

THE HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

VOL. XXXI May, 1948 No. 5

The Budding Fig Tree

"Now learn a parable of the fig tree; when her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near: so ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors." -- Mark 13:28, 29.

OUR LORD'S words recorded here are manifestly intended to notify us of the fact that God had appointed the nation of fleshly Israel to serve among other things, the Christian Church in the capacity, of a measuring rod or barometer, by means of which we could determine something of how near to fulfilment are our own glorious hopes.

Among students of the Scriptures it is a generally recognized fact that the fig tree is a symbol of the nation of fleshly Israel. Shortly before his utterance of the prophecy concerning the events which would attend his second advent, Jesus had pronounced a curse upon a member of the species in consequence of its failure to produce anything but leaves, whereupon the condemned tree at once began to wither, as narrated in Mark 11:13-20. It seems difficult to avoid the conclusion that there was a deliberate intention on the part of our Lord to establish a connection between his cursing of the barren fig tree and his rejection of Israel, the nation symbolized by the fig tree, as prospective heirs of the promises.

The latter event, as narrated in Matt. 23:38, 39, came about in consequence of the fact that they, like the barren fig tree, had, as a nation, produced nothing to reward the one who came seeking the fruitage of their years of God's favor and blessing but the leaves of empty profession.

It is significant that coupled with Jesus' sentence of rejection pronounced upon the Israel of his day we find the declaration, "Ye shall not see me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Jehovah." (Matt. 23:30.) It seems reasonable then to draw the conclusion that when in accordance with the Lord's implied prediction the fig tree begins to show signs of renewed life, the event would not only be an evidence to the Church of Christ that the hour of its deliverance was at hand, but would also be marked by some recognition on the part of a

substantial portion of Jewry of the truth that after all, the Christ of the Christian Church was none other than their long awaited Messiah. Regarding that aspect of the implied prediction that concerns their awakening to awareness of their national solidarity, there can be no doubt at all of its fulfilment. The Zionist movement with its growing power, together with their struggle for political recognition and the fierce determination on the part of the displaced Jews to re-occupy the Holy Land, gives ample proof that the revitalization of the fig tree has commenced in earnest. The battle is one that is engaging the attention of every statesman in the world. In fact, so important has the issue become that it would be no exaggeration to affirm that upon the satisfactory settlement of the Jewish-Arab problems depends the fate, not only of the Near East, but actually that of the whole post-war world.

The question then naturally arises, Are there yet any signs which would indicate that, beyond peradventure, the scales had at last fallen from the eyes of God's ancient people, or at least of a perceptible minority among them, which would give encouragement to the thought that the hour was at hand when Jewry would recognize Jesus, the Nazarene, as being in very truth the "King of the Jews," their promised Deliverer, and the one who should "come out of Zion and turn away ungodliness from Jacob"? (Rom. 11:26.) Is Israel approaching at last the point when it shall declare joyously, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Jehovah"? To merely state the question is to answer it in the affirmative. The present Jew-for-Christ movements are attracting some attention throughout Jewry and, though naturally to a somewhat smaller degree, in many parts of Christendom also, and signs are not wanting, to show that ere long the influence of the Jewish-Christian will be felt in all matters relating to the future of the Jewish world.

To those Christians who, like their Master before them, find themselves outside the camp of organized religion, it is doubly gratifying to note that while many of these new converts are being absorbed by some of the sectarian divisions of "Great Babylon," a few are being led by the spirit into the light of "Present Truth." Words are inadequate things to describe our thankfulness to the great Author of the Plan of Salvation for this fresh evidence of the sure working out of his glorious purposes, "for if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?" - Rom. 11:15.

We believe that the appended selection of extracts, some from the Jewish Christian Press, may be of interest to our readers. Relative to the proposed division of Palestine, a clipping from "Jews in the News" reads:

"The partition recommendation made by the United Nations investigation committee on the Palestine problem calls to mind a charge the Lord makes against the nations of earth in Joel 3:2: 'I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel whom they have scattered among the nations and parted my land.'

"A Jewish doctor in Tel Aviv told me fully two per cent of the people in Tel Aviv secretly believe in Jesus Christ." - From BEHIND THE SILKEN CURTAIN, by *Bartly C. Crum*.

"After the obvious proofs of divine guidance and divine protection in England, Switzerland, and wherever our work is taking root, there is no doubt that in Palestine God will also guide and protect our work -- his work. We believe that there we approach a glorious future. The blessing which God gave to our forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob for their offspring will in all its fulness and overflowing (Mal. 3:10) come down upon us, the true Israel, the Israel of faith -- if we but keep on the path of blessing in communion with the Son of God, our Messiah. We have to stand in faith and build the Temple, the Tabernacle of Christ in Israel. Neither the dead forces of the past nor the destroying powers of the present can touch us; for . . . the future is ours. However satanic the present time may be, even this our age, works for us -- against its will.

The same floods which covered and destroyed the whole world, carried the Ark of Noah to the summit of Ararat, as a sign that there yet exists a God who is not to be mocked.

