in the direction of their indulgence of self, but rather in self-sacrifice--in the service of others. Indeed this is the great lesson for all to learn--both rich and poor. While millions are seeking for joy, pleasure, only a remarkably few have found them. Those few are God's saintly people--whether Catholics or Protestants.

The secret of their success in finding what others are still seeking for lies in the fact that they have been Heaven-directed, and that they have followed the guidance of God's Word. And the more fully they have heeded His instructions, the greater, has been their blessing. God's Message to all is, Seek first God's righteousness, God's will, the Divine Rule or Kingdom. Father Adam rebelled against the Divine will, and by breaking his covenant precipitated upon himself an avalanche of imperfection and death, which has since remained on the world--the reign of sin and death.

God's Word reveals that in due time He will roll away the curse, and bring blessings and opportunities to every member of our race. But meantime He would gather out a special class for a special purpose--the Church of the First-borns, whose names are written in Heaven. (Heb. 12:23.) These Are to be highly exalted and to be used of the Almighty with the Savior Jesus in the great work of blessing the whole world. These are the Seed of Abraham, the Body of the Messiah, of which Jesus is the Head.--Gal. 3:16-29.

The greatest privilege of the present time is to get into this elect company of God's saints. In order to enter this company, faith and obedience are necessary requisites. That faith must recognize Jesus as the Lamb of God the Sinbearer. It must recognize Him also as the Pattern and Exemplar. -The reward will be to those who have His spirit, His disposition, and who will walk through the present

life in His footsteps. *Such will* eventually gain with Him glory, honor, immortality -- the Kingdom.

In the present time, they will to the world seem to have the unfavorable side, a battle against the world, the flesh and the Adversary. The world cannot understand what pleasure and blessing these really enjoy because of the surrender of their wills to God's will, and because of the Spirit of the Lord, which they consequently receive. But these alone have the peace and joy and blessing which the world can neither give nor take away. What other men are seeking and failing to find, God's saints enjoy.

"Peace is theirs which knows no measure,
Joys which through all time abide."

THE DOWNFALL OF ISRAEL

--MARCH 19-2 KINGS 17:1-18--

Golden Text.--"Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people."--Prov. 14:34.

AS Amos gave a prophecy of Israel's fall, and some of the reasons therefor, so this lesson, from the historical book of the Kings, gives a record of its fall and of its cause. In previous lessons 'we have seen Israel's tendency to copy after the nations round about. The people recognized the fact that God had chosen them to be His special and peculiar people: they were quite willing to be His special people, and to have His special favor, but seemingly they did not wish to be His *peculiar* people. They were willing to be peculiar, in the sense of having a peculiar deliverance from Egypt, and peculiar manifestations of Divine favor, subduing their enemies before them, and bringing them into the land of promise, and dividing the land amongst them tribally, and so long as they were inspired with the hope that God would continue thus marvelously and miraculously to lead them, as His people, so long they were satisfied with their, condition. They did not realize that the people who would be *fit* to be used of the Lord as His Kingdom, and through whom He would operate to bring the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant to all the families of the earth, must be not only peculiarly dealt with by Divine Providence, but must also be peculiarly responsive to those providences,

When, therefore, they came to find that as God's people they were restricted and restrained, and that deviation from the Divine program was punished, this *peculiarity*, this difference from the world, they did not relish., They rebelled against it; and in their desire for an excuse for rebellion, they became skeptical, doubting that their experiences were in any sense or degree of or from the Lord. Their evil hearts of unbelief looked out upon the nations around them, and beheld greater national prosperity than their own amongst those who worshiped other gods, and for whom Jehovah had not declared special care. They came to feel that there were different gods, and that the God who had charge of them as a people or nation, and *who* commanded their obedience, and who punished them for disobedience, must indeed be' respected and placated; nevertheless, they hoped, evidently, to gain something of national greatness by the worship of the heathen

deities, which they believed blessed other nations, with Jehovah, whose blessings upon their nation were thus far largely promises, yet to be fulfilled.

