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Signs of the Master's Presence

"What will be the sign of Thy presence, and of the consummation of the Age." - Matt. 24:3, Diaglott.

TWO brief articles introducing this discussion have already appeared in this journal earlier in the year. (See February and March issues). In both we sought to make it clear that the views expressed in this series, while representing our deep conviction, were not presented in any spirit of dogmatism or strife toward those of our brethren who might hold differing views. On the contrary the right of such to hold and teach the same was freely conceded.

We noted first the glorious object of our Lord's Second Advent-that of blessing both Church and world-that His return would be in fulfillment of a gracious promise, not of a dire threat. (John 14:2, 3.) We observed that this view harmonized with the thought that He would come before, not after, the Millennium-that He would come to introduce that glorious reign. (Acts 3:21.) Furthermore, we expressed our firm belief that Antichrist is not an individual -yet to appear, but has already come in the bloody and blasphemous system of the Papacy, the complete destruction of which is predicted to occur during our Lord's second presence. (Dan. 7:26; 2 Thess. 2:8.) Additionally we stated our conviction that there would be not two signs or series of signs, one to denote the end of the Age and the other the presence of our Lord, but that the same sign or series of signs would indicate both; that should we be able to clearly discern from the signs of the times that the end of the Age had been reached, we might conclude also that we were living in the days of the second presence of the Son of Man. (Matt. 24:3.) Not only so, but we endeavored to show that our inability to determine the date for the glorification of the Church need not prevent us from recognizing such signs, if there be any, which might denote the end of the Age and our Lord's presence.

Parousia

Since these views depend to some extent on our understanding of the word "parousia" it will be appropriate at this juncture, to consider objections which have been urged against its translation by the word "presence." One brother whose Christian character and sincerity we do not for a moment question, but with whose conclusions we can not agree, writes as follows:

"The teaching that our Lord has already come and is invisibly present is based largely upon the understanding that the Greek word 'parousia' is fully and solely represented by the English word 'presence,' whilst not a few appear to be under the impression that the Greek word connotes 'unseen presence.' A few remarks concerning this word, therefore, may not be out of place here. This word occurs 24 times in the N. T., and is frequently used without any reference to our Lord's return. Twenty-two times it is translated 'coming' and on two occasions 'presence.' In relation to earthly things the usual meaning of the word is 'arrival', which; we would suggest, is the nearest possible English equivalent to the Greek."

That the word "parousia" is frequently used without any reference to our Lord's return is undoubtedly true, as any one may see for himself by reference to the twenty-four places in the New Testament in which it appears. Furthermore, the impression, if any hold it, that the word denotes an "unseen" presence is doubtless erroneous. Nothing in the word "parousia" indicates whether the presence of the person or thing under discussion is seen or unseen. That must be determined by the context in every case. But that the literal meaning of "parousia" is "presence" no scholar disputes. In the two instances in which it is thus translated in the Authorized Version it is evident that the translators realized neither "coming" nor "arrival" would do. "For his [Paul's] letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible." (2. Cor. 10:10.) To say that his bodily "coming" or his "bodily arrival" is weak would not make sense. Yet it is the same Greek word "parousia" translated "coming" in the other twenty-two places.

Again, "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." (Phil. 2:12.) Manifestly the Apostle is not contrasting his "coming with his "going" or his "arrival" with his "departure," but, as the translators themselves recognized, his "presence" with his "absence," and the obedience of the Church not at the moment of his arrival or departure, but during the period of both his presence and his absence.

The translators of the American Revised Version, while retaining the word "coming". in the text of many passages, disclose in the margin that the literal meaning of the Greek is "presence." This is confirmed by the word-for-word translation of the Diaglott*, although the version given in its margin frequently deviates therefrom. Rotherham, who does not deny, but affirms, the correctness of "presence" uses "arrival" twenty times and "presence" only four times. When so learned a scholar as Rotherham selects "arrival rather than "presence" for his translation, although admitting "presence" to be the literal meaning, we are naturally interested in learning his reasons. But when we ascertain them, they prove singularly unconvincing. In an elaborate footnote to 1 Thess. 2:19 he labors (unsuccessfully, we think) to vindicate his position. We quote: "The sense of 'presence' is so plainly shown by the contrast with 'absence', implied in 2 Cor. 10:10, and expressed in Phil. 2:12, that the question may be asked, why not always so render it?" (Yes, Brother Rotherham, we do ask this very question). "The answer is," he continues, "because parousia, in some cases, plainly marks an event rather than a condition, a transitional point, rather than a continuous line. Take for example 1 Cor. 15:23. Here are three points first, Christ's resurrection; second, His parousia; third, His delivering up of the Kingdom, etc. The parousia will not fall into series, will not file off a 'rank' in the resurrection, except as a point. Hence, for this place, 'presence', a state, is not the word; 'coming' or 'arrival' may be."

* Except in two instances, namely 1 Thess. 3:13 and 4:15 where, for some reason not apparent, "coming" is given.

But what if it should appear that in 1 Cor. 15:23 the resurrection, the parousia, and the delivering up of the Kingdom are not three points, three events, but are three states, three periods of time? In that case this argument of Rotherham's would fall to the ground, and he himself would then, presumably, always translate "parousia" by "presence."

For those who have not recently done so, we suggest a review of the twenty-four places in which "parousia" occurs in the New Testament. The references are given as a footnote to page 159 of Scripture Studies, Volume II, and are therefore omitted here. " Such a review we have made ourselves, and find that Brother Russell's position is sustained; "parousia" never has the thought of "coming", of "being on the way" but always, with out exception, has the sense of "presence," and the context need never be understood as out of harmony with this sense. However, on this, as on all matters, we exhort: "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." (Rom. 14:5.) "Let brotherly love continue." (Heb. 13:1.) And even if we think a brother holding a different view from ours is incompetent to teach us on this particular subject (he may not be incompetent, but even supposing he is) let its not hastily conclude that he is therefore incompetent to teach us anything. He may have rich stores of knowledge and wisdom on other lines of Christian doctrine and experience in which we ourselves may sadly lack, acid of which it would be foolish, to say the least, for us to say we have no need. - 1 Cor. 12:21.

Signs at His First Advent

We next inquire: What occasioned this question on the part of the disciples? Why did they seek a sign in connection with His return? To us it seems that they recognized a possibility that He might be present without them knowing it. This had been the case with many at His first advent -- had been true, even, of themselves, and was still true of the great majority of their own nation, the leaders of which were at the very time plotting His destruction. They themselves had had doubts and fears as to His Messiahship for a long time. In fact, when at length Peter progressed to the point where he was able to confess: "Thou art the Christ [the Messiah], the Son of the Living God," it was not without divine aid. "Flesh and blood," exclaimed our Lord, "hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven." - Matt. 16:16, 17.