"This does not mean that our work, too, could not be drawn into the whirlpool of our time. It must be quite clear to us that particularly in Palestine the severest storms await us; battles internally and externally. We have to expect and endure them, yet with the certainty that the victory will be ours, because God fights for us. He will, carry us over from the declining world into the new era, of Christ. The Jewish Christian community is the bridge between the two eras, the first fruit on the fig tree (Matt. 24:32), the first natural branch grafted again into its own olive tree (Rom. 11:24), the first ray of Christ's grace on the Jewish people. We are his heralds and messengers preparing his way; we are his workmen. We have to build his sanctuary in the Holy Land, in Jerusalem and on the Mount of Olives-not in our own strength, but in his. He has called us to dig and to fill up, to bring together stones from all over the world, to lay foundations according to his plan, to the will of the greatest Architect, the builder of the universe. Thus it is he, and not we unskilled laborers, who lays the foundation and builds-not on sand but on a rock, the rock of *eternity*." - *Abraham Poljak*, in pamphlet, "JERUSALEM."

Following is another extract taken from the same pamphlet, and signed by *Theo. M. Seeck*:

"Now has come the time for the 'rising again' of Israel. In the providence of God, that 'urgent message of the imminence of the Lord's return and of the establishment of the Kingdom of Israel under their King, the Messiah, once rejected, is again being proclaimed to the Jewish people by Jewish Christians, for "God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew." (Rom 4:2.) This message now does not effect that nation alone, but the prospect of the blessing of *all* nations is involved. As divine favor now returns to Israel, the Kingdom is seen as being also the hope of the world, of all nations. The faithful devotion of Jewish Christians, calling all in the name of Christ to repentance should have the effect upon their fellow men of provoking them to jealousy. Their failure to achieve the blessings claimed to be within the reach. of Christendom should have caused them to have repented long ago and have prepared their hearts for the appearance of God's Kingdom, the theme of all the Hebrew Prophets. Let prayers arise at this late hour that this may yet be so and that Armageddon might be averted. This is a Gentile Christian privilege and duty."

- *J. R. Hughes*.

A Perfect Trust

O blessed peace of a perfect trust,
My loving God in Thee;
Unwavering faith that never doubts,
Thou choolest best for me.

Best, though my plans be all upset,
Best, though the way be rough;
Best, though my earthly store be scant;
In Thee I have enough.

Best, though my health and strength be gone,
Though weary days be mine,
Shut out from much that others have;
Not my will, Lord, but Thine!

And e'en though disappointments come,
They, too, are best for me,
To wean me from this clam'ring world,

And lead me nearer Thee.

O blessed peace of a perfect trust
That looks away from all;
That sees Thy hand in everything,
In great events or small;

That hears Thy voice -- a Father's voice --
Directing for the best
Oh blessed peace of a perfect trust,
A heart with Thee at rest!

- *Poems of Dawn.*

The Typical Significance of Pentecost

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come . . ." - Acts 2:1.

DURING the space of forty days following his resurrection our Lord Jesus showed himself alive to his disciples by many infallible proofs, speaking with them of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God. At length the time came for him to take his last leave of them and ascend to the Father. Just before doing so he gave them final instructions. They were to return from Olivet to Jerusalem, there to remain until they had received the Promise of the Father. "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high." (Luke 24:49.) Instead of perplexing themselves with questions as to when the Kingdom was to be restored to Israel, they were to expect an outpouring of the holy spirit which would fit them for the ministry that ministry in which angels would find engage of carrying the Gospel to the ends of the earth. "Ye shall receive power, when the holy spirit is come upon you; and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." - Acts 1:8.

They had not long to wait. When ten days had passed; as soon as the day of Pentecost had fully come, the promise of the Father was fulfilled. - Acts 1:1-12; John 15:26; John 14:17, 26; Acts 2:1.

ISRAEL'S SEVEN FEASTS

The Feast of Pentecost was one of the seven "feasts" or "appointed seasons" or "holy convocations" of Israel, all of which occurred in the first seven months of their ecclesiastical year. (Lev. 23:4, margin.) First came the Feast of Passover, on Nisan 14. Next came the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which lasted seven days. On the second day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Nisan 16, the Feast of Omer, or presentation to Jehovah of the Sheaf of Firstfruits, took place. Fifty days thereafter came Pentecost, the very word "pentecost" meaning fifty. The remaining three festivals were all appointed for the seventh month, and were, respectively, those of Trumpets, Atonement, and Tabernacles.

THE FEAST OF PASSOVER

Not only are the details of the ceremonies observed at these seven holy convocations full of meaning, but the order in which they took place is significant, revealing the order of sequence in which the various stages of God's great plan of redemption were to unfold themselves. Readers

of this journal are well aware that the passover lamb was a type of our Lord Jesus. Indeed, in our "Memorial" celebration, we are reminded of this by the Apostle: "Christ [Jesus] our Passover [Lamb] is sacrificed for us." - 1 Cor. 5:7.

THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

We see, too, how this first feast stands related to the second as cause to effect, for if the paschal lamb sets forth the anointed Jesus as our Passover Lamb slain for us, in order to bring us pardon, peace, and new life, the feast of unleavened bread was designed to prefigure the holiness of that new life. From the moment the paschal lamb was slain, the Jew had to put away all leaven (type of sin) from his dwelling, and we read: "Whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel." (Exod. 12:15.) So it is in the spiritual reality which the type prefigures. It is Jesus the Lamb of God who takes away our sins and brings us pardon and reconciliation; but associated with this truth is another: "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. 2:19); or, as the Apostle, with the Old Testament type in mind, expresses it, "Christ [Jesus] our Passover [Lamb] is sacrificed for us, therefore [or, "so that"] we should keep the feast" - the feast, namely, of unleavened bread, the bread of sincerity and truth.

