

# THE HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

VOL. XXI August, 1938 No. 8

## Things Coming to Pass

*"When ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the Kingdom of God is at hand." - Luke 21:31.*

THE FINAL shaking of the social earth is, we believe, close at hand. During the past twenty-five years every nation of the world has received harder and more severe shakings, financially, socially, politically. Strong as the nations feel themselves to be, all tremble in dread at the results of their distresses. Only the Bible can or does speak authoritatively respecting results. In the same breath it tells of disaster and of blessings-disaster to the nations, but ultimate blessings to the people through the new government of Messiah's Kingdom.

St. Paul, referring to our day and to present conditions, declares the Lord's message, "Yet once more will I shake, not the earth only, but also the heavens." By inspiration the Apostle informs us that this will be the last great shaking which the world will ever have, because in this troubled time in the early dawn of the Millennium, everything shakable will be shaken and destroyed so thoroughly that nothing will remain except that which is unshakable-that which will fully have the divine approval. The Apostle says that the only thing remaining unshakable will be the Kingdom of God in the hands of The Christ-Head and Body. - Hebrews 12:18-27.

We should not get the thought that the shaking of the nations is just beginning, but rather that the shaking that has been in progress for some time is now reaching its violent stage. For years all nations have been trembling with occasional violent shocks; but now they are preparing for the great shock, the great "earthquake," as the Bible symbolically styles it. - Rev. 16:18.

## Nations Hurrying to Armageddon

Knowledge is power. For the past fifty years in particular knowledge has been preparing the masses of humanity, and their power has been growing apace. Proportionately the powers of the past have been obliged to yield. The entire world is honeycombed with social unrest, which, like yeast, is fermenting the entire social fabric. The great Armageddon of the Bible may soon be expected. Every man's hand will be against his neighbor. Various factions and parties have proclaimed panaceas, and have forced them upon the public. As a result, foretold in prophecy, "there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation." - Daniel 12:1.

The shaking process will continue, the Apostle tells us, until Messiah's unshakable Kingdom shall assert itself and take control of the world's affairs. The Lord through the Prophet Haggai tells us this, saying, "I will shake all nations and the desire of all nations shall come." (Haggai 2:7.) All people really desire peace, joy, happiness, blessing, such as God purposes to give them; but they do not comprehend their needs, and are seriously misled as to the methods by which they might be obtained.

We as students of the Scriptures are coming more and more to appreciate the fact that the divine plan presented in the Bible is wonderful in its simplicity and its comprehensiveness. More and more we are coming to see that our error in the past has been that we studied not the Bible, but the creeds-and correspondingly had darkness instead of light.

### **Symbolic Shaking and Burning**

Note again St. Paul's quotation of the Lord's words, "Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven." (Heb. 12:26.) We have seen what the shaking of earth signifies as respects society, governments, social order. In the same symbolic language of prophecy the heavens represent the ecclesiastical systems, as the earth represents the social. The meaning of the Lord's words is, therefore, clear; the coming trouble is not to be merely one upon the world of mankind, but in a very special sense it is to signify a shaking of the Church-the ecclesiastical, or spiritual, or heavenly powers.

"There are doubtless saints of God in various organizations. And these alone constitute the true Church "the Church of the firstborns, whose names are written in heaven." (Heb. 12:23.) The masses of Christians of all organizations, according to this prophecy, will be shaken-shaken in faith, shaken from their self-conceit, superstitions and bigotries. Only the true Church, only those who are in vital union with Christ, only the saints, will remain unshaken in the strenuous storm described by the Apostle.

While the masses of humanity have been shaking the political earth for the past twenty-five years, other forces have been shaking with great severity the ecclesiastical heavens. Inquire where we may, we find that many of God's professed people have been shaken loose from a faith they once thought was sure and steadfast. Indeed, it is the habit of many Christians to boast amongst themselves that they are not as devout today, as they once were. It most assuredly is the fashion today for the majority of Christians to honor God with their lips, while their heart is far from Him. In vain do they worship-teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

Let no one think that the shaking of the ecclesiastical heavens is ended. The Bible pictures the culmination as a sudden catastrophe which will awaken and set free all in Babylon who are the Lord's people -- "Israelites indeed," without guile. - John 1:47.

### **New Heavens and New Earth**

The shaking of the heavens and the earth mentioned by St. Paul, corresponding with the shaking mentioned by the Prophet (Haggai 2:7), is referred to under a different figure in St. Peter's writings. St. Peter describes the end of the nominal church systems of our day under the figure of a fire. The heavens being on fire shall pass away with a great noise-great disputation, confusion, etc.; "the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up," writes St. Paul. -- 2 Pet. 3:10; 1 Cor. 3:13.

Those who have built with gold, silver, and precious stones supplied by the divine message and its promises, will survive the conflagration, because their faith and hope and relationship to God are indestructible. But all those who have built with wood, hay, and stubble of human tradition and churchianity will find their work utterly destroyed in the fire of that day. All their hopes, all their anticipations, will be utterly gone. "Yet themselves shall be saved, so as by fire." (1 Cor. 3:11-15.) Then he explains that God will save this class because they have been truly consecrated Christians, who have built their false hopes and wrong expectations upon the sure foundation-Christ and His redeeming work.

The passing away of the present symbolic heavens, or ecclesiastical powers, will leave the place of spiritual control to the "new heavens" -- the Church in glory. The passing away of the present social earth will give place to the new order of things styled "the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." (2 Pet. 3:13.) The new earth will be this same planet, but under new conditions, new social arrangements, provided by the Messianic Kingdom. At that time the prophecy of Haggai will begin to be fulfilled-the portion which declares "the desire of all nations shall come." That new earth condition is pictured by St. Peter most beautifully, saying:

"Times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus Christ, as before was preached unto you, whom the heavens must receive [retain] until the times of restitution of all things spoken by the mouth of all the holy Prophets since the world began." - Acts 3:19-23. - Contributed by *W. J. Siekman*

## Buried with Him in Baptism

Dear Brethren of the Institute: Greetings in our dear Redeemer.

Today it was my great privilege to witness, and to have a small part in, one of the most beautiful and inspiring occasions of my long pilgrimage toward the heavenly Canaan. Tonight, just as twilight shades were beginning to settle down, a little band of seven consecrated children of the Lord drove some miles to a cottage on the banks of the picturesque Chemung River, near Elmira, where permission had been given to hold a baptismal service.

Here, in this lovely setting, at a bend in the swift flowing stream, five earnest Christians, bent only upon doing God's will and witnessing "a good confession" of their entire consecration to the Lord, led by two older brethren, threaded their way through a barbed-wire fence and down the rocky bank to the flowing water's edge. It was a scene I shall never forget. The baptismal candidates were two young married couples and another young brother, all of whom had been faithfully instructed in God's Word and Plan by our beloved Brother L. L. Benedict, and that instruction climaxed several months ago by the death of Sister Benedict, when the Lord spoke to them convincingly in the funeral discourse by our dear Brother Paul Thomson.

The original plan to hold this service at Ithaca, our next stop, on Sunday, could not be arranged and hence the hurried gathering in the twilight on the shore of the lovely Chemung. Owing to the fast-gathering shadows, singing of hymns was omitted, but with the expressed sentiment

"Jesus, I my cross have taken, All to leave and follow Thee,"

It was our great privilege to extend a right hand of fellowship, in the name of the great Head of the true Church, to these five dear ones there at the river's brink.

Tears of joy filled the eyes of the dear father, beloved Brother Benedict, as he officiated in placing under the waves in symbol of their real baptism into Christ and into the will of God, in obedience to Romans 6:3-6, two of his *own sons*, a dear daughter-in-law, and our dear young Brother and Sister Lawrence.

