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Things Coming to Pass

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

TWELVE MONTHS ago Europe was tense with the fear of war. Along all frontiers troops were massing and reserves were being called to the colors. Diplomats worked overtime in conferences on which might depend the fate of the continent. Effort after effort was made to forestall the impending conflict, but all in vain. The terrible storm burst, and now, after eleven months of war, the face of Europe has been changed. Nine nations -Poland, Norway, Denmark, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Luxemburg and Belgium-have lost their independence. Much of France is German-occupied, and the Balkan states are trembling before the lengthening shadows of Great Germany and the Soviet Union, while Britain, with her back to the wall, stands girded to withstand the long-anticipated Nazi onslaught upon her shores. The European drama rushes toward its climax with a speed that has amazed and terrified the civilized peoples of earth. Episodes whose implications at the time were not always clear, now fall into place as stages in a tragedy whose scope was undreamed of a decade ago. Step by step, factors have led to the present condition, which by their own statements the wise of this world have admitted may alter not only the map of the world but the entire social structure as well. It is now realized, as one has expressed it, "Nazi Germany is not merely a nation in arms engaged in upsetting the traditional balance of power in Europe; she is an elemental revolutionary force with the explosive power of a volcano and, as well, the spearhead of a totalitarian coalition which seeks to undo the results of the American and French Revolutions and to impose on the world an entirely new ideology." It is impossible for men to escape the fact that we are living in a cataclysmic era; in fact, both by the press and the radio, populations are being deluged with warnings of the dreadful implications of present events and of their far-reaching effects upon the lives of all living persons. So fearful has been the effect upon the masses that in many cases it approaches hysteria, and in the agitation for

the exposing and eradication of enemies within each nation, the beliefs and actions of even innocent and harmless people have been misconstrued, with consequent suffering. Man is losing confidence in his own neighbors.

It is at this time, when we who know God's Word observe with fascinated gaze the madness of nations and the earth-shaking events chronicled daily, that one scripture comes oftenest to mind, the words of Christ in foretelling conditions to obtain at the last days: "There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven shall be shaken." - Luke 21:25, 26.

Now, as never before, do we understand the depth of meaning in these words. In the collapse of the democratic institutions in the conquered nations, we are seeing substitutions in moral and intellectual ideology which are doing violence to the teachings of Scripture. Is there not fear such as men have never seen before? Do not the strongest hearts in the highest places, quail before the prospects on the horizon and the crumbling of man's strongest props? Do not we see the darkening of the sun, the Gospel light shining from the teachings of Christ? Is not the moon, the reflection of the Gospel teachings as shown in the Old Testament types and prophecies, turning to blood (becoming repulsive)? And are not the stars (the Apostles and their writings) falling from heaven (ceasing to be illuminaries of men's minds)? Yes, only now, in the triumph of the totalitarian forces, is the world realizing the appalling truth that in their hatred, justified or not, for the established churches of religion, the forces of Nazism are uprooting everywhere the pure and wholesome teachings of the Bible and are substituting a neo-paganism for the Christian way of life which augurs ill for civilization.

In a recent editorial in the "New York Sunday Mirror," which it is worthy of notice, used for its heading the striking words, "Watchman, What of the Night?" the writer went into much detail regarding this spread of hatred of all things religious. One citation will suffice to show the dreadful spirit which has crept into the world, and which may yet prove to be the most potent element in ushering in the "hour of temptation" which is to try all them that dwell on the face of the earth. The editorial reveals as typical of what Germany has been taught, this passage from "Bolshevism in the Bible," by Hans Hauptmann, published in Leipzig in 1937: "But I say to you, Love your enemies, bless those that curse you, do good to them that hate you, pray for those who insult and persecute you.' According to Nordic feeling this is ethics for morons and idiots. It is an invitation to self-abasement without parallel, which would force any one who agreed to it to feel the greatest contempt for himself. This teaching is so hair-raising that one cannot grasp the reason for its being, unless one realizes its mean intention of making humanity a crippled horde of slaves . . . such as the Jewish taskmasters have already made of the many millions of people in Soviet Russia. . . . The determination to destroy all opponents is just as indispensable a factor of human worth and human dignity as the championship of everything that is high and worthy of love."

"Tried, and Found Wanting"

The Christian draws back in horror from a philosophy which, makes a deliberate mockery of the religion of Jesus, and yet we can see that this dreadful teaching and attitude toward established churchianity is but the consequence of the terrible religious history of the past nineteen centuries. We are living in times which are testing the institutions of mankind, whether they be social, political, financial, economic, or religious. For six thousand years humanity has struggled to raise up institutions which would endure and assure them the proper needs of man. But they built not

on the law of God, the Golden Rule, but on what, stripped of all its outward adornments, is the rule of selfishness. This rule, so diametrically opposed to God's rule of unselfishness, has entered into all man's works, and if God be true, the consequences of man's course can only eventuate in annihilation.

Six thousand years ago one perfect man disobeyed God's law, the penalty for which was death. The violation of any of God's laws, whether it be by individuals or nations, can result only in the same penalty. During these six thousand years, humanity has been left to its own devices, except as God has guided its course to eventually work out His own purpose. In this time, mankind have experimented with all manner of institutions, even the best of which cannot be claimed to be based on the Golden Rule. Man has not built on the basis of first, supreme love for his Creator, and second, love for his neighbor. On the contrary, God and His laws were left out of all man's building, and consequently, and naturally, it is impossible for them to prosper, else God's Word would not be true. "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it." God has promised blessing for obedience to His law and has warned, that only destruction can result from its violation. Today we live in a testing time for all man's work, a "shaking" of all things. And we read in Holy Writ the ominous words: "Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved."

It is with deep soberness that we contemplate the events on earth. It is impossible to escape the conclusion that we stand at the door to the final arrangements of man's order preparatory to its collapse under the judgment of the King of kings. We believe we can discern those forces which shall bring about Great Babylon's destruction. We discern, also, a spirit of unbelief sweeping the face of the earth which shall try men's faith in revealed religion and shall result in the "burning of the tares. We see the terrible hatred which is slowly crushing the Jewish peoples to the point where they shall cry out, as never before, for divine help. And we mark, also, the dearth of clear voices teaching humanity from God's Word of the only hope for men. All these are definite Scriptural signs of the times.

"Search the Scriptures"

The sincere conviction forces itself that now it behooves all Christians to become very familiar with the prophetic portions of God's Word, particularly the Book of Revelation. As has been well expressed by another: "It is our conviction that the visions of the Revelation describing the very last closing scenes of the Age are now rapidly fulfilling. We believe these visions more than anything else were designed to enable us to determine our nearness to the greatest of all events, the full establishment of the Millennial Kingdom of Christ." Let us be watchful and take heed to all that is written. And may every experience through which we may be called to pass, reveal in us that strength of faith and character that can firmly utter the words of Psalm 46:1-7: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. There is a river the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved God shall help her and that right early. The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved; He uttered

His voice, the earth melted. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."