THE SHEAF OF FIRST-FRUITS

In the feast of Omer, or the presentation of the first sheaf of ripe barley to God, there is no doubt Israel was taught to acknowledge God's power and bountifulness, and thus by a representative "firstfruits" to consecrate to him the whole harvest. All the Jewish festivals were in connection with the natural seasons of the year; with the harvests which God gave unto his' people; with the outward blessings with which he surrounded them. But here too the earthly and visible is the symbol of greater and deeper spiritual realities. There is another harvest field for the first ripe fruit of which the Lord of the harvest (Jehovah himself) had long been waiting; a harvest of which Christ Jesus was the firstfruits. "Now is Christ [Jesus] risen from the dead and become the firstfruits of them that slept." (1 Cor. 15:20.) It was on the third day after the Lamb of God was slain (after the corn of wheat which was not content to abide alone, but fell into the ground and died, that it might produce much fruit, John 12:24), that he arose again, and stood forth as the Branch of Jehovah for beauty and glory, and as the fruit of the earth for excellency and for comeliness to his redeemed people. (Isa. 4:2, margin.) In him we see a glorious new federal Head of our race, coming forth out of the earth, a Sheaf waved from the earth unto God. Furthermore, when after his resurrection he ascended to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God (John 20:17), it was not only to be accepted for us -- (Lev. 23:11); to appear in the presence of God for us (Heb. 9:24); but also as the pledge and earnest of the harvest to follow -- of the resurrection to life eternal of the whole family of the redeemed of earth.

THE FEAST OF PENTECOST

But before this great harvest of earth's redeemed ones should 'be reaped, another "firstfruits" was to be presented. Thus St. James writes: "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures." (James 1:18.) In the glorious vision, St. John identifies these "firstfruits" as "an hundred forty and four thousand" standing with the Lamb on Mount Zion, "having his [the Lamb's] Father's Name written in their foreheads." "These," writes St. John (Rev. 14:4), "were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb."

To this gracious feature of our Father's plans and purposes the Feast of Pentecost pointed.

"And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete; even unto the morrow after the seventh Sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meal-offering unto Jehovah. Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave-loaves of two-tenths -part of an ephah; they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven, for firstfruits unto Jehovah." - Lev. 23:15-18, A. R. V.

In the light of the two New Testament Scriptures just quoted (James 1:18 and Rev. 14:4) this second "first fruits" is seen to be full of typical and prophetic significance. The preparation and presentation of the loaves are doubtless emblematic of the Church, and set forth that part of God's Plan which has been in process during this Gospel Age, and which is now, we believe, about to be consummated. The true Corn of Wheat having fallen into the ground and died, it brought forth much fruit, and the result, as set forth in this type is bread-two loaves which are waved and presented to Jehovah -- for not only is our Lord Jesus the true meal-offering in whom the Father ever finds delight, and who exhibited in the earth the habits and ways of heaven, but his people, his Ecclesia, also are constituted a new meal-offering unto God, that in them, too, traits of heavenly character might be found, and that so, the earth, sown with seed from the harvest field of spiritual Israel, might produce an abundant crop, to our Lord's and the Father's glory.

"TO HIM THAT OVERCOMETH"

Two or three significant points in connection with this "new meal-offering" as a figure of the Church, call for our reverent notice. First, in contrast to the Omer, or Sheaf of Firstfruits, presented on the 16th of Nisan, the "Bikkurim" (as this second firstfruit is called) consisted of *two* loaves.

Of the *duplicate character* of the emblems two explanations are worthy of special notice. One is that suggested (by Brother Russell, as follows: "The two loaves . . . represented the two classes of the consecrated-the overcoming, 'little flock,' and the 'great company' of the consecrated servants of God who do not make the 'high calling' theirs 'by overcoming the world as they might and should do." (*Watch Tower Reprints*, pages R1289, R2271, R5191.) The other explanation, presented by David Baron, is that which interprets the type as intended to set forth the two formerly irreconcilable elements -- Jew and Gentile -- made one in Christ.

Both of these explanations appeal to us as having merit. It would be interesting to learn if the author of either was acquainted with the writings of the other or whether their respective conclusions were reached without each having the benefit of an exchange and consideration of each other's views. As to this we have no information. However, while we may not know with certainty just why the loaves were two in number, we may profit from the lessons to be found in both of the interpretations suggested. Certain it is that we need Brother Russell's reminder that in the "little flock," to whom it is the Father's good pleasure to give the Kingdom, only overcomers will be found, and if we frequently pause to meditate on this exhortation, it will stimulate and energize us to "gird up the loins of our mind," to "run with patience the race set before us," to give diligence to "make our calling and election sure." - Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; Luke 12:32; 1 Pet. 1:13; Heb. 12:1; 2 Pet. 1:10.

IN CHRIST THERE IS NEITHER JEW NOR GENTILE

The other interpretation, too, is not without its valuable lessons, expounding, as it does, the truth so long kept hidden. For this secret of God, which could not have been known apart from revelation, namely that the Gentiles should be partakers of the same promise in Christ, with the Jews -- made "fellow-heirs and of the same Body" -- was not made known in other ages and generations unto the sons of men, as in the New Testament it is revealed unto his holy Apostles and Prophets by the spirit. (Eph. 3:5, 6.) As a matter of fact, until Christ broke down the middle wall of partition, and consecrated a new and living way for both Jew and Gentile through the veil of his rent flesh, no Gentile, even if he was circumcised, and became a proselyte, and surpassed the most pious in Israel in piety and learning, was ever received on terms of absolute equality, and regarded as altogether one with the congregation of Israel. For two thousand years the knowledge of God and the ordinances of true religion were confined exclusively to the land of Israel. The nations of the earth, with few exceptions, having rejected the opportunities which had been granted to them, were left to reap the consequences of their own apostasy, and given over to a reprobate mind. (Rom. 1:18-32.) God's mercies in the meantime were richly lavished on the Jews; they were the chosen depositories of these mercies--the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises, all pertained to them. - Amos 3:2; Rom. 9:4.