While time did not permit us to sing audibly, our hearts sang, and who shall say the invisible heavenly choir did not join in an anthem of praise to our heavenly Father and to our Redeemer, through whose great love and ransom sacrifice this scene was made possible and precious to all.

A dear infant daughter of Brother and Sister Lawrence, too young to leave at home, was happy in the care of small relatives in one of the cars.

Having been richly blessed by this wonderful witness to the power of God and His truth, and to the constraining love of Christ, even today, the little procession turned city-ward through the deepening shadows and gathered, with others, in the home of Brother and Sister Laroy Benedict, where beginning after 9:00 p.m., the concluding service of an address and farewell was held.

It has been, dear brethren, my happy privilege to witness many baptismal services throughout the past sixty one years, but never one quite like this. We give praise to our God, who blesses us abundantly and who "addeth no sorrow therewith." And so again we sing:

"Faith can *firmly trust Him*,  
Come what may."

Your brother by His grace and in His love and service,  
Harvey A. Friese.

## The Three Parables Uttered by Christ at Matthew's Feast

*"Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but Thy disciples fast not?" - Matt. 9:14.*

BEFORE CONSIDERING the parables themselves, it will be helpful to note the conditions which led our Lord to give them expression. They were uttered at the feast which Matthew, either in the evening of the same day on which he had been called to be a disciple, or shortly thereafter, had prepared in our Lord's honor. - Luke 5:33-39; Mark 2:18-22; Matt. 9:9-17.

There was no lack of conversation at Matthew's table. Besides the publicans (that is to say, tax collectors) and sinners (those who made no religious claims or professions) who reclined with Him, there lounged in the court outside the room, or even in the room itself, many neighbors whom the customs of the East permitted to add themselves, uninvited, to the company. Among these were certain Pharisees, and their scribes, rabbis, and doctors of the law, who had already been worsted in their dispute with Christ when He healed the man who was sick of the palsy (Matt. 9:1-8); certain also of their ardent young disciples. Some of the disciples of John the Baptist were there too. Among these bystanders there arose a discussion, a discussion which was mainly an adverse criticism. The discussion turned on eating and drinking, as was natural at a feast, and various issues were raised, as for instance whether it was not better to fast than to feast; and, with whom was it lawful to eat.

The Pharisees did not approve of eating with "publicans and sinners"; but with a certain awe of Jesus, and remembering how He had previously discomfited them, when He had forgiven the paralytic his sins and cured his palsy, they first put their disapproval into the form of a question, and then asked the question of His disciples, not venturing to ask it directly of Him. To their question: "Why eateth your Teacher with the publicans and sinners?" His disciples not being ready with an answer, our Lord made a threefold reply. First He cited a well known proverb "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." Next He advised them to learn the real significance of the Scripture found in Hosea 6:6, "I desired mercy and not sacrifice," and finally He gave them a distinct declaration of the object and character of His mission: "I am not come to call the righteous but sinners."

### Bigotry and How to Meet It

No sooner is the question "Why eateth your Teacher with the publicans and sinners?" answered than another is raised, raised first, probably, by the disciples of the Baptist. They object, not so much to the company in which Jesus sits; for they cannot forget that the Baptist himself called publicans and sinners to repentance (Luke 3:12); but they are amazed that He, to whom John gave witness, should sit at a well-spread table, and partake of sumptuous fare. That was not like the Baptist. **H**e lived in a wilderness, on locusts and wild honey. Was it right, was it kind, that One whom John loved so well should feast when John was in prison? Was not fasting always better than feasting? Was it not much more suitable and becoming in view of the times of stress through which they were passing?

The mistake which these men made was a mistake which has been repeated many times since, a mistake which, we trust, all of our readers as well as ourselves, seek to avoid. It was the mistake of making themselves the standard by which all others were to be measured, and not only measured but condemned. Even Jesus, it seems, must come under their censure if His thoughts

are higher than their thoughts, His ways broader than theirs. "We do this or that; **we** think thus and so; why don't you? We will lay our ban on you if you don't"-this has been the cry of the bigot in all ages and generations. "**We** do not see this feasting to be right, and therefore it must be wrong." We cannot too carefully guard ourselves against being infected by this self-righteous and intolerant temper which must be a thousand-fold more base and wicked than any errors of thought sincerely held. Christ was in the right, though "we and the Pharisees" thought Him wrong.

When we meet a bigot we are tempted to meet him in a temper as arrogant and as self-sufficient as his own. Let us therefore the more carefully mark how the Lord Jesus met these austere bigots of the law. Their objection lay against the new tone which he seemed to be giving, and really was giving, to the religious life of men. They held that religion demanded a rigid and austere life; that it enjoined fasting, abstinence from comfort and joy -- in one word, -- asceticism. Their real complaint against Christ was that He was departing from this conception of religion. What they meant was: "You are giving a festal tone to life. You rejoice with those that rejoice, as well as weep with those that weep. You do not fast and make your disciples fast. You go to a marriage-feast as readily as- to a house of mourning. You even feast with sinners, who should do nothing but bewail their sins, and their exclusion from our synagogues. You give an added joy, and the sanction of your presence, to **their** festivities."

To all of which our Lord replies by three exquisite parables: the parable of the bridegroom and the bridechamber; the parable of the old garment with a new patch; and the parable of the new wine poured into old wineskins.

### **Parable of the Bridechamber**

First of all He speaks the parable of the bridechamber. "Can the children of the bridechamber fast while the bridegroom is with them?" "Can the friends of the bridegroom be gloomy and mournful when he is about to be married?" This figure of a bridegroom is one of the most precious to be found in the Scriptures. As all are aware, it is used in the New Testament to denote the bonds of love and affection which unite our Lord, the heavenly Bridegroom, to the Church of this Gospel Age. As St. Paul, writing to the Church of Corinth, declares: "I have espoused [or betrothed] you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." (2 Cor. 11:2.) And how the true lovers of Jesus long for the time to come when they shall experience the consummation of their hopes, and go in with Him to the marriage-feast, entering fully and for ever into the joys of their Lord!

In the passage before us, however, Jesus was not presenting Himself as the betrothed Bridegroom of the Church. There was no spirit-begotten Church to whom He could be betrothed when He spoke these words at Matthew's feast. Not until after He had given His life for her sake; not until He had been raised from the dead by the Father's power; not until He had ascended on high, there, at the Father's right hand, to appear in His presence on her behalf; not until the waiting followers of Jesus received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, was there even the nucleus of a Church to whom, as a spirit being, He could be betrothed. Then, indeed, it was, on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was given, that our heavenly Bridegroom betrothed the Gospel Church to Himself, in love.

## **Jewish Bride Rejects Bridegroom**

But the figure of the bridegroom had been used in the Old Testament of Jehovah and His relationship to the Jewish Church or nation. When Christ came, He came as the Father's representative, to claim this Jewish Church for His own. "And His own," we read, "received Him not." - John 1:11.

From **this** standpoint, this brief parable, quite apart from the beauty and interest it has for us, had a special force both for the disciples of the Pharisees and for the followers of the Baptist. The Pharisees 'held by the "law and the Prophets." And the Prophets had spoken of a coming Bridegroom who should betroth Israel unto Himself "in righteousness and in loving-kindness and in mercies," who, though her "Maker," should become her "Husband" and "Redeemer." (Isa. 62:5; Hos. 2:19-20; Isa. 54:5.) Their own rabbis had pronounced this "Bridegroom" to be the Messiah, and had foretold, "All fasting shall cease in the days of Messias; there shall only be holidays and festivals, joy and gladness and cheerful feasts." So that, by His brief parable, our Lord was recalling their own Prophets and rabbis to the minds of the Pharisees. He was announcing Himself as the expected "Bridegroom" and "Messiah" and showing them how even their own teachers had foreseen that the sons of the bridechamber, the companions of the Bridegroom, should not fast in His day, but hold holiday and festival, with joy and gladness and cheerful feasts.