At His first advent our Lord gave many signs in evidence of His Messiahship. St. John records seven of them in His Gospel. First, the water turned into wine (John 2:1-11); second, the nobleman's son healed (John 4:46-54); third, the man with infirmity thirty-eight years healed (John 5:1-9); fourth, feeding of the five thousand (John 6:1-14); fifth, walking on the water (John 6:15-21); sixth, blind man given sight (John 9:1-7); seventh, Lazarus raised from the dead. (John 11:1-46.) We pause a moment here to consider how eloquently these signs revealed the presence not only of the Man Jesus, but of the Messiah, the Sent of God.

Water turned into Wine

In the turning of water into wine may first be seen the change which comes into the heart and life of a believer during this Gospel Age, when, having heard the story of the Savior's love, and realized what a restoration to human life-rights and privileges this means to him, he consecrates all these and gladly yields himself to do the Father's will-to walk in the footsteps of Jesus even unto the end. What a transformation takes place in that one's life as the Father honors him with the spirit of sonship! Then, too, what gladness of heart such will experience when at the commencement of Messiah's reign the marriage of the Lamb takes place, and we with our Lord partake of that which the fruit of the vine, the wine, typifies -- the Kingdom joys and honors. And what new life will be imparted to this world as it partakes of the rich fruitage of love which the true vine, and its true branches, our Lord Jesus and His faithful Church have borne!

"This beginning of miracles [this first of the signs] did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth [thereby] His glory; and His disciples believed on Him." (John 2:11.) Yes, Jesus, Master, Lord, this sign alone convinces us; this sign which caused some to hate Thee, which caused some to despise and reject Thee, causes us, Thy true disciples to exclaim, with heartfelt devotion and joy: My Lord and my God! It

satisfies our heads and rejoices our hearts, as we recognize it, not only as a miracle, but as one worthy of our great Messiah, a sign revealing to us ahead of time, Thy glory.

The Living Bread from Heaven

And so with the rest of these deeds having significance, these signs that were written that we may believe. (John 20:30.) The healing of the nobleman's son, the cure of the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda, what were these mighty works but illustrations of the gracious work of restoration which Messiah will undertake in that glad Millennial Day? Was it only to appease the hunger of the moment that He caused five thousand to sit down and be fed from five barley loaves and two small fishes? Ah! no, in this as in them all He displays His glory, He discloses His identity, He shows Himself to be the great Messiah, who is the Bread, the Living Bread come down from heaven, and mankind shall yet with joy appropriate the rights to human life which He so graciously surrendered, that they might live for ever.

The Light of the World

How sublime the evidence He presents that He is the light of the world. How little need there is to argue that point in the presence of the blind man who received his sight. How plainly does this point to the glorious day fast approaching when Messiah will open the eyes not of one blind man but of all; when He will restore the sight of those who are blind not only physically but mentally, yes, and morally too; when He will open the eyes of their understanding, and enlighten their minds with respect to the Father; when He will be their guiding light indeed.

Walking on the Water

Again, the circumstances in connection with our Lord's walking on the water bear unmistakable testimony to His Messiahship. The disciples were in a boat on the sea. A storm came up, and on account of the strong wind the boat was being tossed about with the waves. Night came on and it grew very dark when in the fourth watch of the night, just before the dawn, Jesus came to them, walking on the water. "Ah!" muses John, as from more than forty miracles he selects those seven which, in his judgment, - will best serve as signs of Jesus' Messiahship, "I must not leave that one out." And how glad we are that he did not, for is it not a very remarkable picture of the way in which our Lord was to return? Has not the Church been tossed about pretty much all down through the-Gospel Age? Is not the darkness growing more intense? Is not the night fast closing in upon us, that dark night when no man can work? (John 9:4.) Do not the sea and the waves roar and foam? Are not the restless, turbulent, masses of society dashing up against the firmly entrenched powers that be, and are not men's hearts failing them for fear? (Luke, 21:25, 26). And just as to His disciples in the boat Jesus came in a manner quite unexpected, walking on the water, so He was to return and to make His presence known to the Watchers in the end of this Age. (Luke 21:26, 27). And is it not a joyous thought to remember that just as the waves subsided and the wind, and they soon reached their haven, so He will subdue all things unto Himself shortly, and we, if faithful, shall reign with Him a thousand years.

Raising of Lazarus

And beloved reader, you who have stood in silence by the cold and silent form of one you have loved, and watched the body lowered beneath the sod-have come away with your heart all crushed and broken, is there

any significance to you in that mighty work which Jesus wrought when He awakened Lazarus from the sleep of death?

Ah! how eloquently this sign speaks to us. It speaks of that still mightier work the Father wrought when He raised up Jesus from the dead. It points unerringly to the time now near, when Messiah, the Living One, the One who was dead, and who is now alive for evermore, shall speak with authority, and all that are in the graves shall come forth, and they that hear and obey His precepts shall live. - John 5:28.

Examination of these signs discloses the fact that while each had its own particular lesson to impart, they unite in teaching one special lesson, namely, that Jesus is the Messiah. Yet just as many today, even amongst believers, may read of them without seeing their Messianic significance, so when they were 'being performed many saw the mighty works but saw in them no sign of His Messiahship. Even the disciples had been slow to believe. (Luke 24:25.) Would they experience difficulty in recognizing Him at His second advent? Some such thoughts as these, it seems to us, must have been uppermost in their minds causing them to put the question: "What shall be the sign of Thy presence?" - Matt. 24:3.

(To be Continued)

The Benefits of Christian Fellowship

Extracts of Sermon by Brother B. H. Barton

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another; and so much the more as ye see the day approaching." - Heb. 10:25.

THERE IS not -one exhortation in the Word of God that is in vain; there is not one suggestion made to you and to me but what there must be some very important reason for that suggestion-some reason why we ought to heed it, some reason why we should act on it. Notice the connection between our text and the verse that follows it. It reads like this: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as ye see the day approaching. For if ye sin willfully after ye have received a knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin." It seems to me there is a most astounding connection between those two verses, as though the Apostle would give us the thought that in that special time, in the period when we begin to see the day approaching more clearly than ever before, the time would be reached when communion and fellowship with the people of God would be more essential than it had been before, and if we would ignore and neglect that privilege there would be great danger that the final results might be the loss of everything.

The Obedience of Faith

Why is this made such an important matter? Why does the Apostle lay such stress on it? Why should you and I be so careful about meeting with the children of God? Well, the first answer to the question, and it seems to me the simplest answer, would be this: you and I should do this thing on the basis of faith, because the Lord says so, even if we could not see one single benefit to be derived, even if we could not see one single advantage to be gained; the very fact the Lord said so ought to settle the whole matter, and we should say, "Lord I respect your Word; You have said it, and I am going to abide by that."

There is not the confident faith in many of the statements of the Word of God, even among some of His children, that there ought to be. Do you remember the faith that Abraham had? Do you remember the time

when God came to Abraham and said, "Abraham, leave thine own house, and thy father's house and come out into this land that I will show you"? Do you remember how Abraham never stopped to question the wisdom of God's advice? He did not say, "Well, Lord, your desire is clear to me, but I cannot see why you want me to go out there? Don't you think Lord, this is a pretty good place where I am living? Why cannot I stay here and serve you? How is that land that you want me to go out into? Is it a pretty good land for farming purposes? Do you think I would be able to raise a crop to support myself and my family? And do you think I could keep my cattle and my sheep out there?" He did not say one word. God told Abraham to go, and he was ready to go. Even though when he got there he found nothing but a barren wilderness.