Let us watch and pray, and let us be prudent as serpents and harmless as doves. Let men read in us the life of Jesus, and may our peace of mind and calmness of heart permeate, insofar as possible, into the lives of our fellow-men who are now fearing as men have never feared before. Let us endeavor to breathe forth to them something of the blessed hope which has so transformed our lives, even the blessed hope of the "glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ," when earth's night of weeping shall be changed to morn of joy,

Clear Vision Brings Strength

A meditation in the sixth chapter of Isaiah

"I saw the Lord . . . high and lifted up." - Isa. 6:1.

AT THE time this vision was given to Isaiah, the nation of Israel had fallen into a very low moral and religious state. They had continually forsaken the Lord and His ways, and had fallen into idolatry and the evils associated therewith. Even when corrected by the Lord by His permitting adversity to reach them, thus bringing them back to Himself, they followed Him for only a brief season, returning again and again to their idolatrous practices and thus requiring fresh chastisements at His hands. As the prophet, in chapter 1, verses 5 and 6, graphically describes their state: "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint; from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores; they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment."

In their corrupt state, the Lord, through the mouth of the prophet, pleaded with them in those well-known words: "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, My people doth not consider. . . . Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well. . . . Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat of the good of the land; but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword." - Isa. 1:3-20.

These offers of divine mercy and compassion, however, fell on deaf ears, and consequently, the Lord decided to send them a different message, a message it would be very difficult to proclaim. And since the message would be so difficult to proclaim, a vision was given to Isaiah to encourage him and to lead him to volunteer to be the bearer of that message. The vision represented first the majesty and holiness of God as represented in the great Messiah who was to come, and it brought strong faith and conviction to the prophet that though all surface appearances might seem otherwise, nevertheless, right would ultimately triumph, wrong be finally and forever suppressed. The vision pointed to a coming time when the glory of the Lord would be revealed and all flesh see it together (Isa. 40:5) -- in the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth during the Millennial Age, that age at the threshold of which we believe we stand today.

Isaiah's Call and Commission

But now let us' consider the vision in detail. According to verse one, it was in the year that King Uzziah died that Isaiah was given this vision. While this vision is recorded in the sixth chapter, it would be placed at the beginning of chapter one if it were to be given its chronological setting, for it was given to Isaiah before he was a prophet. Indeed, as we ponder this vision, we shall see that it constituted his call to be a prophet and contained his commission as to what it was that he should preach.

Although not yet called to be a prophet, Isaiah was already a lover of truth and righteousness, and he knew full well that the corrupt state of affairs which obtained in Israel would not be permitted

by God to go on much longer, and that severe punishments would doubtless be shortly, visited upon the nation. Where is he to look for strength and comfort amid the troublous times which he cannot but believe will soon burst as a veritable tempest upon so ungodly a people? Oppressed with these forebodings of impending calamities, he enters the temple, and as he muses on the situation, the answer to his question comes to him in a form most strange, most impressive. A vision breaks upon his inward eye. There rises before him a new and awe-inspiring, yet most familiar scene. It is still the temple in which he stands, but the temple enlarged, transfigured, illuminated with a splendor, and awful with a terror such as his heart had not conceived. Instead of the holy and the most holy, the mercy-seat, the altar, the table of showbread, and the golden candlestick, everything is changed. There is a throne in it, and upon the throne Adonai, King of kings and Lord of lords. The throne is high and lifted up, and the flowing royal robes of the Majesty seated thereon fill the temple. Beside Him stand a choir of living creatures called seraphim encircling the throne.

The seraphim are not mentioned elsewhere in Scripture, and the origin and meaning of the name can be supplied only by conjecture. Here their presence seems intended to symbolize the adoration unceasingly due the One on the throne. Possessed, apparently, of human form, and in an erect posture, they stand in a double choir about the throne, each with two of his wings seeming to support himself upon the air, with two covering his face in reverence, and with two his own person in humility.

Isaiah, standing, as it were, by the doorway, hears the seraphs' hymn of adoration:

"Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of Hosts," and hears others of the heavenly choir respond

"The whole earth is full of His glory,"

and as the sound of their united voices peals through the expanse, the pillars of the door shake to their foundations, and smoke, indicating, probably, an approaching manifestation of God (Exod. 19:18), fills the temple.

As already suggested, the vision was a prophecy of the future. Only from the prophetic standpoint would the words of the seraphim be true, for the whole earth has not yet been filled with the Lord's glory. Quite to the contrary, the earth was, at the time of the vision, and still is, full of sin and violence, and every evil work prospers under the dominion of the great adversary of God and righteousness--the prince of this age. But God wished Isaiah to know that evil shall not always prevail, but that, as expressed in our dear Redeemer's model prayer, eventually God's Kingdom shall come, and His will shall be done on earth as it is done in heaven. Then with evil and evil doers destroyed, and the knowledge of God filling the earth, this prophecy will be fulfilled, and the whole earth shall indeed be full of the Lord's glory. Meantime, however, Isaiah could rest content -- content to wait God's time, content to work in God's way, content to trust in God's mercy. Now that he has seen the eternal purpose of God, he can look without despair on the moral insensibility of his own people and even on the national disasters into which that moral insensibility must inevitably plunge them.

The Vision's First Effect on Isaiah

The first and deepest impression, however, which was made on Isaiah's mind by this vision, was, he tells us, an overwhelming sense of sin. "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips."

As a matter of fact, Isaiah was not one of the worst of men. On the contrary, he was one of the noblest and best of our race; a man much given to meditation on the highest themes; a man with a pure, lofty ideal before him, which he eagerly pursued; a man who had devoted himself to the study of God's will and who delighted to do that will to the best of his understanding and ability. Isaiah was not a bad man but a good man, one of the excellent of earth. But no sooner does he lift his eyes to the throne and to Him that sitteth thereon, than he sees a goodness so much more perfect than his own, a holiness so intense and radiant, a purity so luminous and dazzling that he becomes aware, not so much of the many sins of conduct which unfit him for the divine presence, as of a sinful nature, a nature faulty, imperfect, unholy, a nature which needs to be redeemed, renewed, transfigured before it can meet the pure eyes of the all 'holy One.

When Isaiah, in the vision, cried out, lamenting his undone condition, and that his lips were unfit to take up the song of the divine holiness and glory, one of the seraphim flew towards him, having a live coal, or hot stone, from the altar, and laid it on his mouth and said: "Lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged."

As, in the vision, Isaiah experienced this removal of his iniquity and purging of his sin, he became filled with a strong desire to engage in the Lord's service. Consequently, when he heard the Lord's voice saying: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" he himself immediately responded: "Here am I, send me." Ah! the vision had not been vouchsafed to Isaiah in vain. It had produced in him the effect God had intended it to produce. Isaiah, in vision, had seen the King that he might serve the King. And with wholehearted zeal he offers himself in service. As yet he does not know what is required of him, but whatever it is, he is ready to undertake it.