## **The Baptist's Faithful Witness**

In like manner the parable had special meaning and force for the disciples of John. **They** held by their master's words. To them the Baptist was the last and greatest of the Prophets. And when the Baptist saw all men flocking to Jesus, he had said to his disciples: "Ye yourselves bear me witness that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before Him. He that bath the bride is, the Bridegroom, but the friend of the Bridegroom, which standeth and heareth Him, rejoiceth greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice; this, my joy, therefore, is fulfilled." - John 3:28, 29.

The disciples of John could hardly fail to recall their master's words as they listened to the parable of Christ. And as they recalled them, they would see how even the austere, ascetic Baptist had claimed, as a son of the bridechamber, to rejoice greatly, while the Bridegroom was with him. And if he could do so, why could not they also?

Obviously there was a special force in the parable for both sets of critics. It referred the disciples of the Pharisees to Hebrew prophecies of a coming Messiah and Bridegroom, anointed with the oil of **joy** above His fellows, in whose days all fasting would cease; and it referred the disciples of the Baptist to the teaching and example of the Baptist himself -- to **his** prophecy of a Bridegroom, and his great joy as long as he stood and heard the Bridegroom's voice. So that, in place of meeting these austere and narrow-hearted critics in a temper as narrow and arrogant as their own, our Lord Jesus adopted their standards, condescended to their modes of thought, and sought to convince them **out of their own** Scriptures--leaving us once again, an example, that we should thus, as well as in all other respects, seek to follow in His steps.



## True Fasting by Gospel Church

But there is a deeper meaning in His next words, a meaning which neither the disciples of the Pharisees, nor the Baptist's disciples could grasp. As long as they have the Bridegroom with them, the children of the bridechamber cannot fast. **That** they are beginning to understand. "But the days will come." He continues, "when the Bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days." In these words it is evident that our Lord is thinking of the experiences, of the true Gospel Church, of which the Jewish Church was but typical. Some of these disciples of His. members of the Jewish Church, would be transferred to the Gospel Church, and others would believe on Him through their word, all down through the Gospel Age. Throughout these centuries He, their Betrothed, would be absent. Now fasting is always associated with sorrow and trial, and as at times the long delay on the part of the Bridegroom would cause the heart of the waiting Church to grow sick and discouraged, she might well fast and doubtless would. But no one would need to urge this on her. It would not be a rite or ceremony imposed on the Church at certain solemn seasons, but the expression of a real sentiment of grief and weariness. It would proceed from the sorrow which the Church would feel in the absence of her Bridegroom, and is designed to lend intensity to her prayers and to ensure with greater certainty that assistance of Jesus (the Holy Spirit *in* rich measure) which alone can supply the place of His visible presence: Mark 9:29; Acts 13:2, 3; 14:20.

## Parable of the Old Garment with the New Patch

To the parable of the bridechamber our Lord adds the parable of the old garment with the new patch. "No man seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment; else the new piece that filleth it up taketh away from the old and the rent is made worse."

In this second parable our Lord again condescends to the imperfections of His critics, that He may lead them to think more accurately, and with a broader vision, of Him, and of the work He has come to do. He states the view of the Law and of the Gospel which **they** (not He) held. To **them**, the Law was an old cloak, a religious garb, which they had long worn, and their fathers before them. They 'had honestly tried (at least some of them had) to clothe themselves in the righteousness which is by the Law. To a large extent its precepts had shaped their lives. Still, its ordinances were, for the most part, ordinances of outward observances, which had not vital, *or* vitalizing power. It could not, as St. Paul found out by bitter experience, give life. It was not graven on their hearts, but only on their phylacteries and doorposts-on the hen! of their garments. It did not touch, quicken, and renew their spirits; it was a mere robe, concealing rather than removing, the deformities and pollutions of their moral nature.

They did not themselves deny that it was an **old** cloak, getting somewhat thin and threadbare by long use. They were willing to have it patched; they were even trying to patch it themselves. The Pharisees, besides supplementing the written law by oral tradition, were willing to take a few hints from the teaching of John the Baptist. The disciples of the Baptist, though as a rule they did *not* become Christian, were willing to take a few hints from the teaching and example of Christ. They cut out a shred here and a shred there from the Gospel fabric, and were sewing them on to their old garment, the Law. But this feasting *in* Matthew's house perplexed them. They could not tell what to make of it-how to use it. It did not fit into any rent, or match with any texture, of their hereditary cloak. They were willing to take from Christ any form or custom which would make the Law more perfect or more suitable to the times; but this feasting with tax-collectors and sinners-what could they make of it? This would *not* give an added air of austerity or sanctity to their lives. It would neither make them more righteous, nor even give them a wider reputation for



righteousness. It might even lessen the reputation they had. How could this patch be wrought in upon their old garment?

For their instruction our Lord adopts their view. Virtually He *says* to them: "You regard the law of Moses as an old cloak, a religious garb, rather than a religious life; -- form rather than spirit. And for you, this Gospel of Mine is simply a new cloak, a new religious garb, another series of outward forms. Be consistent, then. Do not spoil both cloaks by cutting a piece out of the new and sewing it on to the old. The new will not match with the old. The patch of new, undressed, unfulled, cloth, sure to shrink when once it is wetted, will pull away from the frayed threads of the shrunk and long-worn garment, and the rent will grow worse than ever. Either wrap yourselves, as best you may, in the scanty folds of your ancient and tattered cloak, or fling that away, and accept in its place the new cloak, which, you are supposing, I have come to offer men."

### **Parable of the New Wine and the Old Wineskins**

Having thus taken their view, Jesus proceeds to give them His *own* view of both Law and Gospel in a third parable, the parable of the new wine and the old wineskins. To Him, the Law was like old wine rather than like an old cloak -- wine which had not been without its refreshment and cheer to those who honestly sought to regulate their lives by it, even though it could never give them life; and the Gospel, so far from being a new cloak, a covering to be put on, was a new wine, a new vivifying spirit, to 'be put within men, making them strong and glad.

The wineskins, it would seem, would answer to the representatives of these two principles -- the Law and the Gospel. The Scribes and Pharisees at this time were sitting in Moses' seat. They were not divinely appointed to this service, but our Lord does not blame them for undertaking to instruct the people in reference to the mind and purposes of God, so long as they did not assume too much in consequence of what they were doing, and if they were consistent in themselves, conforming their conduct inner and outer, to the precepts of Moses and the instructions of the Prophets. But this they did not do, but, as our Lord stated,, they "bound heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, and laid them on men's shoulders, but they themselves did not move them with one of their fingers."

### **Selection of New Wineskins**

These were the representatives of the Law, at the time of Christ. They were the wineskins in which the old wine of the Law, sadly diluted by the precepts and commandments of men, was contained. The new wine of the Gospel represents the life-giving message which was to flow so abundantly through the teachings of Jesus. And the wineskins were the men who were to become the depositaries of this message, who were to preserve it for mankind. And whom, in Israel, will Jesus choose to fulfill this mission? The old practitioners of the Law? Pharisees puffed up with the idea of their own merit? Rabbis jaded with textual discussions? No, indeed! Such persons have nothing to learn, nothing to receive, from Him. If associated with His Gospel, they would not fail to falsify it, by mixing up with His pure teaching, the old prejudices with which they were imbued; or even if they should yield their hearts, for a moment, to the lofty ideals of Jesus, it would put all their previous views and routine devotion utterly to rout, just as new and sparkling wine bursts a worn-out leathern or skin bottle. Where, then, shall He choose His future instruments? Among those who have neither merit nor wisdom of their own. He needs new wineskins, wineskins that will be able to stand the stress of the fermentation sure to come. He needs fresh souls, whose only merit is their receptivity, new men in Christ, new creatures in Christ Jesus. "God," prayed He on one occasion, "I thank Thee, because Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes." (Luke 10:21.) These babes will

save the truth, and it will save them. This thought is expressed in the words "new wine must be put into new bottles, and both [that is, both wine and wineskins] are reserved."