Dear friends, that was faith, and that is the faith that you and I want to have. And we want to be careful that we do not have merely the credulous kind of faith, in a misinterpreted Scripture; we want to be sure we have the true thought on a subject, and when we have received the truth, then we want to act on it, whether we can see the reason or necessity for it or not. And that is the way with this passage. When we find the advice in the Word of God that we should not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, then when we find the people that have God's Spirit, when we find the people who give evidence of living close to the Lord, then, whether we find the measure of profit in associating with them we expect or not, we should meet with them, because God has said so.

God's Message the Same Though Viewed from Different Standpoints

Some might say, "Well, but do not situations alter the matter?" I am sure if there is no one in your neighborhood who does give evidence of having love for God and His truth, then of course matters would be altered, but even in that case you would have to hold fellowship in your mind and heart with the people of God, even though visible fellowship was impossible. But if you are located where there is a company of God's children, then your course is clear from that statement. Sometimes we are likely to follow the course that was followed by Balak. You remember how that king sent for Balaam to come and curse the people of Israel. When the Prophet arrived at the appointed place the one who had sent for him showed him the hosts of Israel and said, "Now Balaam, curse these people, I want them cursed." And Balaam said, "I will have to find out what the Lord says about it." And you remember how he built seven altars, and sacrifices were offered up, and you remember he received the Lord's message, and he spoke out and said, "Blessed are the people of Israel", etc. Then Balak said, "Why Balaam, I sent for you to curse these people and now you bless them; I do not want them blessed, whatever you do. You have followed just the opposite course from what I intended. Come look at these people from this place, maybe the Lord will give you a different message." So they built more altars and offered further sacrifices, and Balaam went away to get a further message from the Lord, and he came back, and it was the blessing that God intended for the people of Israel. Again you remember how that ruler was distressed to think that Balaam had delivered a favorable message for his enemies. He said, "Well, Balaam, come over here -and see what kind of a message you will get from this position?" And again you will remember the message was one of blessing. How peculiar that that poor man Balak thought God's message would be different if it was viewed from a different standpoint! It was the same message, whether from here, or from there. So let us all be very careful we do not follow the course of that heathen king.

Danger in Ignoring the Word of God

I am afraid that there are some of the Lord's people who say, "Well, I know the Scriptures say we should not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, but now I will look at things from this standpoint; I have some trials and some obstacles in the way, now don't you think I am justified in not meeting with the little company at our place?"

The Lord said, "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together."

"But now wait, I want to show you from this standpoint: I live quite a ways from the meeting, and I have not the very best of health, now don't you think I would be justified in staying home and not assembling with the Lord's people?"

The Lord has said, "Forsake not the assembling of ourselves together." It does not matter how you view it, the matter is settled. Let us not be of that class that are seeking some excuse that they may not have to act on what God has advised, but let us be of the class that are determined to overcome every obstacle in order to adhere to the advice and abide by the suggestions God has made. I think it is a dangerous thing -when we get into the position where we want some excuse for ignoring the Word of God. I believe that Satan realizes our weaknesses along that line and he knows how to take advantage of them.

Dear friends, I think that is the method the devil often takes with us. If he finds in your heart or in my heart the least inclination to ignore the admonition of the Lord, he will find some way of taking advantage of that inclination, and you and I are going to be trapped.

When we find any statement in the Word of God as to the course we should follow, settle it right there: "God says it thus and I will do it, I do not care how much it costs or does not cost."

"Jesus is There!"

But now there is a second reason why you and I do not want to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, and that is because where God's people are, there God is, and where the Church is, there the Head of the Church is. The Savior Himself says, "Where two or three are met together in My name, there will I be."

It would be absurd for any of God's children to gather together without the Lord being present if they really are His children. How absurd to think of some one coming to these meetings and leaving their head at home? Indeed, if they come they have to bring their head with them. If you are one of the children of God, and if Jesus is your head. If you have given up your own head, your own will, to do the will of your Master, then wherever you go your Master goes-, and you will say, Where there is a company under the control of the Spirit of the Master there I want to be; I want to be where He is, and I know He is there in a special and peculiar sense over and above what He is with me when I am alone in connection with my daily employment.

But there is still another reason why we do not want to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. We realize that these are the people who love to talk about the things that we love to talk about; they love to dwell on the topics that are dearest to our hearts. If we are amongst the people of the world, and if all our interests and all our desires are along worldly lines, then we would rather go where our neighbors go-we would rather go to places of amusement, we would rather go to places that would to some degree benefit us along worldly lines; and if your heart has been given to the Lord, you want to go to the place where these things are talked about that you are most deeply interested in, the things of the Lord, where His will is in control. And yet this does not mean that when the people of God meet together they always do confine their discussions and conversations to the subject that means the most to them. Let us be careful all along that line. When we meet with the Lord's people let us keep our minds focused on the things of the Lord; let us keep our hearts centered upon spiritual matters. For you might squander the Lord's time, in talking about the things that do not profit you as respects the edification of the new creature.

Wondrous Vision Within the Holy

I think it is very much like the Jewish tabernacle. You know how when you went into the holy, if you would look up there on that curtain overhead you could see all of those figures of cherubim wrought in needle work. To me that illustrates the way you and I, when we are in this condition, begotten of God's Holy Spirit, as we look up, we see God's providences, we see His wisdom, His love, His power, and His justice, and by the eye of faith we behold the very angels as ministering spirits sent forth to minister to the people of God.

Do you remember when the high priest, or the under-priests either, were in the holy, if they looked up they could see these angels, these cherubim, everywhere on that curtain wrought with needle work? But suppose instead of looking up, the priest just looked down, and kept his eyes on the earth, what would he see? Nothing but dirt; just ground. You remember there was no special floor made in that tabernacle, it just stood on the earth. We can see the purpose, we see the appropriateness of the picture: it gives us the thought that even though you and I have been begotten of God's Holy Spirit, even though we have been brought to the place where we are new creatures in Christ Jesus, yet we have to keep our eyes up, as it were -- lift up our heads. On the contrary, if we are looking down in the worldly direction we will see earthly things; we will just see dirt, nothing but dirt.

"Let the Word of Christ Dwell in You Richly"

I am aware, dear, friends, that we cannot talk about spiritual things to everybody. When you meet with the members of your family who have not given themselves to the Lord. and when you meet your neighbors who are not inclined in spiritual directions, you have got to give some thought and attention, and devote some part of your conversation to the things that they can appreciate, but when you meet with thy people of God it is different; they meet together to talk about the things that will help them toward the Kingdom, help them to make their calling and election sure, things that will give them an abundant entrance into the everlasting Kingdom of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

You and I want to learn to set our affections on the things above and forget those things that are behind. We want to seek the things that will edify.