First they were dissatisfied with the Divine arrangement respecting their government. True, they had liberty, more than other nations surrounding them, but the very fact that this liberty was not common or general, but rather unusual, caused them to desire that they might have a king like the nations round about them. (1 Sam. 8:5.) God pointed out to them the advantages of their *peculiar* condition, under which He had placed them, yet granted their request, and gave them kings, and with the kings, as we have seen, came in a spirit of "broadmindedness," or "public policy," on the part of King Solomon. And his desire to be popular with neighboring kings, and to be considered broadminded in a religious way, led him first to establish, for the benefit of the foreigners at his court, and for his foreign wives, the religious customs and ceremonies common to foreign nations. This, as we have seen, spread amongst the people, and led to a laxity of views respecting the worship of the true God: it led to the thought that everyone should have some kind of a religion, but that each should be at liberty to choose for himself, or to blend elements of the various religions. The record points out that for political reasons, Jeroboam (after the ten tribes had split off from Judah, the kingly tribe, and had chosen Jeroboam to be their king, and form a new dynasty) took advantage of the "liberal" religious views to thoroughly engraft upon the people a false worship. And this false worship is stated by the Lord in the lesson before us to have been the cause of Israel's decline, and ultimate fall, as a nation.

APOSTASY AND FALSE WORSHIP IN ISRAEL

The lesson states (v. 9) that Israel favored -the false religions, and practiced them secretly: by that we understand that they hypocritically built the altars of sacrifice to their false gods, and established the false worship in all their cities and villages, under the pretence that they were doing this in the service of the true God. They were claiming, and probably to some extent deceiving themselves with the thought, that they were becoming more religious, more zealous, more holy, and that the evidences of, this increase of religious zeal were to be found in these various altars of worship in every city, whereas formerly only the one city of Jerusalem had been, the place set apart for Divine worship, where the sin-offerings and sacrifices for sin should be made, and 'to which they were to come at least once a year.

How this suggestion of Israel's secretly or hypocritically introducing a false worship corresponds with the tendency of the human heart today! How many there are today in Christendom who persuade themselves. that in multiplying forms and ceremonies, in building of elegant churches, and in the engagement of finer choirs, and grander organs, and in the multiplying of meetings, 'and in publicly showing an outward display, they are increasing in godliness, holiness, and becoming more religious. How important that we should learn the lesson that "*obedience* is better than sacrifice" that not by multiplying forms and ceremonies and* emblems of holy things are we brought near to the Lord our God, but by taking strict heed unto His Word. Indeed, all these various efforts on the part of humanity to add to the Divine Plan are so many blemishes, so many injuries, so many things that are an offence to the Lord, instead of a thing of sweet odor.

Moreover, every step taken contrary to the Divine leading is a step away from the Lord, no matter how we may deceive ourselves or others with reference to the matter by sophistical arguments.

CHRISTENDOM FULL OF IDOLATRY

Israel's service of idols finds its counterpart at the present time, too, for although we are not sunken to that degree of ignorance that would lead us to worship images, Christendom nevertheless is full of idols-every city, every village. The idols of the present time are known by different names, also, from those of olden times. One-of the idols most worshiped today is "Popularity," another is "Wealth," another "Fame," another "Self," another "Our Denomination." Few, very few indeed, have no other gods than the one true God.

As the Lord dealt with Israel, sending them repeated warnings and reproofs, through Elijah, Elisha, Amos and others, so to us He has spoken by a still higher authority, and in still more forceful language, "For God hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." Nevertheless, just as many who heard the Prophets of old were careless, so today many are careless of the voice of the Son of God, and of His special messengers, the Apostles, and are failing to receive the blessing now due, failing to make their calling and election sure, as Israelites indeed, called under the Covenant of Sacrifice.

The particular seductions which hindered natural Israel from receiving the Divine instructions are enumerated in verses 15-17. They sold themselves to do evil; that is to say, they loved the reward of unrighteousness, held out in the immediate present, more than they loved the reward of righteousness held out as a promise for the future. They sold themselves to do evil, in the sense of seeking and accepting the rewards of evil doing; as, for instance, King Ahab was pleased to receive the vineyard of Naboth, although it came to him as the result of dishonesty and murder. To him the Prophet Elijah said, "Thou hast sold thyself to do evil." He got temporarily the thing he desired, but it brought with it a curse which rested not only upon himself but upon his throne. And, so with the humbler Israelites, there seems to have been a general desire to gratify self -- self-will; and this self-gratification, with its unsatisfactory fruits, caused them the loss of 'Divine favor'. Further, they used divination and enchantments, we are told: they held intercourse with the fallen angels, operating through mediums, witches, wizards, necromancers, who affected to personate the dead, and to reveal the secrets of the future.