### **Truth of Gospel Cannot be Restrained**

In other words our Lord teaches then that it Would be worse than useless to endeavor to restrain, within the limits of their traditions and ritualisms, the powers and graces of the new life which He came to bestow. That life could not endure to be confined within limits so narrow, by restraints so feeble. It would rend them asunder. The new wine must be put into new skins.

Fast! Of course, under appropriate circumstances. But His disciples should neither fast nor feast by rule, in deference to mere customs, however antique and venerable, which did not naturally express their inward life. They should be fettered by no ancient law graven on stones or inscribed on parchments, but should simply act out the laws of the life implanted by the Gospel in their hearts. While He, the Bridegroom, was with them, it was natural and right that they should make merry and be glad; when He was taken away, it would be natural and right that they should mourn and fast. Let them in each case, in every case, follow the impulse of their renewed spirits. For Himself and for them, He claimed freedom; freedom of thought, of emotion, of action. Austere, ascetic John the Baptist is not their ideal, still less the Pharisee, however learned, and punctilious. They are to honor, not a hermit, nor a ritualist, but a Man, the Man Christ Jesus. **He** is to be their ideal, and they are to serve Him as their hearts prompt in perfect liberty. He is their life, and His life in them may be safely left to manifest itself in all innocent, comely, and appropriate forms.

It is a question here, then, of the preservation of the Gospel, and of the salvation of the individuals who are to be the depositaries -of it. The old wineskins, men such as these carping, criticising, Pharisees and rabbis of Judaism will not do. Mere babes, such as this tax-collector, Matthew, and his associates, will do better.

Later on, we find this teaching which our Lord here presents in germ, in the form -of a parable, expanded by St. Paul's labors, when, on a larger scale, the Gospel passed from the Jews (as a nation) to Gentiles, to those who, out of every kindred, tribe and nation, engage in the glorious ministry of the Gospel of His grace.

### **Our Present Day Privileges and Responsibilities**

It is interesting, too, to notice, that this sane question, namely, the preservation of the Gospel, and the selection of those fitted to engage in its ministry, has recurred again and again, since then; and, each time after a period of falling away, the Gospel has been given again, and has seemed like new wine in its power to reinvigorate those whose hearts were ready for it. Each time too, the old wineskins were rejected-new wineskins had to be found. Luther and others of the Reformers were doubtless the new wineskins when the great Protestant Reformation had its beginning. In our own day, the day of Protestantism's decline, who that is at all acquainted with the facts fails to realize that our dear Brother Russell was selected as a fit vessel, a new wineskin, to preserve and uphold the glorious Gospel, all the wondrous features of which he clearly saw, and plainly stated, in the harmonious unfolding of the Divine Plan of the Ages, in which we all so greatly rejoice? How certain it is, too, that the old wineskins, the leaders of nominal Christianity, with all due respect to a few devout souls amongst them, were in no condition for this service, and had to be rejected for the same reasons that obtained amongst the Jewish leaders at our Lord's first advent? How careful, too, should we be today, who have been permitted to engage in this same ministry,

that we continue to prove ourselves worthy thereof, lest it be taken from us, and given to others more worthy, and more appreciative of the honor!

### **Our Lord's Grace Toward Those Slow to Accept Him and His Teachings**

Thus, then, by three exquisite parables, our Lord Jesus vindicates His disciples and Himself. But has He no thought, no tenderness, for any disciples than His own? Yes, indeed He has. For, having vindicated His own, He instantly begins to make excuse for the disciples of John and of the Pharisees. "No man," says He, "having drunk old wine, straightway desireth new; for, he saith, The old is better." - Luke 5:39.

And here we have one of the most gracious touches in this table-talk about weddings and feasts, old garments and new wine; for it comes to this: A man loves his old cloak and his old wine. He has grown used to them; he has many pleasant associations with them. He likes the old garment, which habit has made easy; it is better to him than a new garment, even though the new be of finer material, and cut more in the fashion of the time. He likes the taste of the old wine, which he has had in his cellar many years, and to which he has grown accustomed, better than that of the new wine, however superior *may* be its quality. New wine, however others may praise it, is always repugnant to the palate of a man accustomed to wine the roughness of which has been softened by age.

In like manner old habits of thought and worship, old customs and forms are not easily given up even in favor of more excellent habits, even though God Himself has sent new methods and new opportunities. The Pharisees were used to their rites, their ceremonies, their traditions. It was not easy for them to give up the religious habits in which they had been bred, with which their names had been honorably associated; and our Lord patiently allows for the force of custom. He admits that it must be hard for them to turn away from the old wine they had drunk so long, even to take to a better wine. Hence He will not have the rabbis and their disciples hurried to a decision. It was very natural for them that they should hesitate to renounce the old Law for the new Gospel, that they should want to patch up the old garment a little longer, and to pour the new wine into the old skin. The Law had come to them from God; it was the Law of the Lord; they knew that, and were sure of it. The Gospel also came from God, but they were not sure of that yet. Let them wait, and put it to the proof. As yet it was early times with them. Christ had not long taught in their streets, nor clone many of His mighty works among them; and because He knew how custom clings to men, and how new His words were to these men as yet, He virtually says to them: "Take time and thought. The whole habit and bent of your lives cannot be altered in a day. I do not expect you straightway to accept My words. You are quite right in not accepting them until you know that I too am come forth from God; and I can wait until you do."

### **Concluding Thoughts**

How many, and how weighty, are the subjects for reflection suggested by the talk at Matthew's table. It suggests, first, that whatever the sorrows by which we may be tried, there is set before us a joy capable of sustaining us under all the sorrows and fluctuations of time; and that having this joy we should let it give a festal tone to our lives-lives which would otherwise be overcast with sadness. It suggests, in the second place, that the true ritualism, the service in which we best express Christian piety, consists of love and holiness; that it lies, not in our scrupulous observance of ecclesiastical forms, but in acts of kindness, and neighborly good will, and in keeping ourselves unspotted from the world. It suggests in the third place, that we are neither to impose our conceptions of truth and duty on our brethren, nor to submit to them when they try to impose their conceptions on us; but that, walking in the holy freedom which bows to no spiritual

authority save that of Christ, we are to act out our own views of truth and duty, and to cheerfully accord to others the freedom we claim for ourselves. And finally it suggests that in our endeavors to minister the Gospel to others, either in the Church or in the world, we are to proceed warily and patiently, remembering that it is only as our labors have the cooperation of God's Holy Spirit that any lasting result, whether in ourselves or in others, may be secured.

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In the preparation of the above we have drawn liberally from the writings of Samuel Cox, a Bible expositor who wrote some years earlier than Brother Russell. Our indebtedness to our late Pastor is well known to our readers, and is specifically indicated towards the close of the article.

## **The Christian's Warfare Against Pride**

*"The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalt eth, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." - 2 Cor. 10:4, 5.*

SOLDIERS OF the cross are of a different kind and are differently armed from the soldiers of the world. Ours is a fight against the spirit of the world and against the flesh. It is the fight not only against the imperfections that came into our flesh through our forefather's disobedience, but against the natural opposition of the flesh to sacrifice. The flesh instinctively struggles to avoid sacrifice. Moreover, our fight is against unseen spiritual foes. The world have their swords and their guns as weapons of warfare. And the Lord has provided us an armor; namely, the breastplate of righteousness, the helmet of salvation, the shield of faith, the Sword of the Spirit, and the sandals of "the preparation of the Gospel of Peace." These are all weapons of defense, except the sword. The sword is an aggressive weapon. - Eph. 6:11-18.