Preparation for Future Trials

But there is another reason why I do not think we should forsake the assembling of ourselves together, and that is because in meeting with the people of God we will find grace and strength to prepare us for the hard experiences that are coming. You recall that in 2 Cor. 12:9 the Lord, through the Apostle Paul, uttered these words: "My grace is sufficient for you." Now do not get the wrong thought; do not get the idea that the Lord meant by that that you always would have grace sufficient for every trial. He did not mean that at all. It may be possible some of the Lord's people have found themselves in trials sometimes, and they have had to confess that they did not have grace enough. They said, Oh, I know if I had a sufficiency of grace I could bear this trial better than I do. There is something wrong; the Lord said His grace would be sufficient, but it is not. Has the Lord broken the promise? Not at all. Here is the thought: The Lord promised He will supply sufficient grace, but you and I, in order to make use of that supply, will have to go to the Source of supply in the right way, as it, were.

You have come to this convention: how do you know but what God has arranged that in this convention you might obtain grace to prepare you for trials you are going to have next December? The Lord may realize

there are trials coming on you that you dream not of, and the Lord is getting you ready for those trials. How many have said, Oh, I can see now when I look back that the Lord was preparing me for these awful experiences; I could not have endured it if He had not made me ready for it. Now I can see how these experiences that have happened to me in the last few months were really getting me ready for that awful ordeal through which I have just gone. And so we see the Lord is getting us ready for the trials that are coming.

Now then in your little home gatherings, as you go to the meetings there week after week, the Lord is supplying you with grace. He said that His grace would be sufficient, and that is the way He has of giving you that grace: Dear friends, we cannot afford to miss one single opportunity, for service, or, one single opportunity -that is reasonable and proper for us to make use of in connection with associating with those who love the Lord. If we do, it will be to our detriment spiritually, and some trial will come and we will be unprepared for that trial. So I say, we want to be ready for those trials coming; we want to have that preparation of heart and mind that will enable us to pass through trials victoriously, and that is the reason why we do not wish to forsake the assembling of ourselves together.

Seeking a Blessing at His Feet

But now for, the points we want to lay the more special stress upon. We want to heed the admonition of our text, and we do not want to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, because in assembling with the people of God, they help us, and we are able to help them. Do they help us? They certainly do if our heart is in the right attitude. But I think this, that the trouble with many may be that they 'do not consider this matter of how we can obtain help from our brethren and sisters to the extent we should, and the result is we do not obtain the help that we otherwise might. In coming to this convention what was your motive? What was your object? Did you suppose for instance that you would be of wonderful help to the people of God? You did not expect you would any special help, they would not say anything you did not know; you thought you were pretty well posted, pretty well up on the Scriptures, but you had some wonderful things you wanted to tell some of those that you converse with here. If that was the spirit in which you came, then to the extent you entertained that inclination, that spirit, to that extent you have lost a blessing; but if on the other hand you came here in a teachable attitude, with a desire to learn-not merely to learn something new, but to learn something that will draw you closer to the Lord, then I know you will go away spiritually enriched, you will go away feeling as though you were nearer to your Lord than -you ever have been before.

It is not the new things we should 'be after; that is one of the evidences that we are babes in Christ, I think. If we are in the attitude where we simply want something new, where we come to the conventions not to hear about brotherly love, and not to hear about patience, and not to have our spirit of zeal encouraged, and not to be impressed with the glories of the Kingdom so much, but we come to , hear something new, then, we realize that we will also go away to some extent disappointed, because that is not the Lord's purpose. It is not the Lord's intention that His people should be built up and strengthened by the amount of new things that should be said, but on the other hand, it is the frequent reiteration of the old things that is likely to strengthen us and to--enable us to make our calling and election sure. So now when you go to your little home meetings, and you find that the brother who took the leading part in that meeting never has anything very original to say, and you find that the other friends in the Class seem to have very little novelty in their statements, then, dear friends, the fault is not with the Class, the fault is with you; you are not in the proper attitude.

"Building One Another up"

Now there is another reason why we must not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, and that is because in meeting with the people of God we find specially, helpful opportunities for spiritual development. We do not find the same opportunities out in the -world, and one reason is this: when you and I come in contact with the people of the world and they show the wrong spirit, we do not wonder at that. We say, those people have not made any great profession; they have not professed to be the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, and we could not expect anything better; you would have to expect that unkind word; but when we come to the people of God we do expect something better, and the consequence is, when we find that the Lord's people are imperfect, when we find that they sometimes do things we would rather they should not do, and they sometimes say things we would rather they should not say, it helps to develop in us a larger measure of spirituality, a larger measure of the graces of the Holy Spirit than would possibly have been developed in us if it had been a worldly person that had treated us that way,

I remember the words of the Apostle Paul in Romans 15:24. He told us about the journey he hoped to make to Spain, and he said he expected he would go by way of Rome, and he would stop and visit the Roman brethren for awhile, and he said he hoped that when he met those brethren in Rome he would be somewhat filled with them. That is the way the King James version reads. One of the translations makes it a little clearer-he hoped he would be partly satisfied with them.

Let us keep in mind that there is no one who has the Spirit of God 'but what he can benefit and help us to some extent, in some way. I often think of the statement where Paul told the Church that they had ten thousand instructors in Christ-that though they had ten thousand instructors-he seemed to speak of it as an actual fact, as though that were the case. What did he mean by that? I will give you this thought: possibly at that time there may have been about ten thousand consecrated believers, as far as the Apostle Paul would judge, and he wanted this number to realize that every consecrated child of God was in a position to some extent to be an instructor. I will have to say that I have gotten an indescribable measure of benefit from just observing the conduct, the speech, and the deportment of those I come in contact with in my travels over the country. I give a great many discourses which if the friends knew it are simply made up of the little things I have observed in those with whom I have come in contact.

"Be Thou an Example"

Again, let us remember we cannot only learn from others, and instruct others by the words that are spoken, but by our example, by the deeds we perform. I think a great many must fail to appreciate what examples we ought to be. We often say, "Well, you must not take me for an example." But, dear friends, if you claim to be a consecrated Christian, you ought to be an example-you must be an example; to be a Christian means to be an example; not an example of perfection, but an example of what the grace of God can do. Do you mean to say you have been under the influence of God's grace for five years or ten years or fifteen years, and yet the Lord has done nothing in your life that ought to be an example, a benefit, a blessing to those who come in contact with you? It would be something to be very much ashamed of, if we would have to say that we have resisted the influence of God's Spirit to such a degree that we are not an example of what the Lord can do at all -- even though the Lord has thus been dealing with us so long.

And then remember, when we talk about the example we ought to set, and the life that we ought to live, do not think of that as the example you should set when you Fare at a convention. Indeed if we are living epistles, as we ought to be in our homes, we will be careful there just as truly as anywhere else. But sometimes even friends who are very careful how they act amongst others when they are in a public place, when it comes to their own home it is rather a matter of indifference to them. You cannot help but sometimes observe it.