The Strange Message Isaiah Must Preach

His commission, however, when its terms are disclosed to him, proves to be a strange and disheartening one. To him the Lord says: "Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not; make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn again, and be healed."

What did that message mean? Many have misunderstood it. Many have supposed that Isaiah was himself so to preach that the people's hearts would become hardened as a result; that he should deliberately seek to close their eyes and stop their ears so that they would be unable to see God's gracious character and purposes and could listen no longer to His voice of compassion and tenderness. Some have gone even further than this. By an extension of this selfsame doctrine beyond the confines of the one nation of Israel to the whole world of mankind, they have even charged God Himself with inflicting what they term a "judicial blindness" upon the great mass of our race which left them no chance of repentance-no hope of salvation. Such a gospel (?) we could not but reject, no matter whence it came, so utterly is it opposed to all we have learned of the character and Word of God.

But what do these remarkable words signify? What is the meaning of the message Isaiah is commissioned to proclaim? We answer: God saw that their own stubborn and rebellious attitude had at last brought them into a condition in which they would no longer be able to return to God. Once they had had the capacity to listen and repent, and as God, in mercy and kindness, had dealt with them, rewarding them for right-doing and chastising them for wrong, they had been able to profit by His instructions. But now they had lost that capacity. They had been so persistent in their backslidings; they had been so rebellious in heart; they had so resisted the pleadings, the warnings, the invitations of His grace; they had so hardened themselves against Him, that they had brought themselves into a state in which they would be insensible to any further influence by which God might seek to cleanse and reclaim them.

Isaiah, then, is commissioned to be the preacher and teacher of the nation; but instead of looking forward with joy and confidence to a fruitful ministry, in which many will turn to the Lord, he is told that the exact opposite will be the case. While the vision of the earth being filled with the glory of the Lord, the glory of holiness, is sure and certain, it will not come about in the lifetime of the present nation. Through long and continued neglect of their God-given powers of right thinking and right-doing, these powers have become atrophied, they cannot now function.

As Isaiah, in vision, receives this commission, and notes its apparent fruitlessness, he wonders how long it is to continue. Anxiously, we may well believe, and sick at heart at such a dreary, seemingly hopeless task, he asks: "How long?" And the Lord answered: "Until cities be waste without inhabitant, and houses without man, and the land become utterly waste, and the Lord have removed men far away, and the forsaken places be many in the midst of the land. And if there be yet a tenth in it, it shall again be eaten up."

In this answer from the Lord a prospect as hopeless and discouraging as the first, though in a different way, is opened before him. How long is his apparently fruitless preaching to continue? It must continue until the desolating tide of invasion has swept over the land, and purged to the utmost the sin-stricken nation. So severe should the judgment be that even though a fraction, a tenth, should escape or recover from the first assault, a second and a third should follow till the purgation was complete. The Kingdom of God cannot come until this obdurate generation is wiped out; war and exile will do the work.

But the dark prospect is not left without a gleam of hope. As a terebinth, or an oak, which, when it is felled and left apparently without chance of recovery, will yet germinate afresh, for its stock remains unimpaired, so the core of the Jewish nation shall survive the judgment and burst out afterwards into new life. And so God promised that there should be a root or stem of Israel, which should survive this cutting down of the national tree; a root, or stem, or stock, which would be a holy seed, and, which would constitute the beginning of a redeemed and sanctified Kingdom of God on earth.

Isaiah's Ministry Foreshadowed Our Lord's

Such was the vision vouchsafed to Isaiah, and such the message he was commissioned to proclaim. And how faithfully he carried out his commission and how complete the desolation God permitted the nation to undergo, is a matter of record. But though the story of Isaiah's call and commission is full of interest to us, it takes on an added meaning when we learn, as we do from the New Testament writers, that his courageous proclamation to the nation of his day and their

failure to heed his message then, was but a foreshadowing of our Lord's own ministry and His rejection by the nation at His first advent.

Each of the Synoptic writers (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) tells us this as he records the unfolding of the parable of the sower by our Lord. "Why speakest Thou in parables?" His disciples asked. "Because," He answered, "they seeing, see not; and hearing, hear not; neither do they understand. And in them," (note well our Lord's own words) "in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which saith: 'By hearing ye shall hear, and shall riot understand, and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive'; for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing; and their eyes they have closed, lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their hearts, and I should heal them." - Matt. 13:10-15; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10.

Not only Matthew, Mark, and Luke but St. John also makes reference to this prophecy, and in addition St. John identifies the King sitting upon the throne in Isaiah's vision as being, not Jehovah but none other than our glorified Lord Jesus. His words are: "These things said Isaiah, when he saw His [that is to say, Christ's] glory, and spake of Him." - John 12:41.

Doubtless, too, all will recall St. Paul's impassioned speech recorded in the closing verses of the book of Acts, where, after spending a whole day endeavoring, with doubtful success, to persuade the Jews out of their own Scriptures the truth concerning Jesus, he remarked: "Well spake the Holy Spirit by Isaiah the prophet unto our fathers, saving, 'Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear and shall not understand, and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive,' " etc., and how, following this, he said: "Be it known therefore unto you that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it." - Acts 28:23-28.

The Holy Seed

But what of the stock that according to the closing words of the prophecy was to constitute a holy seed which would survive the nation's destruction and prove to be the beginning of the Kingdom of God on earth? Ah! St. Paul tells us of this seed in yet another reference to Isaiah's vision. It is found in the Epistle to the Romans, chapter 11, verse 7. "Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded"; and then, in support of his statement that the rest were blinded, he cites this vision of Isaiah as follows: "According as it is written, 'God hath given them a spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear.' "

But in this passage from the Romans letter St. Paul says that the "election hath obtained it." How did this occur? We answer: When the favored Jewish nation rejected Messiah at His first advent, that nation, as such, was rejected by Him and scattered amongst all the nations of the earth. Amongst that nation, however, there were a few -Israelites indeed who received Him as their Messiah. To as many as received Him, to them gave He the privilege of becoming sons of God. These became the nucleus of a new nation, a spirit begotten nation, whose citizenship is in heaven. To these were added others from amongst both Jews and Gentiles, from every kindred, tribe, and nation, to constitute, as St. Peter expresses it, a holy nation, a royal priesthood. Soon this holy nation will be complete, each member thereof having shared with his Lord in the first or chief resurrection. When this has taken place, the word will go forth: "Let the whole earth be filled with the glory of Jehovah," and the blessings of Christ's mediatorial Kingdom will begin to go into effect, natural Israel having a prominent share in connection with this glorious work.