In the case of the Christian, "the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God," is to be handled to accomplish good, to be " used in opposition to Satan and sin. But the thought of this Scripture seems to be, not that we are commissioned to fight the world, but that we are to strive to be loyal to the Lord, to fight sin in ourselves and wherever it might properly be under our jurisdiction, and to repel the attacks of the Adversary. The exercise of our powers in bringing self into subjection means a great deal in the way of sacrifice, much in the way of battling. God has given us "exceeding great and precious promises." The new creature is made strong by these promises-strong in proportion as he perceives the significance of these promises, and feeds upon them.

### **Mental Strongholds to be Cast Down**

The Apostle is pointing out that these strongholds which we are to pull down are in ourselves. Sin is entrenched in our minds, in our imaginations. Pride, selfishness and various other kinds of sin, are entrenched in us through the long centuries of the downward tendencies of our race. These things have dug deep trenches in our system; they are firmly fastened there. But, urges St. Paul, "Let not sin have dominion over your mortal body." Destroy the stronghold. Bring your entire being into subjection to the will of God.

By way of pointing out what these strongholds are-that they are **mental** strongholds -- the Apostle says, "Casting down **imagination**s, and every high thing that exalteth." Our imaginations may be of many kinds. We may be beset by false doctrines and superstitions that have come down to us from past ages. The Word of the Lord is the only thing that can effectually cast these down and make us see God's real character, make us see His glorious promises to the Church now and to the world in the future. The Word of the Lord is the only thing that will cast down imaginations-ignorance, superstition, pride, unholy ambition, idle speculations, and every form of thought that would lead us astray and hinder the work of grace in our hearts and minds. These imaginations of the natural mind exalt themselves against the true knowledge of God, the Spirit of God -- "high things," the Apostle calls them.

We are to "mind not high things. The Apostle does not mean that we are not to mind the high things that are spiritual; for in another place he says, "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." (Col. 3:2.) In other words, Set your affections on the **very highest** things. But the "high things" of the world are very different; they exalt themselves against the things which are truly high, which are of God. The Lord's children are to be humble, not high-minded, not to be carried *away* by the empty honors, projects and ambitions of earth. The desire to have a place among men, to shine in society, to have wealth and influence, to have whatever things would bring us into high esteem amongst mankind, is a temptation that the disciple of Christ must guard against.

It has been noted by those who have the care of the mentally defective that a great deal of difficulty lies in the imagination. It is said that if one visits an insane asylum, he will find one here who thinks he is a king; there another, who imagines that she is a queen; another who imagines he is fabulously rich and could draw checks for millions. The organ of self-esteem has been too large. The Lord only knows how much the individual himself has had to do in cultivating this tendency. But he has always more or less to do with the matter; the high imaginations and the desire to be great obtain dominion over him-get the mastery.

### **Pride Leads to Mental Unbalance**

The same thing applies to Christians. After coming into the Church -of Christ, they are still liable to the ambition to become some great one, to do some great thing, to find or promulgate some great doctrine, to discover some new interpretation of Scripture or some new type. All these are "high things that exalt." Our Lord gave a discourse upon this subject, telling us that when we are invited to a feast, we should not take a high seat, but a low seat-and perhaps afterward we might be exalted. To desire these things and to seek for them is to have "strongholds" of pride and unholy ambition in the imagination, aspirations for exaltation and honor. Then comes the thought that we are great, that we are worthy of attention, of special notice. Mental unbalance is there. The fact is that we are all insignificant, of very little importance in the execution of the Lord's Plan.

The Lord could have done all His great work without us and our cooperation, probably more easily than with us. But He very graciously permits us to have a part in His work, for our own good and blessing. He is dealing with us as children and is training us. Having begotten us of His Holy Spirit, He helps us to overcome our weaknesses and rewards us if we do overcome them. He drills and disciplines us to fit us for a noble and glorious future. A part of this drilling as soldiers of the King of kings is our fight against self-esteem and a desire for great things, high things, according to the standards of this "present evil world."

## **"Bringing into Captivity Every Thought"**

The thought of casting down unholy and unprofitable imaginations is also borne out in the final words of our text, that we are to "bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." Whatever we **do** we have first thought **about**. We sometimes say, "I acted before I thought." What we mean is that we acted before we gave the matter **serious** thought. No thought should be harbored in our minds which is not in full harmony with the Word of God. As Christ was obedient to the Father in everything-saying, "Let not My will, but Thine, be done"-so every one of us should bring our thoughts into obedience to Christ. Our Redeemer is our Exemplar.

All the members of Christ's Body must have the same mind that was in Christ, must manifest the spirit of our Master. "Let us humble ourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt us in due time." (1 Peter 5:6.) No one can wholly follow the Lord without much of the spirit of humility, without bringing his **thoughts** into subjection to the Lord. This is not the time to exalt ourselves and to show how we can shine. But we are to "show forth the praises of Him who bath called us out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9), who has called us with this Heavenly Calling, not for our own sakes merely, but for His own glory and the blessing of others. God's glory is to be our chief concern always. We are to be efficient servants of the Lord, through His grace, not of our own strength. If we are to be great in the end, we must be humble, we must gladly be servants of all now. We must be glad to serve, not only when there is honor attached, but when the service is unnoticed or unknown.

God has arranged for our learning certain lessons of self-control, bringing ourselves into full obedience to God in a voluntary way, with a view to our being His representatives by and by, and of then enforcing obedience to God's requirements on the part of the world. It is a generally accepted principle that no one is qualified to rule others who has not himself learned obedience. At the cost of great suffering, our Lord Jesus learned what obedience means. He promptly and fully submitted Himself to God. This Spirit of Christ is to be manifested and developed in us, that we shall thus be ready for the future work of The Christ, the work of the Millennial Age.

In proportion as the Truth is received and assimilated, it brings to us the spirit of a sound mind. It does not bring us perfect soundness of brain; but where rightly received, it brings meekness, teachableness, thoughtfulness, seriousness. It leads us to take careful heed to the instructions of our Heavenly Guide. It thus gives balance to the judgment, greater than we had ever **before** known. This should increase as we go on in the good way and become disciplined soldiers in the army of the Lord. But if the Truth is not received in the spirit of the Truth, in the love of it, it might not only fail to be of any benefit, but might engender a spirit of pride and boastfulness.

This quality of pride seems to be particularly associated with all kinds of insanity. Many of the inmates of insane asylums are affected with a large degree of self-esteem-thinking of themselves more highly than they ought to think. Their minds are unbalanced in that direction to a notable degree. We cannot be too careful to cultivate nearness to the Lord, which always brings humility and a proper realization of our own unworthiness and littleness before Him.

## **Keeping Close to Christ Our Only Safety**

Satan is especially alert to trap the Lord's children in this "evil day." We might give an illustration which we have used before, but which seems well to picture wherein lies our special danger and our entire safety. Suppose we should consider a large circle, with Christ as the Center of that circle. Suppose the circle contained an abundance of space, so that there might be varying degrees of closeness to the Lord. Let the outer edge of that circle represent the utmost limit of God's care



over His children. Any one, then, nearing the outside line would be coming more and more into a place of danger. We believe that in proportion as any of us live close to the great Center of the circle -- our Lord Jesus -- we are safe. In proportion as we fail to do this, and allow ourselves to drift or to wander away from Him, we shall be getting near the danger point, and are amenable to the evil influences from outside. Should we wander entirely over the outer line, our case would be beyond recovery.

The Lord has in a way put around the human race a barrier against danger. This barrier is, largely, man's will. Those who have given up their wills, their minds, to the Lord, to have His will done in them, are particularly liable to severe and subtle attacks of the Adversary. He especially seeks to delude and entrap the true children of the Lord, thus again to bring them into bondage to sin. Upon such as come under his influence, the delusion is gradual.