Let us remember that our influence will count for most in proportion to the thorough spirit of humility we possess. We will find that the one who tries to put himself forward, to make himself conspicuous, will injure his influence to that extent. I would say that specially with regard to the elders of the various Classes. If a brother is permitted to occupy the position of an elder, it seems to me he ought to perform the duties that devolve on an elder in a spirit that is so permeated with humility that others would get a blessing from his service, and yet at the same time would hardly be aware of the fact that he was the elder of the Class.

"In Honor Preferring One Another"

I have been in a Class where it seemed to be the special ambition on the part of the elder to let everybody know he was the elder. I have been in Classes where I had not been there but a very short time until all the elders would have notified me they were the elders of the Class, and how long they had been elders, etc. Now, one might say, "Well, there was not anything wrong in that, they wanted you to be informed on the subject." Yes, but I am afraid that sometimes there have been indications which, while I could not judge, have made me somewhat suspicious that there was a little different spirit there. I remember one Class where I went where they all seemed to be fairly humble,-but there was one brother that I am afraid-well, wanted to be a little prominent, to be rather conspicuous, and I remember at first this brother went ahead and opened the meeting, and at the second meeting the same brother took charge of the meeting, and just before the third meeting began I said, "Brother, who will open the meeting this morning?" -- Sunday morning it was.

He said, "I think I will, Brother Barton."

"Well, are there any other elders in the Class, Brother?"

"Oh, yes, we have four elders."

"Well," I said, "suppose, Brother, you take your turn; I think it looks much nicer if all the elders take their turn in matters of this kind. Suppose you have one of the other brethren open the meeting this morning."

"Well, Brother Barton, I know they will not want to do it; they put it off on me, and tell me I ought to do it; I know they will refuse."

"Well," I said, "you go and ask them anyhow."

He went to one of the brothers and asked him if he would open the meeting. The brother apparently refused, and this brother came back to me and said, "He tells me he would rather I would open the meeting, he does not want to do it."

I said, "Wait, I will go and speak to him."

I said, "Brother, you are one of the elders of this Class?"

"Yes."

"Well now, could not you open the meeting this morning?"

"Well, but I think Brother So. and So could probably do it much better."

"Well, but Brother, I think if the Class elected you as one of the elders it would be proper for you to take your turn."

"Well, if. you think so, it will be all right."

That brother opened the meeting, and I got another brother to open another meeting, and a third brother the next meeting, and I think if I am not mistaken possibly all the elders of the Class had a turn in opening those meetings before the conclusion of our visit.

Now the thought was this: These brethren apparently had the spirit of humility, but there was one brother that was too willing that he should be prominent. He ought to have impressed on the minds of the others the fact that they had a work to do, too; they had an opportunity, according to the Lord's voice as expressed through the Class; and I would suggest that brethren who are elders of the Classes be specially careful that they do not assume too much of the responsibilities and ignore the other elders in the Class. And where there is only one elder, how careful that brother ought to be!

I know one Class, a grand noble little Class too, and the brother who is elder of this Class serves them very faithfully. They think a great deal of him. But the time came when that brother found it was possible for him to go into the colporteur work, so he had to bid the friends goodbye and he went away. And he told me he learned several months after he had gone into the colporteur work that not a single meeting had been held by that Class since he had left. They depended so upon him, they looked to him to such an extent that when the time came for him to leave, the Class immediately went to pieces. The brother said, "I was frightened to think that I had not used my position any more faithfully than that, but allowed all the responsibility to be put on me, whereas I ought to have been helping to develop some of the other brethren; so I gave up the colporteur work and went back to that Class. There are now four or five elders, and it would not hurt the Class if I would leave."

Brother, what is your position in regard to this? Do you have to admit that you have been rather assuming a little too much, so that the- Class largely depends on you, and there would be a great trial on the Class if you should leave? Or, on the other hand, -have you been showing there was no selfishness in your heart by doing everything in your power to help develop the other brethren, so that the Class, if you were taken away, would be able to get along very nicely in every respect without you? Maybe the others will not have quite the same ability, but at the same time you have done your part toward helping them along those lines.

"With All Lowliness and Meekness"

Another thing: the elder that exerts the greatest influence over the Class is the elder who performs the duties devolving upon him in such a way that the others would hardly know he was an elder. He does not feel boastful about the matter, he does not have much inclination to put himself forward. I remember one Class where some of the sisters told me of a trial they were having. They said there were sick friends in that town, and they, felt-inclined to visit some of those sick friends, and one of the sisters said to one of them, "Here, you have no right to visit that sick person at all; you are not one of the deaconesses." It seemed to me that was an awful spirit to manifest; that was a terrible state to get into. We want a spirit of unselfishness, the spirit that seeketh not her own.

We often sing, "Oh to be nothing, nothing," but do we mean it when we sing it? We have got to mean it if we get into the Kingdom. We have got to be one of the class that can sing from the heart, "None of self, but all of Thee." I thought of that in connection with a little illustration awhile ago that seemed so refreshing in a way. The thought was, how this world is passing through a night. The Bible says, "Weeping may endure for a night" -- this great night of sin and darkness and trouble, this night of sorrow; but you know how it is after night as you look up you see the stars shining; there is one over here and a little one over there, and there is a large constellation here. So in this great night of sin, God's people have been like the stars that have been shining. I trust you are one of the stars that has been shining in the night time in your neighborhood. I am thankful that scattered all over the earth the Lord has these stars, His bright ones, that have been shining.

Then we came to know what a star is. You know there was a day when they did not understand astronomy quite as well as we do today, and back in that time they had a thought that stars were just holes in the floor

of heaven, and the light that twinkled in the star was simply the light of heaven shining through the knotholes in the floor. And this thought presented itself-that is exactly what we have to be. We have to be holes through which the light of heaven shines. What is a hole? If anybody should ask me what a hole is, I would answer that to my understanding a hole is nothing with something substantial put around it. So if you and I get to the place where we become nothing, and God puts His substantial goodness and grace and love and wisdom around us, then we will be holes through which the light of heaven will shine. Then we can exert the most-helpful influence on our brethren and they can exert the most helpful influence on us too. So we do not want to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, because we have not only opportunities to be built up ourselves, but to assist in the building up of the Body of Christ.

The Good Shepherd

[Contributed]

"I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine." - John 10:14.

AS THE Bible has much to say about shepherds and sheep, it may be well to begin our study by examining the derivation of these words:

Shepherd in the Old Testament is from the Hebrew "ra'ah," a primitive root signifying to tend a flock, that is pasture it; intransitive to graze; by extension to associate with (as a friend), and is translated feed, pastor, shepherd, wander, waste. In the New Testament it is from the Greek "poimen," a shepherd (literally or figuratively): translated shepherd, and pastor.

Sheep in the Old Testament is from "tson," an unused root meaning to migrate a collective name for a flock (of sheep or goats); also figuratively translated cattle, flocks, lambs, sheep, sheepfold, sheepshearer, shepherds. In the New Testament it is from the Greek "probaton," meaning something that walks forward (a quadruped), that is, a sheep (literally or figuratively translated) sheep, and sheepfold.