Isaiah and others of the ancient-worthy ones will be resurrected and constitute the earthly phase of this holy seed. They will at once enter into their reward as the earthly representatives of Messiah's Kingdom. Gradually the Kingdom will extend, as to these "princes in all the earth" will be gathered all those, both Jew and Gentile, who evince a desire to worship God in the beauty of holiness and to live in harmony with His principles. After a thousand years of the grand work of restoration, and the destruction of the willfully incorrigible, at the close of the Millennium, when He shall have put down all rule, and authority and power, when death has been destroyed and all tears have been -wiped away from all faces, He, Christ Jesus our Lord, shall deliver up the Kingdom to God, even the Father. Then it shall be true in fact what until now has been true only in the plans and purposes of God; "The whole earth shall have become full of the glory of the Lord."

When once Isaiah had seen the vision vouchsafed to him and had grasped its tremendous import, nothing else seemed to matter to him. The events and changes of time could no longer sway him with their former power. Henceforth, the monarch who sat on the throne of Israel was but a passing shadow, at best a frail and imperfect symbol of the true King of men, Adonai, King of kings and Lord of lords. The earthly temple, so awe-inspiring with its sacred emblems, its priestly ministrations, its harmonious choirs, henceforth was but a poor reflection of the temple not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For him the pomps and splendors of earth had no longer any glory by reason of the more excellent glory behind and beyond them. His prophetic career must have extended over a period of at least forty years, and tradition has it that at its close he suffered martyrdom by being sawn asunder, yet none of these things, nor the prospect of them moved him. He was raised above the shows and lures of time -its changes and fears and griefs; for he could look through them and discern the sacred and abiding realities which lay beyond. He had had a vision; he had seen the Lord -- high and lifted up -- and he looked for the time to come when He would exercise His control and bring in everlasting righteousness, peace, and joy.

Concluding Thoughts

We are not prophets; nevertheless, we represent, feebly enough, it is true, the Lord's cause in the earth today. And the experience of Isaiah is illustrative of that through which we must pass if we are truly consecrated and would engage in some small measure in the service of God. Like Isaiah we must be seers before we become servants. As many of us as **are** servants **have** seen a vision which others do not see and heard a voice they do not hear. For us, as for Isaiah, the eternal realities have shown through the pomps and shows of time, and we have heard a divine voice bidding us look to the things which are unseen and eternal, not to the things which are seen and temporal. We need to realize very distinctly that the Lord shall surely establish His Kingdom, which shall fill the whole earth with His glory. We have been granted such a vision in these last times through the unfolding of "The Divine Plan of the Ages" as even Isaiah could have comprehended only dimly. In the light of the glorious truth that has shone on our pathway, now these many years, the wondrous character and purposes of God may be seen as never 'before. If, as we turn to others with the message which has so cheered us, we find few who are able to appreciate it, and fewer still who gladly surrender their lives to it, we must not permit such experiences to discourage us so that we should cease promulgating the message. We must remember that here and there a member of the holy seed will be reached. We must remember that this was true in Isaiah's case, it was true in the case of our Lord and His apostles, 'and, we are assured in advance, must also be true in ours. Let us hold the vision clearly before us. Let us remember that it is for an appointed time, and that, though it may seem to tarry, it will not do so in reality. And let us yield whole-hearted obedience to the heavenly vision in all the various

details of our lives. In so far as we are obedient to the heavenly vision, our life will be a life of faith "in the things which do not appear" to sense; we shall walk "as seeing Him who is invisible"; our character and conduct and our labors in His service will be drawn, gradually but surely, by an unseen power, ever by God's Holy Spirit, into ever closer accord with His holy mind and will concerning us. And at the last, if we continue faithful to the end, we shall hear the Master's voice, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joys of thy Lord."

The Mystery of Godliness

"Great is the Mystery of Godliness." - 1 Tim. 3:16.

THE UNIVERSE is mystery upon mystery. From the animalculae in the air and in the water, to the stars that burn in the firmament at inconceivably vast distances from the earth, there is mystery. And that is only another way of saying that we do not fully understand anything. The ancients believed in four elements-earth, air, fire, and water. But today we have discovered ninety four elements. For a long time it was believed that the atom was the smallest indivisible particle of matter, but we now talk of atoms being composed of electrons. The mysterious power of electricity that pervades the earth and water has been applied only during modern times. There is a mystery in a drop of water. What binds two atoms of hydrogen and one atom of oxygen together to form a molecule of water? We indeed give it a name, for we call it chemical affinity. But what causes that precise action to take place? And why are not the atoms combined in different proportions from what they are?

Why does a fly have eight thousand eyes?

Why does a grasshopper have to have two hundred and seventy horny teeth in his body? Why does a codfish's eye (formerly supposed to be simply a piece of jelly) have a crystalline lens composed of millions of microscopic fibers held together by millions of tiny hooks? Where does the earthworm get the power to grow a new head if his old one is cut off? Why is it that some plants eat insects and fully digest them? Why does a horse get up front feet first, and a cow hind feet first? Why? Well, we could just ask questions indefinitely, and about the only answer we would receive is, Things are the way they are because they exist in obedience to the laws of their creation.

One of the greatest mysteries is that of germination. How do the biochemical elements that compose the embryo of the seed become invested with that wonderful property called life? A poet has expressed this thought in the words

"Behold the mystery the brown earth shields,
A little sowing, a swift touch of death,
An unseen stirring of some quickening breath,
And young grain covers all the barren fields."

And why does nature never make a mistake? Why do not oats forget that they are oats and come up barley or wheat? Verily, as the Bible says, God made everything after its own kind. Man may make mistakes, but not so the seeds of the earth. And after germination they unerringly grow upward and not downward for they seek the sunlight and must have its benefits in order to fructify in due time.

Great, then, is the mystery that is all around us. No one knows exactly what electricity is, what light is, or what life is. Man cannot create a single gnat and invest it with life. In the exercise of his powers he gets to a certain place divided off from the creation of life, and he has to be content with that.

Spiritual Things

Beyond the realm of material things are those things that belong to the domain of the spiritual. And godliness is one of these things, for it is connected with truth, with hope, and faith and love. So, then, it is easy to believe that if there is mystery in nature, there is the same element in godliness or God-likeness. In order to strive after this quality, one should know something about God. At least some of the mystery concerning Him should be cleared up. When this is accomplished, there will still be much mystery left. To find out that God exists is the first great thing to learn about Him. Next comes the great fact that He is love. The ascertaining of this fact gives our minds a big shove ahead. Then an elucidation of His plan and purpose helps to clarify the Bible and reduce its greatest mystery or secret to comprehensible elements, i.e., "Christ in you the hope of glory." But still we have some mystery left, and the Apostle refers to it when he says, "Great is the mystery of godliness." Paul says, "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." - 1 Tim. 3:16.