We are all born with unsound minds. As to the degree of unsoundness we need not quarrel. The armament which the Lord gives us is not merely a knowledge of how to quote Scripture. Neither is it merely to have the ability to dispute and to debate, though that ability is very good in its place. The real thing that God is looking for is in our hearts. He is not looking to see how much you know; for He could pump a good deal of knowledge into you in a few minutes if He so desired. But the Lord is looking to see to what extent you are meek, patient, fully submitted to His will. Let us have more and more of the Spirit of the Lord, the spirit of a sound mind, and the earnest desire to help one another.

"The Lord shall judge His people." (Heb. 10:30.) If they get into trouble through not being sufficiently watchful, the Lord will give them some experiences which will be good for them, if rightly received. Let us remember the warning words of the Apostle Paul: "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" of the Lord. (1 Corinthians 11:31.) This means that when we neglect to judge ourselves, He has to do it for us. Thus we are being chastened with a view to our correction, that we might attain unto the heavenly reward and favor that is to be ours as new creatures in Christ, if we remain humble and faithful unto death. If we continue to be meek and filled with the spirit of humility, not craving present honors and exaltation, but willing in perfect patience to await the Lord's -own good time, our exaltation will come; and we shall share our Savior's throne and His glory forevermore.

"O blows that smite,  
O wounds that pierce  
This shrinking heart of mine!  
What are ye but the Master's tools,  
Performing work divine!  
How blest that all these seeming ills  
That draw my heart to thee  
Are each a proof that Thou hast set  
Thy seal of love on me!"  
- *The Watch Tower*.



# **The History of the Church**

**No. 9**

## **Martin Luther**

STANDING UPON the pinnacle of God-given light and understanding, the earnest Christian is stirred as 'he turns to view those time-recorded events which men call History. To the alien mind it may seem but a jumbled mass of chance happenings, confused and with no pattern; but to the heaven-enlightened it is a majestic edifice, planned by the greatest of all architects, steadily and symmetrically moving onward to completion-not by the skilled laborers of a Hiram or a Solomon, but by the activities of the wise, the stupid, the blindly ignorant, actuated at times by noble purpose, but oftener by selfish aims and desires; God using their very wrath to His ultimate praise and the bringing about of His invincible purpose.

When the current of human history is changed by some great and turbulent movement to another and quite diverse channel, the practiced eye may trace back of it a long series of events preparatory to that momentous happening. We follow onward through the pages of the Holy Word four thousand years of God-prepared happenings and circumstances that brought to pass surely and steadily its intended culmination-the birth of a Redeemer. And no less surely did the same omnipotent Hand set into motion and control those forces which would lead His people forth from the cold and barren pastures of an apostate Church.

### **Faithful Witnesses of the Reformation**

Back of those stars which shone so brightly in the darkened firmament,-Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, and Knox -- were the less brilliant but contributing lights of other earnest men holding aloft their individual torches, that other, eyes, straining to pierce the obscuring mist of Papal bull and boasting error, might also behold the Gospel Sun still shining in the blue vault of heaven.

In the year 1170 Peter Waldo, rich merchant of Lyons, desiring the poverty of his Lord, sold his possessions, gave all to the poor, and attempted to restore to its original purity the Church which he believed to be utterly corrupt. He continued to preach and after repeated warnings, he was excommunicated, as were his followers.

In England appeared John Wycliffe, "Morning Star of the Reformation," emaciated and weakened by study and asceticism. At first he confined his protests to those against the corrupt clergy and the tyranny -of Rome, then brought his great intellect and knowledge of the New Testament to bear in an examination of the doctrine of Transubstantiation, held by the Church which had substituted the Sacrament of the Mass for the holy simplicity of the Supper of the Lord. In the tongue of the common people his co-workers gave forth the plainer truths of the Gospel, while Wycliffe's English version of the Bible removed the sackcloth with which it had been bound and gave it, open and unchained, to a grateful people. Against his influence Papal decrees were useless, and nearly a half century after his death, his bones were removed and burned, and the ashes scattered upon the surface of the river. But the flowing water could not carry *away* from men the sound of his voice, nor the breezes remove the ever-ascending incense of the truth he uttered.

In Bohemia John Huss pointed with a steady finger at the appalling vices of the clergy and was consigned alive to the blazing fagots, whose roaring flames but lighted with a greater intensity the surrounding darkness.

## **Men Destined and Chosen by God**

Through Huss the truth taught by Wycliffe reached the eyes of an awakening monk in Saxony, bold of speech and impetuous in action-Martin Luther. Violating at times in his earnest vehemence the very law of love, but standing in heroic disregard of all personal safety, Luther was a man destined and chosen by God to fling wide open the door which the delicate, scholarly hand of an Erasmus had already set ajar. But a mightier Hand than theirs had reached down from the great white throne of heaven and turned that stubborn door upon its time-bound hinges; for without divine help the timid fingers of a scholar and the virile hand of the Augustinian could have availed nothing. "Lo, I have set a door open before you which no one is able to shut; for though your strength is small, you have kept My Word, you have not renounced My name." . Praise God there is One who opens and none shall shut, who shuts and none shall open, who sets up and puts down, whose mighty Word shall not return to Him empty, but shall work out His glorious will in all the affairs of men.

Beside the great reformer there must ever stand the frail body -of Erasmus-he of the weak and gentle voice, who shrank from every form of violence in speech and deed, accomplishing by the strength of his intellect alone so telling an attack upon the haughty Church that the world listened and, charmed with the delicacy of his satire and the brilliance of the mind that guided his pen, fell admiringly and trustingly at his feet. Though they were never to meet in person, the pictures of Erasmus and Luther appeared side by side, hailed as the first honest German reformers. Yet great is the contrast they present; for though both were deep in their natures and their view the same, in temperament their fundamental difference clashed all along the way.

The sway that Erasmus held over his own time and generation seems to lie in the fact that he became a symbol of all that men longed for in the depths of their consciousness. He held up before them a blessed vision of men dwelling in brotherhood, of peace instead of war; and they were sick at heart of constant strife and bloodshed. The humanist dream of Erasmus was that of a world united in speech, religion, and culture, with all bickerings and controversies laid aside for all time. Viewing the constant quarrels of the nations, the hatred that existed between French, English, and German, he exclaimed, "Why do such foolish names still exist to keep us sundered, since we are united in the name of Christ?" In his idealistic vision the pen and not the sword would bring about a new spiritual form of a universal unity, would bring men into the fold of an all-embracing Christliness where love of fellow and an absorbing desire to serve others should prevail. But, beautiful as was the idea, men in general were inadequate to receive it. It was beyond man's power then as now to write upon the fleshy tablets of men's hearts so high a law-hardened more or less to stone as their hearts are through their continued alienation.

And so Erasmus and his followers instituted a new kind of nobility, of culture and high aspiration. They buried their tell-tale names of humble origin under the Latin or Greek equivalents of those names, even as Gerhard was called Erasmus, and Schwarzerd became Melancthon. But, alas, such intellectual atmosphere was but for the happy few, and the threshold of the door too high for the masses-"the barbarians," which a weary earth under varied forms of tyranny has held in such numbers.

## **Various Methods of Reformation**

The brilliant criticisms of the ruling domineering Church penned by the scholarly hand of Erasmus became in Luther's brawny grasp a heavy weapon in an active personal battle with the arrogant foe. Still say the Catholic theologians, even as it was remarked in his own time, "Erasmus laid the egg and Luther hatched it." While reason and mockery were the best of tools in the

delicate fingers of the scholar, sitting within the four walls of his study, swathed in furs to keep within his frail, anemic body what was there of heat, Luther wielded the scapel blade, cutting with bold and certain strokes at the malignant sores which he loathed But Erasmus hated force, and the harsh, dictatorial tones of the monk fell upon his ear with much unpleasantness. However, he said, "If God, as may be surmised by the magnificent swing with which Luther's cause has gone forward, wishes that matters should run this course, and needs a rough handed surgeon like Luther to heal the sores of a degenerate epoch, it is not for me to question His wisdom." Calmly seated behind his books, again he remarked, "How should I be able to help Luther by merely turning myself into a companion in danger? By so doing I should lead two men to their deaths instead of one."