But with the present dispensation, the "spirit dispensation" as the Gospel Age is rightly called, a new order of things commenced. In Christ, that is to say, in the Christ Company, the anointed company of consecrated believers in Jesus, there is neither Jew nor Gentile, but all are one body. As the Apostle elsewhere declares: "He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; . . . and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one spirit unto the Father." - Eph. 2:14-18.

As the two Pentecostal loaves combined to make up one offering and were waved as one in the presence of God, so the believing Jew and the believing Gentile, washed in the same precious blood, sanctified and indwelt by the same spirit which teaches both alike to cry, "Abba, Father," and presented by the one great High Priest, are made equally acceptable, and are consecrated as one offering to the service of God.

Writing on the same truth in connection with the exposition of Rom. 11:15, 16, Brother Russell has himself observed: "Oh, the rich depths of God's wisdom and knowledge! How useless for us to try to discover his dealings except as he is pleased to reveal his plans to us. His doings are all mysteries to us except as we are enlightened by his spirit. Who knew this gracious plan, so much beyond human conception? Who helped the Lord to arrange such a plan, think you? This is not human wisdom. God only could be its author. A Jew would never have planned to graft in Gentiles to share the chief blessings of the promise. A Gentile never would have arranged the original stock and branches Jewish and himself a favored graft. No, the plan is clearly of God ... to him be the glory forever." - Watch Tower Reprints, page R5533.

"THEY SHALL BE BAKED WITH LEAVEN"

The second peculiarity we wish to notice in connection with the presentation of the loaves at Pentecost is that expressed in the words, "They shall be baked with leaven." This is remarkable, especially in the light of the express injunction given to Israel to exclude leaven from their sacrifices (Exod. 34:25), but it only supplies us with another instance of the minuteness with which these types are regulated, because of their rich symbolical significance.

Leaven, as we have already observed, signifies sin, or corruption. From every sacrifice, therefore, which set forth the perfect servant of Jehovah, the true Lamb of God, leaven was rigidly excluded. Thus with the Omer, or Sheaf offered on the 16th of Nisan, which represented Christ Jesus in resurrection, the true firstfruits and meal-offering, there was no leaven, for nothing even suggesting of corruption could be associated with the only sinless One, in whom was no guile, or deceit. But it is otherwise with his people. The Church is indeed "elect through sanctification of the spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." We are, as consecrated believers, possessed of a new life, are now washed and sanctified and justified in, the name of our Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God, and are "clean every whit" in his sight. Yet well aware are we that "if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us," and the more we seek by his grace to follow him wholly, and in the power of his spirit to keep our hearts pure and our hands clean, the more conscious we become of our daily need of cleansing. - 1 Pet. 1:2; 1 Cor. 6:11; John 13:10; 1 John 1:8.

For the same reason also there is no sin-offering connected with the Sheaf which prefigured our Lord Jesus (Nisan 16); but with the two loaves there is the express command that apart from the other accompanying offerings there should be one he-goat for a sin-offering (Lev. 23:19, 20), which again teaches us that the Church, though called and qualified by the power of the holy spirit to serve, does, nevertheless, need at every moment of its service, the protection of the "precious blood," even of that one sacrifice in which the virtue and efficacy of all the offerings here enumerated, were combined, and under the shelter of which, the Church, presented as the new meal-offering in the earth, abides. In the one sacrifice of the Cross, the Savior provided for his Church a fragrance and acceptableness, which it could never find in its own leavened self.

That which is typified by the Feast of Pentecost, looked at from one aspect, is spread over the whole of this Gospel Age, though a striking fulfilment took place at the inauguration of the Christian dispensation fifty days after our Lord's resurrection, when the Pentecostal season for that year "was fully come." But perhaps that which is specially set forth by the actual presentation and waving of the loaves is yet to be fulfilled at the close of this dispensation, when all the firstfruits from among men being gathered, and the number of the elect being completed, Christ Jesus shall present to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy and without blemish (Eph. 5:26, 27); but even then it will be so, not because he found her so, or because of her absolute purity while on earth, but because, having first bought her with his own precious blood, he sanctified and cleansed her with the washing of water by the Word, and made her perfect in the beauty and comeliness which he did put upon her. - Eph. 5:26; Isa. 61:3.

"THE AFTER-FRUITS"

There is another feature of this "Feast of Pentecost" too important to escape mention even in so brief a space as remains to us. It is this: Just as the Omer presented on the morrow after the Passover, setting forth Christ Jesus as "the firstfruits of them that slept," was a pledge and earnest of the two loaves presented on Pentecost, which prefigured the Church in its elective character as the firstfruits from among men, so also 'the second firstfruits are themselves a prophecy and pledge of the fuller harvest yet to be gathered in the coming Age, of which in the Scriptures, all God's holy Prophets have spoken since the world began. (Acts 3:19.) The blessing which came to the world at the first advent of our dear Redeemer, wonderful though it was, has thus far been only partial in degree and extent.