The Son of God

Every age of the world had had its great characters, yet Jesus seems to have been different from all of them. He had an individuality that was invested with mystery. To some of His disciples He said, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." Indeed, the world has not been able to bear them from that day to this. To the world the things that Jesus set forth in His teaching are incomprehensible. Our Lord was an exponent of the greatest law in the universe -- the law of love. Had the world received this law from Him, what a world we should have had today!

The miracles of Jesus were invested with mystery. How could He feed five thousand persons with five loaves and two fishes? This was not done in obedience to any known law. Neither was the healing of blind Bartimaeus, nor the raising of Lazarus, nor the walking upon the water. Could we have looked behind the scenes, we might have beheld a wonderful mechanism at work. Then we know, too, that angels can do things that men cannot do. The way of Jesus was shrouded in mystery. It was therefore a solitary way for the Master. None could enter into the great secret of His life.

There is mystery in the sacrifice of Jesus. No doubt millions have asked the question, Why did God not devise some other plan for the salvation of the human family? Why did it have to be true that "without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins"? And why were animals slain for hundreds of years to typify the greater sacrifices (Hebrews 9:23) that were to come. Why were the first-born ones saved by the blood on the night of the Passover? Simply because of the fact that in due time the Lamb of God was to die on man's behalf. God arranged it to be that way. Could He have done differently? We do not know. He always does the best. We might ask, Could He have made the bark of a tree to grow in the center of the tree instead of where it does grow? Probably He could, but it would not have been so good for the tree. The sacrificial death of Jesus

has features of mystery about it, and that is equivalent to saying that we do not fully understand it. We only believe that in the divine wisdom it was the best thing.

Then the resurrection of Jesus is something of a mystery. We know why He was raised up, but not **how**, except that it was by the power of God. It was hard for Thomas to accept the fact of our Lord's resurrection. It has been hard for others to accept it, and millions have rejected it. When the Apostle Paul preached to the people of Athens about the resurrection, we are informed that some mocked, and others said, "We will hear thee again on this matter." So dead was Jesus, however, that He could do nothing toward raising Himself to life. Peter said, "Him hath God raised up, to be a Prince and a Savior." It was a simple matter for the heavenly Father, the great Source of life, to give life to His beloved Son.

The Truth that Jesus Proclaimed

And think of the mystery which lay in the truth that Jesus proclaimed. It was mystery upon mystery. His disciples said to Him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" And His reply was, "Because to you it is given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God, but to them that are without it is not given. . . . Therefore I speak to, them in parables, so that in seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand; so that in them is fulfilled the prophecy of the prophet Isaiah, 'Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy and shut, their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and I should heal them.'" What a strange thing to say! Did not our Lord want men to become converted? Apparently not. Had He wanted to draw great numbers to a state of conversion, He could have presented the truth in so simple a form and have backed it up with such power, that this purpose would have been accomplished. But Jesus never worked against the divine program. He knew that the time of the world's conversion had not come. So He said, "No man cometh unto Me except the Father which sent Me draw him." Here was another strange or mysterious thing. Why does God draw some, and not others? Why do some take up with the truth almost immediately, and others fail to grasp its import?

We knew a sweet old lady. She enjoyed the reputation of being a student of God's Word. She liked to talk about the Bible, and did so a great deal. Well, we took her "The Divine Plan of the Ages." She struggled with it but could not seem to grasp it. We told her about it, but with the same result. Finally she said, "I believe that you and I will both get to heaven, because we both love the Lord, and we both believe in His Word. But your book- is beyond my depth. Probably I am too old to change my mind about these things." And yet she was not so very old. She was about seventy and in full possession of her faculties.

To another lady we said, "Isn't it strange, that a person of your ability, a college graduate, should fail to grasp these simple verities of the Scriptures? Can you explain to me why this is?" And her reply was, "Yes, I think I can. Doesn't the Bible say that. some persons are sealed in their foreheads?" We replied, "Yes, it does." "Then," she said, "the matter is very simple. You are sealed, and I am not."

Simple? Yes. And yet wonderful, and with a certain mystery about it, one of the great mysteries of the Gospel Age, a mystery that we shall doubtless understand more fully when we get beyond the veil.

Our Lord's Parables

And the parables of our Lord seem simple enough, and yet there is a great depth of meaning in them. Years ago some of us thought that we fully understood them. Today we do not feel so sure. We once heard a brother say that the harvest work was completed in 1916. His idea was that the friends had begun that work and had completed it. Well, if that was true, then it was evident that the reapers (the truth people) had left some of the "wheat" in the systems and had culled out some of the "tares." Today, even among those who profess to follow the truth, there are some who seem to be "playing on the job" instead of working at it. It would look as though there might still be wheat and tares growing together side by side.

Then there is the parable of the Virgins and their lamps. Some think they know all about that parable. They know exactly when the midnight cry went forth, or will go forth. They know when the foolish virgins will say to the wise, "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out." They even know when the door will be shut. It is just wonderful how clear this entire matter is to them. They surely have been greatly favored of the Lord, that is, if they are right. But there comes the great question. Are they right?

It may be -- and this is what some Bible expositors think that every little point of this parable will not find fulfillment, and that the parable was chiefly set forth in order to **prepare** us for what is to come in a general way. The fact was that Jesus was to come back some time, and His followers were to be prepared for that event by having their lamps burning and by having oil in their vessels in order to keep their lamps supplied and thus prevent the flame from becoming extinguished.

Then there is the parable of the Unjust Steward. This man was accused of wasting his Lord's substance. He realized that he was to be put out of the stewardship. This was not a pleasant prospect. So he reduced the indebtedness of the people and thus secured their favor. In a worldly way it was a shrewd thing to do. And commenting on it the Master said, "The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." Then our Lord went on to say, "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." And how many are there who fully comprehend the meaning and the depth of this injunction?

It would seem that the parable of the Prodigal Son has a great wealth of meaning in it, as has also the parable of the Lost Sheep.

"There were ninety and nine that safely lay
In the shelter of the fold;
But one was out on the hills away,
Far off from the gates of gold."

How many weary hearts have been stirred by this beautiful story. How many have pictured the Shepherd leaving the ninety and nine, and going forth on a way that was wild and steep to find the wandering, lost one. And the storm descended upon him. And the wild beasts of the mountains tore his flesh and wounded him and left him to die. And yet, in the spirit of the living God He prevailed. Thank God, He prevailed.

"And up from the mountains thunder-riven,
And up from the rocky steep,
There arose a cry from the gate of heaven,
'Rejoice, I have found My sheep.'
And angels echoed around the throne,
'Rejoice, for the Lord brings back His own."

Oh, what a story! Oh, what a beautiful mystery is the mystery of divine love! We understand a little of it now, but we shall probably continue to explore its unfathomable depths throughout eternity.