Smith's Bible Dictionary tells us the following respecting shepherds:

"In a nomadic state of society, every man, from the sheik down to the slave, is more or less a shepherd. The progenitors of the Jews in the Patriarchal Age were nomads, and their history is rich in scenes of pastoral life. The occupation of tending the flocks was undertaken, not only by the sons of wealthy chiefs (Gen. 30:29; 37:12), but even by their daughters (Gen. 29:6; Exod. 2:19). The Egyptian captivity did much to implant a love of settled abode, and consequently we find the tribes which still retained a taste for shepherd life selecting their own quarters apart from their brethren in the trans-Jordanic district. - Num. 32:1.

"Thenceforward in Palestine proper the shepherd held a subordinate position. The office of the eastern shepherd, as described in the Bible, was attended with much hardship, and even danger. He was exposed to the extremes of heat and cold (Gen, 31:40); his food frequently consisted of the precarious supplies afforded by nature, such as the fruit of the 'sycamore' or Egyptian fig (Aknos 7:14), the 'husks' of the carob-tree (Luke 15:16), and perchance the locusts and wild honey which supported the Baptist (Matt. 3:4); he had to encounter the attacks of wild beasts, occasionally of the larger species, such as lions, wolves, panthers, and bears (1 Sam. 17:34; Isa. 31:4; Jer. 5:6; Amos 3:12); nor was he free from the risk of robbers or predatory hordes. (Gen. 31:39.) . To meet these various foes, the shepherd's equipment consisted of the following articles: a mantle, made probably

of sheep's skin with the fleece on, which he turned inside out in cold weather, as implied in the comparison in Jer. 43:12; a scrip or wallet, containing a small amount of food (1 Sam. 17:40); a sling, which is still the favorite weapon of the Bedouin shepherd (1 Sam. 17:40); and, lastly, a staff, which served the double purpose of a weapon against foes, and a crook for the management of the flock. (1 Sam. 17:40; Psa. 23:4; Zech. 11:7.) If the shepherd was at a distance from his home, he was provided with a light tent (Cant. 1:8; Jer. 35:7), the removal of which was easily effected. (Isa. 38:12.) In certain localities, moreover, towers were erected for the double purpose of spying an enemy at a distance, and protecting the flock: such towers were erected by Uzziah and Jotham (2 Chron. 26:10; 27:4), while their existence in earlier times is testified by the name Migdal-edar (Gen. 35:21 A. V.), 'a tower of Edar;' (Micah 4:8 A. V., "tower of the flock.") . . . In large establishments, there were various grades of shepherds, the highest being styled 'rulers' (Gen. 47:6), or 'chief shepherds' (1 Pet. 5:4): in a royal household the title of abbir, 'mighty,' was bestowed on the person who held the post.-1 Sam. 21:7."

"Jesus, that Great Shepherd"

Since we find that these words, shepherd, and sheep, are used in the Bible in a symbolic way, perhaps the first question we should ask is, Who is the Shepherd, from the Bible standpoint? In the Old Testament we find the answer definitely given in Psalm 23:1: "The Lord [Jehovah] is my shepherd." But when we come over into the New Testament we find the answer, just as definitely given in the words of Jesus in John 10:11: "I am the good shepherd." The Apostle Paul also calls Jesus, "that great shepherd of the sheep" (Heb. 13:20); and the Apostle Peter refers to Jesus as the chief shepherd, saying: "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." (1 Pet. 5:4.) When we look into the real relationship between Jesus and His Father, and examine the claims of Jesus, we find that after all there is no conflict in these thoughts. For Jesus never claimed to do anything of Himself. It was His Father's words, His Father's acts, that He did: "For I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me." (John 6:38.) "I can of Mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and My judgment is just; because I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me." (John 5:30.) "And the word which ye hear is not Mine, but the Father's which sent Me." (John 14:24.) "And He that sent Me is with Me: the Father hath not left Me alone; for I do always those things that please Him." (John 8:29.) "Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." (John 4:34.) In this discourse in John 10, where Jesus presents Himself as the good shepherd, He adds, verse 30: "I and My Father are one." And so we see the oneness of the Father' and the Son with respect to this matter of their relation to the sheep: they have a common purpose, the protection and care of the sheep. Henceforth in considering this subject we will not need to distinguish between the two, since their oneness in the office of the shepherd is so specifically stated.

With respect to the figurative use of the word "sheep" in the Bible, the Popular and Critical Bible Encyclopedia says: "The nature of the sheep and their relation to man have given rise to many beautiful figures. (1) Jehovah was the shepherd of Israel and they were His flock. (Psa. 23:1; 74:1; 78:52; 79:13; 80:1; Is,a.. 40:11; Jer. 23:1, etc.) (2) The sheep offered in the ancient sacrifices represented Christ. (3) He and His people are likened to sheep and lambs, to represent their innocence, patience, harmlessness, usefulness, and exposure to trouble and enemies. (Isa. 53:7; John 10:1-26; 21:15-17.) (4) Christ is God's Lamb, whom He has provided, and the sacrifice of whom fully satisfied His offended justice. (John 1:29.) (5) Men in general are compared to sheep and lambs, to denote their stupidity, their weakness, exposure to danger, and need of government. (1 Kings 22:17; Hosea 4:16; Isa. 53:6.) (6) Or for their innocency and harmlessness as to a particular sin. (2 Sam. 24:17.) (7) Sinners are likened to sheep, to mark their unthoughtfulness, their proneness to wander, their exposure to ruin, their inability to defend or recover themselves, and their need to be saved, led, and nourished by Jesus the great Shepherd. (Psa. 49:14; Isa. 53:6; 1 Pet. 2:25; Luke 15:4-6.) (8) Apostasy of sinners from God is likened to the straying of a lost sheep.-Psa. 119:176; Isa. 53:6; Jer. 1:6."

Parable of the Lost Sheep

In Jer. 50:6 we read: "My people hath been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains: they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their resting-place." Here the Prophet pictures how his people Israel had been led away from God by unfaithful shepherds teachers, and had forgotten that Jehovah was their resting-place-"place to lie down in." (Hebrew.) And what was true of them as to their lost condition when Jesus presented Himself as their Messiah was true also of all the race: all were utterly lost, alienated from God by having turned from Him to seek the pleasures of sin. As the Apostle presents it in the first chapter of Romans, they did not choose to keep God in their remembrance. And so, since they did not choose to hear His voice, He gave them up for the time being to the practice of their evil desires, to learn by bitter experience the exceeding sinfulness of sin. But His infinite mercy did not permit Him to forget them, for He already had a plan for their ultimate redemption. And though He had myriads of angels who still rejoiced to do His bidding, yet in due time He sent forth His Son to make redemption and open the way for all the wandering sheep to return to Him.

The Prophet Isaiah foretold this, saying, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." (Isa. 53:6.) Yes, Jesus bore the penalty of your sins and mine, that we might no longer roam as sheep having no shepherd. Praise His name! How beautifully is this redemption pictured in Jesus' parable of the lost sheep! "For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost. How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish." - Matt. 18:11-14.