Indeed, unbelieving men sometimes taunt us with the little that the Gospel has accomplished, and maintain that Christianity has been a failure, and truly if, as is supposed by some, God had

purposed the conversion of the world during this Gospel Age, it must be admitted that his plans have thus far been frustrated. For when we contemplate the condition of the world after more than nineteen centuries of Gospel witnessing, what do we see? How far are we from seeing a believing world! Consider how small a proportion of the human race are even professedly believers in Jesus. And of these who mentally assent to the truth as it is in Jesus, how few are governed by it!

But a better acquaintance with our Father's Word reveals the fact that the conversion of the world in the present Age was not expected of the Church. Indeed the very fact that the world has not yet been converted, far from confirming the unbeliever's view that God's plans have failed, is merely a convincing proof to the consecrated child of God that God has not even attempted the world's conversion yet. The Scriptures declare that all God's purposes shall be accomplished, that his Word shall not return unto him void, but shall prosper in the thing whereunto he sends it. (Isa. 55:11.) And as we look into the Scriptures and then around us at the condition of the world in which we live, we see that the Gospel has accomplished just that which God said it would accomplish in this Age now closing. First, a remnant according to the election of grace was to be saved out of Israel. (Isa. 10:22; Rom. 9:27; Rom. 11:5.) And the Gentiles, we read, God hath visited, to take out of them a people for his name. (Acts 15:14.) These two, reconciled in one body unto God, through the Cross of Christ, were to unitedly form his Ecclesia, his Church, the Bride or Body of Christ, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. And as the Scriptures foretold, so it is; Israel as a nation still rejects Christ, but have there not been thousands who received him and became sons of God thereby? The other nations of the earth, the Gentiles, still, for the most part sit in darkness, and under the shadow of death, but wherever the Gospel has been preached as a witness, some have heard the call, and have joined the company of *taken out* ones, "called out" ones, as the very word "ecclesia" means.

But an election is never an end in itself; it is rather a means and preparation for some vastly larger accomplishment. And the very fact that the Church is spoken of as a kind of "firstfruits" implies "*after-fruits*." The Gospel of the Kingdom must first be preached as a witness unto all nations, for the gathering in of the first ripe ears, to constitute a glorious firstfruits, and then:

"After this I will return,
And I will build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen
And I will build again the ruins thereof,
And I will set it up;
That the residue of men may seek after the Lord,
And all the Gentiles upon whom my Name is called,
saith the Lord, who maketh these things known
from the beginning of the world." - Acts 15:16-18.

REVIEW

Let us now review the ground covered foregoing. First, we noted that Israel had seven "feasts" or "appointed seasons" or "holy convocations," three of them occurring in the month Nisan, the first month of their ecclesiastical year, the fourth, that of Pentecost, sometimes called the "Feast of Conclusion," came in the third month, and marked the conclusion of the Passover Season. The remaining three feasts did not take place until later, all three occurring in the seventh month.

The four we have considered have received their fulfillment already, in this Gospel Age; Christ our Passover, to whom the paschal lamb had so long pointed, has already been slain for us; the Omer Sheaf, which was both a type and a prophecy, that he should be the first that should rise from the dead (Acts 26:23), received its glorious fulfillment when on the third day he rose again, and became the

firstfruits of them that slept; and with the day of Pentecost there commenced the gathering out of the firstfruits from among men of all nations, who by one spirit are formed into one new body in which there is neither Jew nor Gentile, and who, in the power of a new life, are called into fellowship with God, and to keep the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

TIME FEATURES

It is also interesting to observe that in so far as this series of prophetic types has run its course, not only do type and antitype answer to one another in a most striking manner and in a variety of ways which preclude the possibility of their fulfillment being brought about by anything but design, but they also synchronize in point of time. Was it mere chance that when the hour was at last come for the Lamb of God to be offered for the sin of the world that it should have fallen on the Jewish Passover? And when he whom the pains of death could not hold was raised from the grave, victorious over death, to be the beginning of a new, spiritual harvest unto God from amongst men, was it a mere coincidence that it should have been at the time that the priests and leaders of Israel were busying themselves in preparing and presenting in their Temple the Omer of Firstfruits?

And again, was it mere chance that it was not until the day of Pentecost was fully come (Acts 2:1) that there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind to inaugurate the new dispensation and the spirit of God was poured out in such abundance that about three thousand souls were added to the company of apostles and disciples to form a new meal-offering unto Jehovah, a kind of firstfruits of his creatures? The Christian cannot but perceive in all this not only the prophetic character of Israel's types and ceremonies, and therefore that they could not have been designed by man, but must have originated in the mind of God; the Christian cannot but perceive also, that Christ is all, and that the very election and call of Israel was typical, and that all their divinely ordained ritual and services had Christ and the great redemption which he was to accomplish, for their center and goal.

CONCLUSION

Finally, brethren, let us not conclude our meditation without making a very personal and practical application of the lesson of Pentecost. When the Sheaf of Barley representing our Lord Jesus, was waved before the altar by the officiating priest, it was composed of the very finest ears they could find. So also, at the Feast of Pentecost, fifty days later, the wheat harvest having now been gathered in, the two loaves which were waved before the altar were made of the new flour which, in turn, had come from the very finest of the wheat. That is to say, such should have been the case. But in the case of natural Israel the Prophet Malachi reminds us that instead of coming to the Lord with their best they were inclined to perform the letter of the law and to avoid its spirit; apparently they were ready to bring sacrifices and offerings, but the selfishness of their hearts and their lack of true appreciation of the Lord led them to proffer him the weak and the lame and the poor, while they kept the better for their own use. Through the Prophet Malachi the Lord urged them that they test him, prove him, and see whether or not he would grant them great blessings if they would but enter into the spirit of their consecration and offer unto the Lord the best of what they possessed.