But in just the same measure that Erasmus shrank in disapproval from Luther's noisy assault upon that which he himself had held up to the world in ridicule in his "Praise of Folly," so Luther despised the lukewarmness and indecision in matters of faith that Erasmus displayed. He scorned his evasion when a pointed question was put to him, his refusal to say Yes, or No, his seeming lack of conviction. The public attack Erasmus had made upon him he could not overlook, and for a year waged a fierce war of words against him whom he called, "the greatest enemy of God." Later Erasmus refused Luther's overtures to peace. He would not be the friend of him who had brought war where the teacher had believed himself about to establish good will amongst men. But Luther had said, "This war is our Lord God's war. He has unchained it, and never will it cease raging until all the enemies of His Word have been wiped from the face of the earth."

Melancthon and Luther, however, walked hand in hand, a loving John and an, energetic Paul; but the gentle fellow-laborer was often hurt by the excitable outbursts of Luther, and Erasmus ever remained in his eyes as the great teacher, the revered master.

On the outside, the Roman Church presented itself as a fair edifice indeed, but the supporting pillars were weakened by the dry-rot of formalism and the boring termites of Papal error. Already in the deep grooves made upon its outer walls by a scholar's pen, the pick of a miner's son was at work, each forceful blow shaking its very foundations. But small attention was given this at first by those complacently seated within. They were too busy with the decorating of St. Peter's, too engrossed in master paintings for the Vatican to direct much attention to the noisy Saxon monk. They had handed Savonarola over to the flames, and had escorted the dissenting ones out of the Spanish peninsula, now they hoped for quiet that they might give their full attention to art. But the sound of storm grew into the threatening roll of thunder.

### **Divine Protection Afforded the Reformer**

Brother Streeter, in his "The Revelation of Jesus Christ" remarks: "In the Lord's providence the Reformers were protected in their witnessing by some of the world's princes." Otherwise the reformers of this particular period would have met with violence as did some we have mentioned of an earlier time. The most outstanding of these powerful protectors was Frederick, Elector of Saxony, of whom we have already spoken as the founder of the new University of Wittenberg. He had invited the young priest, Luther, there as a professor, protecting him in both his pulpit and in his university chair. Strange as it may seem, no more ardent son of the Roman Church was to be found in all Germany than Frederick, in the collecting of relics and the bones of saints, the superstitious tokens which Luther despised. Then fate seemed to lay the whole outcome of the Reformation into the hands of Erasmus. When Frederick was passing through Cologne, he asked for an interview with this indisputable; leader of religious thought that he might determine his opinion of Martin Luther. Was he the head of a new and better evangelism, he queried, or was he merely a fanatical sectarian. The whole issue of the Reformation trembled in the balance. Would

the answer be that the fiery monk was justified in what he was doing or would it imply that he was wrong? Luther's rebellious methods were distasteful to Erasmus. "If Luther remains within the fold of the Church, I shall be happy to rally to his side," he had said. Even with the same horizon they were in a sense, rivals. One word of disapproval from Erasmus, the master, and Frederick would withdraw his supporting arm; as nearly as Erasmus would take sides on any question he now stood on the side of the Reformer, and the Elector straightway requested the Papal delegate not to excommunicate Luther and burn his books as threatened until a careful and public inquiry had been made into his cause.

And so to the town of Worms, already filled with people who had come to witness the entry of its recently crowned young emperor, Charles V, came Luther now under the ban of the Pope and with an official letter of safe-conduct in his purse lest he be waylaid and burned at the stake as had his noble predecessor, John Huss, one hundred years earlier. The next day he stood before the assembly; demanded to recant portions of the books he had already acknowledged as his own work and to be the first to consign one to the flames, he asked for time to consider. The next day he gave them his reply-noble, brave, and worthy of his Christly 'ambassadorship: "Unless I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture . . . my conscience is taken captive by God's Word, and I neither can nor will revoke anything, seeing it is not safe or right to act against conscience. God help me. Amen." Ordered ten days later by the Emperor to leave Worms, he was waylaid in the Thuringian forest by a party of five horsemen and carried captive to the castle of Wartburg where, known only as Knight George, he remained a year-a captive only that he might be safe from those who would have taken his life. Thus did Frederick, Elector of Saxony, come to the rescue of the Reformation. Thus did he press his name deeply and dramatically on the pages of the history of the Church, a ready instrument, noble and willing, in the hands of his God.

Luther in his quiet forest-surrounded sanctuary continued his letters and controversial papers which, fluttering through the bars of his prison, went their way to gladden all the world. At the age of sixty-three he passed quietly away, as a mighty wind, its force all spent against resisting oaks gently moves the sleeping flowers with a final sigh. His last word on earth was a decided, "Yes," when asked if he still stood by the doctrines he had taught. "The just shall live by faith," the young monk had declared as he arose from his knees when ascending the Scala Scanta -- and so shall the just die; and so died Martin Luther.

### **A Prophet Sent by God**

In the funeral discourse given before his interment at Wittenberg he was likened to that angel of the Apocalypse who flew in mid-heaven with the everlasting Gospel. He was declared to be a prophet sent by God to deliver His Church from the power and corruption of Rome. Surely, the listeners were reminded, it was his prerogative as such a messenger to speak so forcibly that to some it would seem to be bitter and lacking in gentleness, but the result of 'his labor and fortitude might well be summed up in the words of the second angel, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great." Brother Streeter, who so ably wrote an exposition of Revelation in our own day, 'has an embracing but more complete explanation of these angel messages by virtue of the later and clearer epoch in which he lived.\*

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\*See "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, in two volumes, published by our Institute.

Melancthon, faithful friend and fellow-laborer, who had himself often suffered under the vehemence and strong words of Luther, gave also on the solemn occasion his eulogy. He declared him to have been a Jeremiah into whose mouth God had placed His Word, mighty to the tearing down of strongholds of sin, a word sufficient also to plant and to build. There might be truth, he admitted, in the complaint of some good people that in controversy Luther was too rough and outspoken, but even Erasmus had reputedly said, "God in these last times, in which great and terrible diseases have prevailed, has given the world also a sharp physician." And he, Melancthon, associate and friend of thirty years, in his own deep loss bore testimony to the deep spirituality of the Reformer, of his constant dependence upon prayer in all the trials and difficulties of life, of his freedom from personal vice, and his eye of single devotedness to God's will and purposes, relying on Him for help in all his times of need. Thus spoke Melancthon, the gentle scholar and loving John, of whom Luther had lovingly said, "Our master of arts, Philip, goes forward quietly and gently, cultivating and planting, sowing and watering joyfully, according as God has dealt to him so liberally of his gifts."

And what of Erasmus? Had he escaped the noisy battle which he so detested and to which he had paved the way? His wish had been to reform the Church from within. He had sat calmly in his study as Luther stood before the hostile assembly at Worms, when one word from the scholar would have had weight with the decision. He hoped instead that the Pope's ban would curb Luther. Could he, now in his fifties, hide himself in student quiet and be thought of kindly by both parties? Not so, for in times of great crises the people insist on a decisive stand -- for or against, yes or no -- and Erasmus found himself named by the Catholics as the promoter of this, "Luther plague." Priests spoke against him from the pulpit, while radical students threw down his chair at the university. He could not live happily in any decidedly Catholic town, nor did he find a suitable haven in one gone over to the Reformation. It has been said, "A free and independent mind which refuses to be bound by any dogma and declines to join any party, never finds a home upon this earth," but Switzerland, loved refuge for all who have sought freedom of thought and conscience, became his dwelling-place. Here he lived for eight years, linking his name inseparably with Basle as he carried on his great literary work, sought by the learned.