Here we see the great love of the shepherd for the sheep: He is not willing that one should needlessly perish, though he has many others. Thus we see it is not for his own sake, to supply his lack, but for the sheep's sake, that he goes into the mountains to recover the wandering one. Did you ever think what it would mean for a shepherd to go into the mountains on a wild, stormy night to seek a lost sheep? The writer was once in the Rocky Mountains when the train was delayed all night by a storm. The next morning one track was cleared for the train to proceed, but on the, other track were boulders over two feet in diameter, washed down by the storm. And as we thus saw what terrible force the storm must have exerted, there came a deeper realization than ever before of the great cost at which our Savior redeemed us.

"But none of the ransomed ever knew
How deep were the waters crossed,
Nor how dark was the night that the Lord passed through
E'er He found His sheep that was lost:
Out in the darkness He heard its cry
Sick, and helpless, and ready to die."

Yes, as the shepherd goes willingly into the darkness and storm of the night to seek his straying sheep, so we hear the voice of Jesus saying, "I lay down My life for the sheep. Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have authority to lay it down; and I have authority to receive it again. This commandment have I received of My Father." (John 10:15, 17, 18.) Here again we see the oneness of the Father and the Son: The Heavenly Father provided the redemptive sacrifice for lost man by the gift of His only begotten Son, and the

Son also provided that sacrifice by the gift of Himself, willingly laying down His life. As He said to Pilate: "Thou couldst have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above." - John 19:11.

The version of this parable in the Gospel of Luke emphasizes the joy of the shepherd in thus rescuing the sheep: "And He spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance." - Luke 15:3-7.

"God so Loved the World"

What a manifestation this is to us of the great love of our Heavenly Father for every human being! To what lengths has He gone, yea and will yet go, to manifest that love to erring man! If He has such great love for sinners, with what compassion ought we to regard them—we, sinful by nature, who have come to know somewhat of this great love! Poor, sin-blinded world, God will some day deliver you also from the bondage of sin and Satan into the glorious liberty of the children of God! Now He is preparing a special flock for a special purpose; but He loves you, just as He loved us. List to His loving words: "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd." (John 10:16.) Yes, He has "made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: that in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; even in Him In whom also we have obtained an inheritance." - Eph. 1:9-11.

Let us turn now to Jesus' words in John 10:1-3, 6-9: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; . . . This parable spake Jesus unto them; but they understood not what things they were which He spake unto them. Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before Me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door."

By no other means than through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, is it possible to find forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with the Creator. Listen to the Apostle Peter as he boldly declares this fact: "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, if we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even' by Him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name tunder heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." - Acts 4:8-12.

Through the exercise of faith in this blessed name of Jesus, He becomes to us the door by which we are enabled to enter into the sheepfold. And so the Apostle Peter further declares:

"For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." - 1 Pet. 2:25.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. All that ever came before Me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them." (John 10:1, 8.) The Diaglott footnote says: "Panta, all, may be taken in the sense of polloi, many; . . . our Savior cannot here mean Moses and the Prophets, who were commissioned to speak in the name of Jehovah; but rather those religious leaders who 'shut up the Kingdom of the heavens against men,' by taking away the 'key of knowledge.' (See Matt. 23:13; Luke 11:52.) Such were the priests, scribes, and Pharisees," in Jesus' day.

These things are important, because these same conditions have existed all down through the Age, and we have seen striking evidences of them in our own day. Such teachers have not heeded the injunction of the Apostle Peter: "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly"; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock." - 1 Pet. 5:2, 3.

Those whom Jesus refers to as thieves and robbers were in authority over God's people. They were teachers, pastors, standing in the relation of under-shepherds. But they did not have the love for the sheep that the Good Shepherd, the Chief Shepherd has. And so Jesus likens them to hired shepherds, having no love for the sheep, and contrasts their attitude with His own attitude toward the flock: "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But lie that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth; and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine. As the Father knoweth Me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep."-Ver. 10-15.

Of, these hirelings who come to steal and to destroy, Paul warned the Church at Ephesus, saying: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch." - Acts 20:28-31.

"As a Sheep Before Her Shearers"

Turning now to the sheep: The followers of Jesus are referred to under the symbol of sheep because sheep display some of the qualities which the true followers of Jesus must possess. Jesus also had these qualities, and hence is referred to under the symbol of a lamb or sheep for this reason, in addition to the fact that he was the antitypical Paschal Lamb. The sheep is an emblem of meekness, patience, and submission. How beautiful; our Savior manifested these qualities! "Not My will but Thine be done." And it is only as we develop these qualities as the fruit of the Holy Spirit that we demonstrate ourselves to be true sheep in the flock of the great Shepherd. An ancient Jewish writer states that the sheep, in the season of shearing, would run to the shepherd at his call, and, stooping a little, put themselves into his hands to be shorn and stand quietly until he had finished. Jesus was led as a lamb to the slaughter-willingly, submissively. Let us likewise learn willingly and trustingly to submit ourselves to our Shepherd's disciplining, as it may come to us in the daily experiences of life.

"I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." (John 10:9.) All that we enjoy in our new relation to God as our Heavenly Father He has designed to dispense to us through the agency of our Lord Jesus, desiring "that all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father." (John 5:23.) He is the door by which we first entered into the sheepfold and found salvation; and He

is the great Shepherd of the sheep by whom we "go in and out and find pasture." Let us therefore inquire further into the nature of the shepherd and what he does for the sheep. Smith's Bible Dictionary gives the following respecting the duties of the Eastern shepherd:

"The routine of the shepherd's duties appears to have been as follows: In the morning, he led forth his flock from the fold (John 10:4), which he did by going before them and calling to them, as is still usual in the East; arrived at the pasturage, he watched the flock with the assistance of dogs (Job 30:1), and, should any sheep stray, he had to search for it until he found it (Ezek. 34:12; Luke 15:4); he supplied them with water, either at a running stream or at troughs attached to wells (Gen. 29:7; 30:38; Exod. 2:16; Psa. 23:2); at evening he brought them back to the fold, and reckoned them to see that none were missing, by passing them 'under the rod' as they entered the door of the enclosure (Lev. 27:32; Ezek. 20:37), checking each sheep as it passed, by a motion of the hand (Jer. 33:13); and, finally, he watched the entrance of the fold throughout the night, acting as porter. (John 10:3.) The shepherd's office thus required great watchfulness, particularly by night. (Luke 2:8; Nah. 3:18.) It also required tenderness toward the young and feeble (Isa. 40:11), particularly in driving them to and from the pasturage. - Gen. 33:13."

In harmony with this is Jesus' statement of what He does for His sheep: "The sheep hear His voice, and He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him: for they know His voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers." (John 10:3-5.) On this Smith's Bible Dictionary says:

"Shepherds in Palestine and the East generally go 'before their flocks, which they induce to follow by calling to them (comp. John 10:4; Psa. 77:20; 80:1) though they also drive them. (Gen. 33:13.) The following quotation from Hartley's 'Researches in Greece and the Levant,' p. 321, is strikingly illustrative of the allusions in John 10:1-16:

"He Calleth His Own Sheep by Name"

"Having had my attention directed last night to the words in John 10:3, I asked my man if it was usual in Greece to give names to the sheep. He informed, me that it was, and that the sheep obeyed the shepherd when he called them by their names. This morning, I had an opportunity of verifying the truth of this remark. Passing by a flock of sheep, I asked the shepherd the same question which I had put to the servant, and he gave me the same answer. I then bade him call one of his sheep. He did so, and it instantly left its pasturage and its companions, and ran up to the hands of the shepherd with signs of pleasure, and with a prompt obedience which I had never before observed in any other animal. It is also true in this country that "a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him." The shepherd told me that many of his sheep were still wild, that they had not yet learned their names, but that by teaching them they would all learn them."