Mystery Upon Mystery

This coming of Jesus to the world was and is a complete mystery to men. The only **ones** who can understand it are those whose minds are enlightened by the divine spirit. Godliness was expressed in the life of Jesus in terms which said, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Verily the Son of God was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not.

Nor does the world know His followers. Nor does the world understand them. To be in the world and not of it is certainly a mystery. To be sure, there is an explanation for it, but not an explanation that men in general can receive. Remarkable are the words of the Master where He said, "Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own. But ye are not of the world, for I have called you out of the world. Therefore the world hateth you, and ye know that it hated Me before it hated you."

Just how does the divine spirit of truth operate in the heart and mind of the follower of the Lord? Is this all clear to us, or is there a mystery about it? Why is it that one person is spirit begotten and another person is not, and yet they both have the same truth? Why is it that love is as a deep, crystal-pure river flowing in the lives of some professed Christians, and like a small, muddy stream in the lives of others? Why do some persons operate in the power of the living God, and others, again, "have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof"?

One thing is plainly manifest, and that is that in order to impart something to others, we ourselves must have something to impart. And in order to rouse them up to godliness, we must possess this quality in our own hearts. Therein lay the power of Jesus. Whatever He asked others to do, He Himself did. He did not say, "Go on," but, "Come on." He took the lead in all matters of godliness. He was humble, meek, pure, strong, fully consecrated to the divine will, reverent, peaceable, kind, active in service, possessed of a great vision of future glory. And if we, like Him, would preach love to others, we must be enriched by it in our own lives..

God-likeness

"Great is the mystery of godliness." In the beginning God made man in His own image, but where is that image today? If the race could be restored to that image, love would reign in the hearts of men. Ah, then there would be no wars, no inordinate striving after power, no worship of the god of gold, no breaking hearts in all the world, no underpaid labor, no want, no care, no sin, no exploitation, no destruction of the world's produce to keep up the price, no gambling, no

robberies, no graft, no dishonesty, nothing to hurt nor to destroy in all God's holy mountain. And that is exactly what is to come in the eventuation of the eternal plan and purpose.

Godliness or God-likeness! Ah, that is what we need. It is simply to be like God in character. God is not the author of all the strife and confusion we find in the world today. Indeed He has not caused any of it. It has all come through a disregard of His laws. And He is permitting the world to reap the fruitage of its sowing. He does this in the confidence that He can and will make it all right in due time. The human family will enjoy the future all the more in contrast with the past. God is a god of peace and order, not one who favors strife and crime and fear. And likewise, God's people must be peace-makers if they are to be like Him. And they must be true lovers of righteousness, and must always stand on its side.

"Great is the mystery of godliness." Yes, it is a heavenly mystery, and great is the mystery of heavenly things. The mighty orbs of space are invested with mystery. Who can gaze upon the starry heavens on a fine night and not realize this great fact? And who can gaze upon a real Christian-one who is strong to do and to dare in the cause of right, and who stands forth calm and serene in the midst of raging elements-and not be impressed with the thought that here is the highest form of true greatness, that here is one truly furnished unto all good works and fully clad in the complete panoply of the truth of the living God? - *Contributed by Walter Sargeant*

Admonitions for the Consecrated

"I write unto thee . . . that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." - 1 Tim. 3:14, 15.

IT IS one thing to make our consecration to the Lord, to be His and to serve Him even unto death, and another thing to carry out that service day by day in all the little details of life. Our Lord's words-that he that is faithful in that which is least would be faithful also in greater things-is well illustrated by the fact that it would be comparatively easy for us to finish our sacrifice by suicide, or even by going to the stake, and a much more difficult thing to day by day hold our sacrifice on the altar in all the little affairs of life-in self-denials, in patience, in perseverance, in brotherly kindness, in gentleness-to receive reviling and revile not again, to be smitten mentally or physically and not to retaliate; this endurance of a lingering crucifixion -- death is much more difficult. But we can readily see that the Lord's plan is greatly to our advantage, in the sense that while the consecration evidences a right spirit, will or intention, the gradual carrying out of that consecration tends more and more to develop the character-likeness of our Lord in us. Hence the Apostle urges that we learn to rejoice even in tribulations, knowing that they will work out in us various fruits and graces of the Lord's Spirit, as we receive them in the proper attitude of heart and seek to learn the lessons they teach.

Good Behavior in the Church

Recognizing that we are all defective according to the flesh, that none of us come up to the divine standard of perfection, and that our only perfection is that of the heart, the will, we must not wonder if occasionally we have trials and testings, aggravations, one from the other, though it must be the will, the desire, the intent of each to provoke one another to love and good works and not to anger, hatred, and evil works. (Heb. 10:24.) For ourselves we must recognize the very highest standard of God-likeness, and as for others of the Body we must be prepared to allow our love for them and for the Lord to cover a multitude of blemishes should they appear to us. And each one, in proportion as he or she follows this course, is pleasing to the Lord, is pure in heart-a copy of God's dear Son-and, covered with the robe of the Redeemer's merit, is considered from God's standpoint, not according to his imperfect flesh, but according to his perfect-intentioned heart or will. To us, "in the Church" does not signify in a meeting-house, but amongst the Lord's people. Neither does it mean merely when we are assembled together, but it includes all of our dealings with them, every day and all the time. And we all should desire to learn the lesson how we ought to conduct ourselves in or amongst the members of the Church, the Body of Christ, the tabernacle of the holy Spirit amongst men.

Everywhere in the Bible the Lord sets before us perfect Love as the standard, and we must therefore suppose that all who have passed the standard of babes in Christ, and have come to some measure of knowledge of the Lord through His Word and Spirit, recognize this love standard and are seeking to conform to it. We must therefore suppose that the difficulties which from time to time arise amongst such are largely because of imperfect development of knowledge and experience in applying the love standard, as well as because of imperfections of the flesh. Hence the Scriptural exhortation that we grow in grace as well as in knowledge, and that we be more and more filled with the Spirit of the Lord, the spirit of love, the spirit of a sound mind, the spirit of brotherly kindness, the spirit of meekness, the spirit of patience -the holy Spirit.

Are Contentions Necessary?

We reply that they are sometimes, but not nearly so often as they occur. There is just one ground of contention authorized, and we find it in the words, "Contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." (Jude 3.) But since the spirit of contention is everywhere in the Bible reprehended, we must understand the Apostle to mean that only the important points of our faith are to be contended for. We must not give place to any who deny the personality of the heavenly Father, and who would teach in the Church that God is a great big nothing, merely a principle of good; and if there is anything good in the sense of useful in the piece of iron or wood or stone or in any other substance, there is that much of God in it. We must contend earnestly against such vain philosophies, as being not only foreign to the faith once delivered to the saints, but antagonistic to it to the last degree. We must contend also for the ransom, because it is the very foundation of the faith once delivered to the saints-that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures and that He rose for our justification. This would imply a contention against various false claims, such as that our Lord was not made flesh but remained a spirit being, to whom death was quite impossible-that He merely assumed for a time the human body, pretending that it was Himself, and pretending that He died when it died.