Outside, the battle waged fiercely, for Luther had found upon his own hands a storm that he had never wished nor bargained for, as an oppressed peasantry, now taking matters into their own excited hands, staged a social insurrection where the Reformer had intended one of spirit and of truth. His spiritual sword, keen and two-edged, became a carnal weapon in their hands; words of the spirit resolved themselves into fleshly commands. One sea-like surge succeeded another as they stormed cloisters and destroyed graven images, and at Luther's reproof they taunted him with the term, "Friend of Antichrist." "I was born for struggling on the field of battle," Luther had said, "with parties and devils. Thus it is that my writings breathe war and tempest. . . . I am like the sturdy wood-cutter, who must clear and level the road." But this insurrection he had not reckoned for, and deciding that "the brute populace must be governed by brute force," he took his stand on the side of authority against these who had followed him so devotedly but mistakenly. Surely with sorrow as well as with characteristic courage and honesty he exclaimed at the end, "I, Martin Luther, have slain all the peasants who died during this rebellion, for I goaded authority to the slaughter. Their blood be on my head." Erasmus, old and sickly, pricked to the heart at tidings of the violent deaths of friends, uttered his sorrowful prayer, "May God gather me soon unto Himself so that I quit this mad world." The wrath of man, the overruling of God! To those standing upon a sea of glass, how beautifully the sun is shining, though storm-clouds gather and men's hearts fail them for very fear.

"No storm can shake my inmost calm  
While to that Refuge clinging,  
Since Christ is Lord of heaven and earth  
How can I keep from singing?"

- *Contributed.*

*Next of this series JOHN WESLEY*

## Convention of Young Bible Students

The following is at hand from our young friends in Detroit, Mich.

"Joyfully, we once more remind the friends in all parts of the country of our coming Labor Day convention, September 3, 4, 5. All sessions will be held in the auditorium of the downtown Y. W. C. A., 2230 Witherell Street.

"Reasonably priced and suitable accommodations are available, as well as restaurants in the immediate vicinity of the Hall for those whom the local brethren are unable to provide for.

"Those wishing to symbolize their consecration to the Lord by water immersion are asked to notify the secretary of the Detroit Class as soon as possible.

"We whole-heartedly invite all young people interested in the truth to this feast of spiritual food. No one else, however, is barred and any wishing to attend whether they be young or old are very welcome. A very fine program has been arranged which we are certain will be to the blessing of all.

"For further information, address the Class Secretary, Brother Frank Niemczak, 5807 N. Lawndale Avenue, Detroit, Michigan."

### "BEARING MUCH FRUIT"

"It is the branch that bears the fruit;  
That feels the knife,  
To prune it for a larger growth,  
A fuller life.

"Though every budding twig be lopped,  
And every **grace**  
Of swaying tendril, springing leaf,  
Be lost a space.

"O thou whose life of joy seems reft,  
Of beauty shorn;  
Whose aspirations lie in dust,  
All bruised and torn,

"Rejoice, tho' each desire, each dream,  
Each hope of thine  
Shall fall and fade; it is the hand  
Of Love Divine

"That holds the knife, that cuts and breaks  
With tenderest touch,  
That thou, whose life has borne some fruit  
May'st now bear much."

## Convention Blessings

### Waupaca, Wis.

"This convention afforded, as do all occasions of fellowship with those of like precious faith, a season of spiritual refreshing and encouragement. The attendance was relatively small, possibly 150 to 200 being present. The setting of the convention provided more than the average for a recreational change from the human standpoint, particularly for the brethren living in cities or towns. Some of those who had had a share in the preliminary arrangements had hoped for a larger representation of scattered sheep from the vicinity adjacent to Waupaca, but this was not disappointing inasmuch as it is our privilege to sow the seed and' the Lord giveth the increase. The encouragement the convention afforded those who did attend and subsequent work in Central Wisconsin may bear more fruit than the convention itself gave promise of.

"The discourses were spiritually upbuilding and uplifting.- We rejoiced to hear the old, old story in a public talk, for which some 2,000 announcements were distributed in Waupaca and surrounding towns, as well as to many of the farm homes. Another public opportunity was afforded as a sort of postscript to the convention at the Veteran's Home, some two miles from the convention grounds, in the evening after the regular convention had closed. An invitation to return was given and another talk is scheduled for the near future.

"The Testimony Meetings were perhaps one of the most refreshing and stimulating portions of the convention. The testimonies echoed and re-echoed praise and thanksgiving to the Lord. for the way in which He had led some in being brought back into full faith and renewed determination to keep the sacrifice bound with cords to the altar. There were friends present who were isolated, so that association with others was not possible, and some who had lost the desire for fellowship and had forsaken the assembling of themselves with others. All rejoiced together in their privileges of fellowship and in the liberty wherewith Christ makes free.

"Another outstanding session was that of the sunrise baptismal service held on 'the shores of beautiful Columbia Lake, Although water immersion is but a symbol, it has a solemnizing effect upon the heart of all the consecrated, and each witness of friends observing this symbol reminds us of our covenant and prompts us to diligence in carrying it out faithfully unto death. 'Being buried with Him in baptism, we also should walk in newness of life.'

"We thank our heavenly Father; for so many opportunities of feasting with our present Lord in communion with others of like precious faith, and for the harvest truths which have been so graciously assembled for us through the faithful service of His servant. Our spiritual appetites have been whetted for further opportunities of fellowship with the brethren in convention as the Lord may provide."



Dear Brethren:

It is with rejoicing hearts that we take this opportunity to write you. The Detroit convention is over and we are left with many sweet thoughts for meditation. We can truly say the Lord has blessed us abundantly, above all that we asked or thought, and our hope is that we may go forth strengthened and uplifted and better fortified by the lessons learned, to continue our journey along the narrow way, and that we may be not only hearers of the Word, but doers also.

We wish to thank our dear brethren off the "Herald" for all their help and cooperation and for sending us dear Brother Friese whose message was so helpful and much appreciated by the brethren in Convention.

The testimonies offered were a source of inspiration and encouragement to all, and we were much favored by a fine array of talented speakers. The music rendered too, was commented on by many. Six dear ones symbolized their consecration, and many eyes were moist with tears of joy as they remembered the day when they took the same step. We pray that the Heavenly Father will gently lead them by the hand until their earthly pilgrimage is over and He receives them unto Himself.

After receiving our "Herald" and scanning the Annual Report and especially noting the small working margin, the thought came forcibly to us that we may never know on this side the veil how much you dear brethren have sacrificed on our behalf in the sending of speakers to us for our comfort and encouragement along the way. We know however that the Lord is not unrighteous to forget your labor of love in that you have ministered unto the saints and do minister.

May the Lord richly bless you as you seek to serve His little ones, and again thanking you for your prayers and labor on our behalf, we remain,

Yours in the bonds of Christ,  
M. H. -- Mich.

Dear Friends:  
Greetings in His name.

We wish to express our gratitude for the part you played in making our convention possible. The discourse by Brother Friese was, we feel sure, very helpful and strengthening to the faith of all who heard him.

We had an attendance of approximately one hundred, drawn from a radius of about 200 miles. The spirit manifested was one of love and solicitude for one another in these days of severe trial.

The convention opened Sunday morning with an address of welcome, followed by two discourses. After the noon intermission, services were resumed with a prayer and testimony meeting, after which three discourses were given.

Again thanking you for your cooperation, and praying the Father's richest blessing on your efforts to do His will, we remain

With much Christian love,

The Cleveland Ecclesia  
Mrs. V. E. C. - Sec.