We, as spiritual Israelites, may gain a profitable lesson from these sharp criticisms of natural Israel. How is it with us? We have vowed unto the Lord the firstfruits, the very best, the very finest, the most valuable of all that we have and all that we are of time, influence, talents, money, all. To what extent are we rendering unto the Lord our offerings and sacrifices in harmony with this our covenant? It will not be long before our trials will be over, but until that little while is past we are in the trial time, and it is proving us either worthy or unworthy of the glorious favor which we seek--the chief blessing, joint-heirship with our dear Redeemer. If we really appreciate this favor, we shall seek to what extent there are yet other opportunities of spending and being spent in his service. Of natural Israel the Lord required a tenth -- a tithe. Of spiritual Israelites he makes no specific requirement, but leaves it to us

each, that by the degree of our sacrifices, according to our abilities, we may demonstrate the measure of our love.

The Lord's words to natural Israel come to us spiritual Israelites with still greater force: "Prove me now herewith," saith the Lord. If any feel themselves poor, spiritually, if any feel that they are spiritually lean, that they are not enjoying such fellowship with the Lord as they would desire, that they are unable to draw as closely to him as they would like, to all such the Lord says: Bring ye the whole tithe into the storehouse, fulfill your vow of consecration and thus prove me now herewith, and see if I will not do my part; I will do for you exceeding abundantly above all that you have asked or thought. Those who accept the Lord's proposition heartily, without reservations, find their spiritual leanness departing, their joy of heart increasing more and more.

Thus may it be with each one of us, for Jesus' sake; Amen.

- P. L. Read.

A Fully Ripened Christian Character

"The years that Abraham lived were a hundred and seventy-five; he breathed his last, dying in a ripe old age, after a full life, and was gathered to his father's kindred." - Gen. 25:7, 8.

THE THOUGHT in this text is that Abraham's life was not only long in the number of years he lived, but that it was also a full and complete life -- the fruitage of life's experiences was abundant and mature, full and ripe. From the time he left his kindred in Mesopotamia at the call of God until the time of his death, God's guidance and blessing had been his in a most remarkable manner. As the special friend of God his had been a life of unusual favors, associated with which were also special opportunities for displaying, the qualities of faith and obedience God desired in him. These great opportunities were progressive in their order and also in their effects. They began with the initial test of leaving his country and kindred and going into a land of which he knew little or nothing. Succeeding tests followed this first step of obedience, ending finally in the supreme trial, that of being asked to offer up his beloved Isaac as a burnt offering. Under all these special trials he proved himself so loyal and true to God that ever after he was to be an outstanding example of unwavering faith and steadfast obedience. Then when the silver cord of life broke, and he fell asleep rejoicing in his vision of a coming day when his Seed would rise to bless the world, he left behind a record of years of faithful obedience, and a life full of ripened fruitage.

To reach a similar happy ending is the privilege of all Abraham's spiritual children. For them also a succession of experiences are divinely arranged and overruled that thereby they too may have an evidence of being in friendship with God as was Abraham. As in his case, so in theirs, these successive growth-producing experiences, properly responded to, will eventually produce a character likewise full and complete. This is the full life intended in the admonition of the Apostle Peter when he stresses the necessity of having an *abounding* measure of the higher spiritual qualities of Christian character, saying, "For if these things be in you, and *abound*, they make you that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." Then he can promise that "an entrance shall be ministered unto *you abundantly* into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." - 2 Peter 1:8, 11.

Nature can teach us many lessons easily applied in our experience as maturing Christians. Jesus recognized this fact, therefore drew many of his parables from nature's storehouse. Wheat fields, trees, vines, birds, lilies, all served his purpose. As a sower he went forth sowing good seed, spreading the message of God's love among men. Those receiving it into the soil of a good heart

he gathered into his fellowship of love. Time for continuous growth he knew would be necessary before mature fruit would appear. But he made it clear that fully ripened fruitage would be looked for in due time. Every branch failing to bring forth its quota of fruit would be taken away, gathered by men, and burned. The great fruit specially looked for was the reflection of his own love in those called his disciples. By a rich possession of this love they would glorify him, and by loving one another, furnish the best evidence possible to the world about them that his spirit of love could bind them together in a oneness such as he and the Father knew. Thus, as a foundation fact of character, and as a proof of ripeness in spiritual development, Jesus made this unity of love a token of Christian maturity. This is understandable, for it is the fulfilling of the law as epitomized by himself. Too few have attained the "high old age" development by which this royal law of love and unity can be displayed. But if we want to know anything of the blessedness and the sweetness of victory over all our inherent unloveliness, and to walk in the liberty of love, we can get it only by keeping close to Jesus, the Vine. As we draw nearer, each for himself, to the Master, we will assuredly feel that we are coming closer to all those who stand around the same center, and so draw from him the same life of love. A picture drawn from nature will illustrate this. In the early spring, when the wheat is green and young, just a little above the soil in which it stands, it appears in long rows across the field, each row apart from the other. But as the season of growth advances, there is a gradual disappearance of the separation between the lines, and by the time the grain is ripe and ready for the ingathering, all lines of separation have gone, leaving one unbroken tract of waving golden grain. So it must be in the Lord's wheat-field. When immaturity prevails among his people, they are like those early rows of tender wheat, drawn up in distinct lines of separation, but as maturity is reached, those lines should disappear, and the field present a unity which will reflect the golden tint of ripeness and readiness for the heavenly Garner. If we live the life of Christ, and let the love of Christ fill our hearts, we will have this beautiful maturity, and so be ready to reach out to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ, and our hearts will thrill with thankfulness in the thought that all are one in him.