We must hold to the faith once delivered to the saints, that our Lord left the glory which He had with the Father before the world was, that He humbled Himself and was made flesh, and that He

did this not as an example, but that He by the grace of God "tasted death for every man" -- that He might die the just for the unjust to bring us to God. This means additionally that we must contend that His death was a real death, the just for the unjust, else our faith in Him as a Savior and Redeemer would depart. Furthermore, if we did not believe that He really died, really gave Himself as a corresponding price for father Adam, thus purchasing him and his race, how could we believe in His resurrection from the dead? How could any one be resurrected from death if he had not gone into it? We must also hold to and contend earnestly for the great fact that God's work during this Gospel Age is the selection of the Bride of Christ -- the Church of the Firstborn - - and that this election, completed at our Lord's second coming, will have its consummation in the resurrection of the little flock to glory, honor, and immortality in the Kingdom, as the Royal Priesthood under Christ their Royal Head and High Priest, that as the Spiritual Seed of Abraham they may fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant, "In thy Seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." For all these fundamentals of our religion, including the declaration that sin entered into the world by Adam's transgression and that we are all partakers of his sin and of its penalty, and all need redemption -all these first principles of the faith we must stand for, contend for. To be indifferent to these and to allow error to creep in and to be promulgated, taught in the Church, would be a serious sin and show unfaithfulness on the part of those who had pledged themselves as soldiers of the cross to defend it.

But aside from such fundamentals, the Lord's people should seek to exercise great moderation amongst themselves upon any point of doctrine not clearly enunciated-upon the meaning of any parable not explained in the Scripture itself. Neither should there be any dispute or division as respects any leader or any other brother. Each should be allowed to exercise his own judgment in respect to things not specifically stated in the Word of God. Each should feel a delicacy or reserve about promulgating any doctrine or matter not specifically and clearly taught in the Scriptures, and above all he should be sure never to teach or attempt to teach speculations if he himself is not thoroughly convinced respecting the same. Each one has enough to contend with in the twists and kinks of his own imperfect judgment without having others add to his difficulties by the rehearsal of matters which they admit they do not clearly understand. There is so much in God's Word that is simple and plain and well substantiated that we can talk about and think about, that we are well nigh inexcusable for far-away speculations. The Scriptures declare: "The secret things belong unto God, but the things revealed belong unto us." - Deut. 29:29.

Patience and Forbearance Commended

If some dear brother has a peculiar theory or hobby and feels that he cannot rest until he has presented it to the Church, there should be some opportunity given him to let off steam -- even if it would not be advisable to hear him in the most public manner lest visitors should conclude that his fancies represented the general thought of the Church. But if after he has been heard on some occasion, and it be the judgment of the Church that his theories are unreasonable, unscriptural, he should be content with having given his view; and if he be not content, but desires to ride his theory continually as a hobby, to the annoyance of others and to the interference with the general spirit of worship and progress in study, it would seem to be the duty of the elders to call his attention to the fact, and to remind him that he has been heard, and therefore his urging the matter is in the nature of a contention, not for a fundamental of the truth, but for a theory, and that such contention is reprov'd throughout the Scriptures as contrary to the will of the Lord and to the good of His people themselves included, and that therefore they cannot permit the matter to continue. - Titus 3:9.

The Apostle speaks of those who are "contentious and *obey* not the truth." (Rom. 2:8.) The intimation is that the contentious spirit or disposition is generally to be found amongst those who are not living up to the spirit of the truth which they have already recognized. They have been attempting to grow in knowledge without growing in grace—in love, in kindness, gentleness, meekness, patience, etc.; and those who are right at heart will be pleased to note this as their difficulty, and to correct the same, because what would it profit us to contend for our theories and cause confusion in the Church of God, and be ultimately reprimanded by the Lord and be unable to pass the examination for perfect love and Christ-likeness, and therefore be counted unworthy a place in the Bride class! Surely such contentions, such theorizings, are well worthy of the Apostle's reprimand, and well worthy to be heeded by us all.

The Apostle's exhortation that "nothing be done through strife or vainglory gives another suggestion along this line, namely, that some have naturally the spirit of strife, and therefore more to overcome along this line than have some others. Some, it is intimated, have a vainglorious spirit, the spirit of pride and ambition, which gets themselves and others into difficulty. But are we to reject those who are naturally combative, naturally ambitious? Are we to say that they therefore are not of the Body, and cut them off? By no means; rather we should seek to so exemplify the proper course in our own conduct as to impress a lesson upon them and upon all with whom we have contact. Wherever we see a wrong spirit in another our first thought should be, Have I any of that disposition myself? and our first correction should be in our own hearts and conduct. Thus casting the mote or beam out of our own eyes we would be the better prepared to approach our brother with gentleness and kindness, and unobtrusively to render him assistance in getting the better of his difficulties.

Bereans Who "Fight to a Finish"

Some of the Lord's dear brethren of excellent heart and noble intention seem to get the improper thought in connection with the Berean studies. They seem to say to themselves, There can be but one right thought on this subject, and that one the truth; and every one else here should want the truth, and we should contend and dispute on this question if necessary all night and fight the matter until some one gives up and sees that he is wrong. This is an evil thought entirely, and is productive of great discomfort and disadvantage, and a hindrance to spirituality in various classes. On the one hand we are to appreciate more those who do some thinking of their own about a subject than those who do no thinking, and who merely swallow a statement set forth by others. But there is a proper limit to be observed: the Lord has had great patience with us all in our slowness to learn, and surely we should be patient with each other. He lays down line upon line, precept upon precept, and is slow to anger and plenteous of mercy, and very generous toward all those who give evidence of desiring to do His will.

We certainly are not authorized to do less than this in His name and as His representatives. Rather our realization of our own obtuseness in the past should make us very sympathetic with others who are slow to see, slow to hear, slow to understand. Each therefore should be content if he have a reasonable opportunity for presenting his view on any question, and should not attempt to enforce and crowd it in upon another. If the Editor has stated his view, and one or more do not see the matter exactly so, and the question is not fundamental, then it would be the proper course to let the matter rest there, and to allow the Lord eventually as the great Teacher, through His providences to gradually bring us to where we could the more completely see eye to eye. In this we have the opportunity for learning the lesson of patience and forbearance, brotherly kindness, meekness, gentleness -- Love.