A disposition of willfulness and dissatisfaction with the Divine arrangements naturally leads people into these delusions -to seek to know of the future from some other quarter, to the intent that they might *frustrate, if possible, the operations of Divine Providence*, so as to the more thoroughly accomplish their own self-will. This same spirit is not lacking today, and in many instances is leading people in the same direction, to consult the same fallen angels, demons, who now, as then, attempt to personate the dead, through Spiritualist mediums. The result now, as then, is that those who are thus seeking in a wrong direction for light and leading, and because *discontented with Divine Providence* and arrangements, are in danger of being led further and further away from the only true revelation, and the true prophets thereof.

THE MODERN MOLOCH

In the fervency of their religious zeal, the Israelites, we are informed (v. 17) caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fire of Moloch-as sacrifices. Not that they were devoid of parental love, but that they esteemed it a part of duty to make such "religious sacrifices." And so today, many, misled by false teachings, and by mixtures of paganism with the Divine revelation, have gotten to the place where they have similarly perverted ideas respecting the Lord and the sacrifice which would be pleasing to Him. They have come to think of the Almighty as a ferocious deity, who would take pleasure in the everlasting torture of the children of men.

The modern Moloch, ignorantly worshiped by many professed spiritual Israelites today, is far more terrible than was the Moloch of olden times, for the children who were then burned did have an end of tortures, while, according to the theories now advocated by many in spiritual Israel, they worship a Moloch who will hopelessly torture his victims to all eternity. As such a worship of Moloch in olden times tended to degradation of the feelings and conduct-tended toward brutality and heartlessness, so the tendency of the modern Moloch worship is in the same direction. He whose idea of God is that-of injustice and terrible ferocity cannot well have a life and feelings of his own directly the opposite of this. The tendency of all is to copy after the character and disposition of their ideal -God. Hence, the fact that people of civilized lands are becoming more and more tender-hearted and merciful can only be accounted for by supposing that the Moloch teaching called "Orthodoxy" is losing its power, superstition and priestcraft are losing their power. And although the Bible is losing its power also, with many, under the influence of Satanic "higher criticism," nevertheless, the spirit of its teachings-mercy, forgiveness, love-is recognized by its foes as well as by its friends.

The statement of verse 15 is particularly noteworthy, as indicating how Israel-got into all these other extremes; viz., (1) they rejected God's statutes-God's law, God's Word; (2) they lost sight of and neglected the covenant which He made with their fathers--they lost faith in the promises of God; (3) they lost sight of the testimony which He gave them respecting what would be. the result of forsaking His counsel; (4) they followed vanity (foolishness-they did not take the wise course) and became vain (foolish) and went after the heathen that were round them (copied after others, desiring to be not, peculiar, but popular) concerning whom the Lord had charged them that they should not do like them.

"YE ARE NOT OF THE WORLD"

Applying these various points to antitypical nominal Israel of today, we find that to the extent she has gone from the Lord, in theory and in practice, it has been very generally as the result of (1) not heeding the Lord's Word; (2) of being negligent of the promises which were set before spiritual Israel, the high calling, etc.; (3) of becoming foolish, in attempting to serve God, and to be His "peculiar people," and at the same time attempting to please and to copy the world, and to be popular therewith. The disposition to "do like them," to do like the world in general, is the seductive point at which the great Adversary would switch us off from being the Lord's peculiar people, Israelites indeed, heirs of the promises. Let us remember in this connection the Master's words, "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own, but now ye are not of the world, for I have chosen you out of the world; therefore the world hateth you." Our course in life, as new creatures in Christ Jesus, is to be along wholly different lines from the course of the world, and we must be prepared from the outstart to know that the world's pathway and the pathway of elect Israel are different paths, as surely as they have different terminations.

The fall of the Ten Tribes of Israel for the above reasons reminds us of the fall of Papacy for similar reasons. As the faithful Israelites were sifted out and gathered into Judah, so the faithful of God's people were very generally gathered out of Papacy into Protestantism. But as Judah subsequently became similarly idolatrous and instituted Moloch worship, so Protestantism has failed of faithfulness, to God and is to fall as Judah fell. The testing and sifting will go on to the full end of this Age, for the Lord seeks individually the Israelites indeed and not by nations nor by denominations. Eventually He will gather in glory the "elect" out of all nations, peoples and tongues to be His glorious Israel-His holy nation, His peculiar people, His royal priesthood-to bless all the families of the earth as the true Seed of Abraham.-Gal. 3:16, 29.