"He calleth his own sheep by name. How this speaks to us of the interest of the shepherd in each individual sheep! "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows. (Luke 12:6, 7.)

"For the Father Himself loveth you." - John 16:27.

"He leadeth them out, and when he putteth forth his own sheep he goeth before them." This is a very precious Scripture, for it tells us that He never asks us to overcome any temptations which He has not already overcome. He "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." (Heb. 4:15.) "For in that He

Himself bath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted." (Heb. 2:18.) Therefore, whatever our testings, we know that our Shepherd has gone before us, and we have but to follow in His footsteps. However trying, however disappointing, however bitter, our experiences-may be, we can always go to Him in confidence that He fully appreciates how hard it is for us, and can fully sympathize with us. He has been through it all; therefore He is able to comfort all as no human being can comfort.

(To be continued)

Days of Happy Fellowship

Minneapolis, Minn. A

"Some 125 to 150 Bible Students gathered in convention in Minneapolis, Sept. 6th and 7th, and were greatly blessed by the sweet fellowship with those of like precious faith and the discourses presented by the ministers of God's Word who were heard in eight discourses.

"In his 'Address of Welcome' the Chairman quoted Matthew' 24:28: 'Wheresoever the carcass [food] s, there will the eagles be gathered together.' All recognized 'the food' to be 'The Truth' from the Scriptures as presented to us by our dear Brother Russell, which had first attracted us, led us to make a full consecration of our all to the Lord and which had now drawn s together, as 'eagles,' for strengthening and refreshment.

"The topics, 'Whom Seekest Thou?'; 'The Poverty that Maketh Rich'; 'Mirrors'; 'The Present Rewards of the Consecrated'; 'The Testimony of Jesus'; two discourses on 'Hope'; and a talk for the public on 'Salvation. How? When? Where?' were ably handled and proved very soul cheering and helpful.

"In every discourse the doctrines, (which as we all know are important and necessary as a foundation for the building of the character that will be pleasing to God-'conformed to the image of His Son'), were touched upon.

"The testimonies, in the 'Praise, Prayer and Testimony' services were spontaneous and enthusiastic. They were full of love and gratitude to the dear Heavenly Father for the blessings of the Truth, the privilege of walking in our dear Savior's footsteps, and for the precious promises by which, if 'faithful unto death,' we may become partakers of the divine nature.

"Some recalled meeting in convention in St. Paul in 1906 -- 30 years ago; one mentioned having been in the Truth 37 years, while others were rejoicing in the symbolizing of their consecration in Minneapolis only a year ago-all rejoicing together in the spirit of the Truth as well as in the letter, remembering that, as the Scripture (2 Cor. 3:1-6) says, 'The letter killeth but the spirit giveth life.'

Saginaw, Mich.

"The Saginaw Convention over the Labor Day holidays is past, but the memory of the inspiring discourses and the sweet fellowship of those of like precious faith lingers on like the sweet smelling savor from the incense altar. The convention opened Saturday afternoon and closed Monday afternoon with an average attendance of 80, while the public meeting, Sunday evening, was attended by 127. Classes from Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Chicago, Detroit, Jackson, and nearby places were well represented. The speaking brethren from these places were especially prepared, the Lord's Spirit being very manifest in the manner in which the nine

discourses were presented. Such soul-stirring subjects as "Our Unchangeable God," "The Pure in Heart," "He hath Wholly Followed the Lord," "The Baby Moses in Antitype," "Abraham and Lot in Antitype," "The Hole in the Roof," and others were given in such a rousing manner that the message was well engraved on the mind of every one present. The program was interspersed with a number of beautiful solos and duets... .

"Gratitude and love to a gracious God who made this convention possible! His blessing was with us, our cup of joy in the Lord ran over. There was not a dull moment, the time between discourses seeming to be entirely too short, although nine hours in the aggregate were set aside just for fellowship and luncheon. It is hard to estimate the value of the knowledge and spiritual uplift received, as many expressed themselves both in testimony and privately that their minds had been opened to truths never before understood. The sentiment of the prayers, the testimonies, the discourses, and private conversations all proved that the Lord was also present, because the unity of the spirit was so profoundly manifest.

"In the words of a visiting brother, the experiences at Saginaw those three days were like unto an oasis in the desert of mistrust and unbelief, where refreshing truths were being poured out for the weary and heavy-laden. What a joy it was to realize that the Lord hearkened and heard!"

"Several hymns sung by a group of the young members of the local class proved an unusually inspiring feature. A trio from Chicago, and other soloists rendered most helpful and appreciated numbers.

"The dear friends of the Minneapolis Class had made provision for the entertainment of visiting friends and bountiful provision for the feeding of all present, between the sessions of the convention. We know they will receive their much deserved reward, for, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me.'

"One of the last hymns sung was:

"My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.'

"This seemed to be the sentiment of all present and all left rejoicing in the Lord and with the feeling that it was good to have been there."

Dear Brethren:

The two delightful days of Brother Friese' visit were over too soon. We shall never forget this, our first visit with the dear brother. One service was dropped on account of the extreme heat, as we felt sure it would be better for Brother Friese. The two afternoon meetings were held on the lawn, and there we had much happy fellowship. Among other topics these lines were quoted and discussed:

"We all are writing a gospel each day,
Writing in all that we do and say;
Men read that gospel whether faithless or true.
Say, what is the gospel according to you?"

We found the Gospel according to Brother Friese was beautiful and inspiring. It made us long inexpressibly for the great love to God and the brethren and to all which is so beautifully exemplified in his life and ministry.

When Brother Blackburn first came to us in 1920, he "came with nothing new," but "to stir us up by putting us in remembrance." This old, old story of Jesus and His love, and its transforming power in our lives has been preached by our dear Brother Blackburn with beautiful consistency and increasing power through the years, and taken up by others who followed. By an odd coincidence Brother Friese' first message to us was from the same text' used by Brother Blackburn over 16 years ago, for he too came "with nothing new," but he also would "stir us up by putting us in remembrance." How happy we are to have had such men of God to minister to us through the years, by word and life, and also on the pages of the "Herald." Our hearts fill with gratitude to God for all His gracious gifts.

Brother Friese' last discourse was, I think, the best of all, and I shall remember him thus, with the sunshine filtering through the leaves on his shining, upturned face, as he talked to us of our glorious hope, "the hope which is as an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast, and entereth into that which is within the veil."

Our prayers go up daily for you all. With warmest Christian love,
Your sister by grace,
E. A.-Kans.