So the life that is really Christ-like goes on toward its intended goal. All who love the Lord in a sincere devotion grow into a harvesting ripeness. In them the fruitage abounds, as it is written: "The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." These beautiful and beneficent effects of love are brought forth in largeness by all truly related to Christ. They grow in grace and in knowledge. To these the last days of life are the happiest, the holiest, and the best. The perfume of Christ's sacrifice on Calvary, so very pleasing to God, descends on such mature characters. Life on earth is sweetened for them as they keep that sacrifice uppermost in mind, letting it purify the atmosphere from all that is contrary to Calvary's deep meaning. Thus, as has been said, "The true saint will *carry* in his garments the fragrance of the sanctuary, of the holy oil, of the sweet spices of the garden of grace, the Rose of Sharon, and the Lily of the Valley."

What a glowing prospect this view holds before the devout Christian as he nears the full maturity of his experience in the evening-time of life! It can be for him the happiest, holiest, and best of all his days. It can be a time of happy retrospection, calling to mind how goodness and mercy have never ceased to attend all his journey through. It can be a time of richest feasting and delightful serenity. The Lord often reserves his choicest morsels for these life-ending days. Beulah Land lies near the bounds' of life. It comes after the long journey with its mingled trials and joys. The sunset of life comes, bringing to view the verification of the Psalmist's character-sketch of a mature Christian: "The righteous shall spring up like a palm-tree: like a cedar in Lebanon shall he grow high. Planted in the house of the Lord, in the courts of our God shall they spring up. They shall still flourish in high old age; they shall be vigorous and covered with foliage:" (Psa. 92:13-15, Leeser.) The palm-tree of special note in Palestine was the date-palm. Of this tree it is said that it frequently continues to thrive and bear up to one hundred years. And it is also said that as it

grows older the fruit becomes increasingly better. What a perfect illustration of the truly developed Christian.

We come again to Nature's manifold lessons: "What splendors of glory she puts on in her autumn days! The trees array themselves with the most gorgeous colors; the hedges by the wayside festoon their brows with beauty, and even the commonest shrubs and plants receive from the artistic fingers of the sunbeams all the tints of the rainbow. Every intelligent beholder must admire. And thus it is with the mature Christian. His earthly life is temporal and must sink into decay. Ere long 'the silver cord shall be loosed, the golden bowl be broken, the pitcher be broken at the fountain, the wheel broken at the cistern,' because man goeth to his long home. But his end is glorious. He fades away like a leaf -- beautifully, gently, hopefully, usefully. All his matured virtues and rich experiences come into view, and find expression, not only in his words and actions, but even on his face. His utterances and deeds are full of meekness and gentleness, gratitude and grace, and the inward glory of the loving spirit is already beaming forth from his peaceful and radiant countenance, and is both seen and admired by the dear ones who surround him. He looks back upon his active and useful life with profoundest thankfulness to God, by whose help he was enabled to do some little good to his fellow creatures in the Church and in the world. And he looks forward to the glorious future, assured that the hopes of his heart like divinely-inspired prophecies are certain to be fulfilled."

So we are matured, ripened, and glorified. Receiving the truth of Christ into the mind, his love into the heart, and his spirit into our spirit, the change goes on from day to day. The graces which shone with such perfect luster in the life of Jesus, are made to shine more and more in our characters in proportion as we grow up into the full stature of a perfect man in Christ. Then when perfected, these graces will form a robe of adorning, beautiful to God, to angels, and to men.

"So let our daily lives express
The beauties of true holiness;
So let the Christian graces shine,
That all may know the power divine.

"Let love and faith and hope and joy
Be pure, and free from sin's alloy;
Let Christ's sweet spirit reign within,
And grace subdue the power of sin.

"Our Father, God, to Thee we raise
Our prayer for help to tread Thy ways
For wisdom, patience, love, and light,
For grace to speak and act aright."

- *J. J. Blackburn.*

The Shepherd's Care **THROUGH DEATH'S DARK VALE**

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me, Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." - Psalm 23:4

IT HAS been said that there is no verse in the Bible that is more familiar than the fourth verse of this Psalm -- no expression that has made so lasting and indelible an impression upon the human mind as the words, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death." The words have generally been understood as picturing the close of life's journey-as a sunny pathway merging into a dark and gloomy valley. However, while this is not the true, the Scriptural thought, nevertheless, these words will ever be a reminder that life's earthly journey will end at last in what is looked upon by those who do not understand its cause, as earth's dark enigma and mystery -- death. One has expressed this general thought: "This picture of the close of our lives, with a dark valley at the end of their sunny pathway, was hung up long ago in the halls of memory, as we first learned to lisp these venerable words, and though much has happened since then, it holds its place, and will while memory lasts."