"Consider One Another to Provoke"

If any one of a contentious mind would set himself about it, he would have no difficulty in provoking in others resentment and evil works; but the Apostle urges, that having the holy Spirit of love dwelling in our hearts, we should consider one another to provoke unto love and good works. We should study one another's natural dispositions from a sympathetic standpoint, with a view to helping each other over difficulties and weaknesses. And how much of this is possible! Frequently it is possible by speaking a kind word, gently, sympathetically, lovingly, to help some dear brother or sister to keep balanced-to overcome some of his or her weaknesses, the expression of which would be injurious to himself as well as to the Church or others. How we should all study this spirit of helpfulness and recognize it as the spirit of love, the Spirit of the Lord! Let us remember that a soft answer, a kind and gentle word, may be helpful and turn away anger, but that grievous words and strife words, cutting words, sarcastic words, are almost sure to stir up anger. (Prov. 15:1.) Let us therefore study more and more to be gentle toward all and kind and affectionate one toward another, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. - Eph. 4:32.

Another point upon which forbearance and consideration seem very necessary is in respect to the choosing of leaders. Some very devoted brethren seem to get the impression that they should have -no part in electing as an Elder any one they could not endorse in every particular. We agree that no immoral person should be chosen to eldership under any consideration, and that if an Elder be found to be immoral his resignation should be immediately called for. But usually this is not the ground of difference: the Lord's people would never knowingly choose an immoral person as a standard-bearer or leader in spiritual things. But suppose that in a congregation there be one person whom the majority may consider vastly superior and better qualified every way than any other of their number to be their Elder or leader, and suppose that a minority of the congregation have a liking for the presentations or manners or what not of another brother, and suppose that another minority have a preference for still another brother, or at least a desire to see him brought forward into the public service of the Church, believing that he has talents that could be used of the Lord to His glory. What shall each party do?-fight it out on political lines and say, We have power, and therefore authority to elect our man, and you must either join in this or quit the company? By no means!

This might be "good politics" amongst the worldly, but it would be quite out of harmony with the spirit of love which must govern the Church. In gaining **such** a victory we might wound one or more of the Lord's brethren, might offend our Lord, and do ourselves incalculable injury in our race for the great prize. Such a "victory" would be a **defeat** of our real aims and aspirations-a victory for our great Adversary. Are we not to consider one another, and seek not every man merely his own preferences, but seek to build one another up in the most holy faith? The spirit of love would therefore seem to dictate that more than one Elder should be elected in such a casetwo or three or more, as the supply of material and the desires of the company could be reasonably interpreted, without violating the general directions of the Lord's Word. A fair and reasonable decision should be such as would be proportionate to the number of the brethren. Some might be found specially well adapted to the leading of one kind of meeting and others to the leading of another kind, and the Apostle points out that we have need of every member of the body, so that the eye cannot even say to the hand or the foot I have no need of you. The thought we should have in mind is that there is plenty of room for all of the Lord's people to do service.

When the Apostle points out the qualifications of an Elder he mentions the ideal, just as our Lord mentions the ideal to us all when He says, "Be ye like unto your Father which is in heaven." We cannot be like the heavenly Father fully, completely, but we can have Him as our standard or pattern to which we are striving to attain. Similarly, few elders may come up to the standard of qualification mentioned by the Apostle, but these qualifications should not be overlooked by any in their expression of a choice, or rather in their expression of what they believe to be the Lord's choice in the matter. "Forbearing one another in love," says the Apostle. O, how this forbearance and consideration of one another's preferences, tastes, views, would help to make us all more and more like the glorious Lord Himself, and how it would smooth many of the wrinkles and difficulties, and bring peace in every little company of the Lord's people! We are not thinking of nor striving for the kind of peace and quiet that prevails in the graveyard or which prevails in the sleeping room, but the kind which the Lord would approve amongst those who are awake and alive and thoroughly consecrated to Him, and forbearing and considering one another because of their love for the Head and for all those who are seeking to walk in His steps.

"Love Seeketh Not Her Own"

All of the Lord's people should gradually come more and more to be ashamed of a self-seeking spirit and disposition and to appreciate more and more the spirit of love, which thinks not of personal interests but of the good of others, especially those of the household of faith. If a brother thinks that he has some talents which he would be pleased to use in the Lord's service in the Church, it is proper for him to be on the alert for opportunity to use these, but also proper for him to avoid imposing himself or his services on the Church. While glad to serve the Church freely, without money or price, while glad to give time, strength, energy, and every talent to the service of the Truth, the spirit of meekness as well as the spirit of wisdom should hinder him from crowding his services upon the Church more than the latter could appreciate. Better go gently, and trust to the Lord to guide and to eventually indicate who shall serve the Church and to what extent they shall serve and in what capacity. This, the Lord's way, the Scriptural way, will be found to be the wisest one-any other course will sooner or later bring difficulty to all concerned.

"Whom the Son Makes Free"

It is difficult for many of us to keep balanced respecting our personal liberties: we are largely influenced by the customs and practices of those surrounding us, and need continually to hearken to the voice of the Lord in His Word. Because in Babylon it is customary that nothing should be done without ordination, a feeling sometimes creeps in amongst those less developed in grace and truth that is somewhat in accord with that the feeling, for instance, that no meetings must be held except as they are appointed by the Church and conducted by one of the elected elders. There are advantages coming from a recognition of the oneness of the Church, and the appointing of meetings when and where they may be most helpful and to be led by those esteemed to have superior qualifications. But we must never lose sight of the fact that neither the Lord nor the apostles placed any limitations upon the liberties of individuals, and hence we may not do so. Note our Lord's words-"Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. 18:20.) That promise is as true today as it ever was, and places no restriction upon any of the Lord's people.

Interesting Briefs

If, therefore, any of the Lord's flock feel that their best spiritual interests are not served by the arrangements already made by the Church, they are fully at liberty to start a meeting that will be more helpful to them-any kind of a meeting not in conflict with the provisions of the Scriptures. In case of such a necessity seeming to present itself to any, our advice would be that they seek to appoint such meetings at a time and place that would not be in conflict with the appointments of the general congregation. If then it be desirable, as we hold that it generally is, that the Church should take a general supervision of such matters, it should recognize its responsibility and appoint a sufficiency of meetings and of the desired kinds, and under such leadership as will meet the necessities of the dear people-that all may be fed, that all may be strengthened, that all may progress, and that all may be maintained in unity of heart and in love and fellowship and cooperation.

- Reprints, June 15, 1907, page R4008.

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Being-Doing

There is a silent personal influence, like a shadow, that goes out from every one, and this influence is always leaving results and impressions wherever it touches. One cannot live a day and not touch some other life. Wherever we go our shadow falls on others, and they are either better or worse for our presence. Our influence depends upon what we *are* more than upon what we do. It is by living a beautiful life that we bless the world. This is not underestimating holy activities. Good deeds must characterize every true life. Our hands must do mighty works. But if the life itself is noble, beautiful, holy, Christlike, one that is itself a benediction, an inspiration, the worth of the influence is many times multiplied.

- *Selected.*

Crossing the Bar

"Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me,
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea.

"But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home.

"Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark;

"For tho' from out our bourne of time and place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crossed the bar."

- *Alfred Lord Tennyson.*