While it is not our thought that the "valley of the shadow of death" means death itself, yet these words convey the thought that death is a reality. No matter what may be the view of death, the larger proportion of humanity instinctively realize a sense of terror and dread of death. Poets and theologians have endeavored to picture death in such a way as to remove this dread and fear, but they have utterly failed. "The wages of sin is death," and until sin is removed, death will (be feared and looked upon with dread. Shakespeare has well expressed the thought of the natural apprehension respecting death: "But that the dread of something after death, the undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveler returns, puzzles the will, and makes us rather bear those ills we have than fly to others that we know not of." The thoughtful man, though not a Christian, cannot think of death's approach without a feeling of seriousness and sobriety. It is not true, as many profess to believe, that death at its worst is only a shadow. The Scriptural thought is that death is a terrible reality.

ON THE JOURNEY TO DEATH

The Psalmist, however, is not here speaking of death, but rather of the journey thither. A beautiful translation of these words that retains the original poetic form in which they were first written, brings out very clearly the thought that the "valley of the shadow of death" pictures the present life, as a journey to death in which we have the comfort of the rod and staff:

"Though I *may walk* through death's dark vale,
I fear no hurt: for You are there;
Your rod and staff direct my way."

The Scriptural meaning of these words are thus most beautifully expressed: "All of our lives we have been in the *shadow of* this great valley of death. The valley was entered by our race, because of our first parents' disobedience. Our father Adam was once on the mountain top of life. He lost his footing there, and descended gradually the slopes into this valley of the shadow of death. We, his children were all born here. We are dying daily; we are surrounded by dying conditions. . . The shadow of death has been over the human family, and its accompaniments of sickness, pain, and sorrow have extended to, every creature, so that the Apostle truly said 'The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God' --

waiting for the uplifting power of the Millennial Age, waiting for the sons of glory, Jesus Christ and his Church, to bring the promised restitution and uplifting out of the 'valley of the shadow of death,' back to the heights of light and love and divine likeness. The fear of evil, of trouble, of disaster hangs over the world and is accentuated by its ignorance of God and of the future. Satan, taking advantage of this-spirit of fear, has so terrorized mankind with horrible pictures of purgatory and eternal torment, as to thoroughly separate the human heart, if possible, from its Creator, while feigning to be its shepherd. Under the influence of 'doctrines of devils' the Adversary has made God's character and his Book repulsive to mankind in general, and well nigh quenched their love while fanning their fears."

However, it is to the Lord's sheep, and to these only that the words, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil," apply. To such, death itself has been robbed of its "sting." "The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Such can walk calmly and without fear through this dark - "valley of the *shadow* of death." And while it is true as the poet has said that even to the Lord's sheep, "Sometimes the shadows are deep, And rough seems the path to the goal," he "fears no evil."

The figure is evidently drawn from the life of an earthly shepherd and his sheep. The expression may have been suggested to David by incidents in his own life as a shepherd when, in search of good pasture or of quiet resting places, he led his sheep "o'er moor and crag and fen"; or, perhaps at other times wending their way homeward they found the way leading through places of danger. Sometimes "the path, suddenly turning downward, led into the dark vale below where, following the voice of their shepherd they were led further downward into a deep and narrow gorge overhung with frowning rocks. The steep precipice on the one side and the trees on the other shut out all but a few rays of sunlight even at noonday. Ravenous beasts lurked in the deep ravines, calling the more for the watchful care of the shepherd. Some such circumstances and conditions may have been in the mind of the Psalmist, when he wrote the words: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death." He would recall how the frightened sheep would huddle together, and how his voice would calm their fears.

"I WILL NEVER LEAVE THEE"

How much like this at times is the pathway of the Christian. We have often to pass through dark valleys. It is in such experiences that we feel very deeply our need of drawing closer to our divine Shepherd, and whispering, "*Thou* art with me." The promises, "I am with thee," "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," become very real and precious.

May not this account for the fact that at this point David, in speaking of the Lord, changes the pronoun. Until we reach this verse he speaks of the Lord in the third person: "*He* maketh me to lie down in green pastures"; "*He* leadeth me beside the still waters," etc. Up to this time he is content to speak *about* him, but at this point, recalling the dark valleys and deep gorges through which he led his sheep; how his familiar voice calmed and quieted their fears; and how at such times the sheep much more attentively gave heed to his voice, may it not be that there is brought to his memory some of the dark and shadowy experiences he encountered in his own life in his endeavors to serve Jehovah; and how he felt himself drawing nearer to the Great Shepherd, and whispering, "*Thou* art with me." In the green pastures and beside the still waters of life's journey, when things are pleasant with us, when the pathway is smooth and in the sunlight, or when in the quiet, shady places we can look out and see that the sun is shining, it seems enough to talk about the Good Shepherd and speak of him as the One who sought us and found us and led us to these green pastures and quiet resting places; and so we say, "He leadeth me"; but as we move down

into the dark valleys of trial and affliction, when nothing of an earthly nature can be found to comfort and remove our fears, we feel the need of drawing closer to our great Shepherd; and addressing him in closer, more tender terms, we say: "For thou art with me." It is then that we realize as not at other times how precious is the promise: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flames kindle upon thee; for I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Savior." - Isa. 43:2, 3.

TRUSTING GOD IN THE DARK

One has said: "*We pass through many a valley of shadow, ere we reach the valley. And whenever we feel our souls overcast, we should stay to consider if there be a cause arising from our neglect or sin. If there be, a moment's confession will bring us out again into the light. But if there be none, so far as we can tell, then let us be brave to plod on. Every step has been measured out for us, even as it has been trodden before us. And God is testing us, to see whether we can trust him in the dark as well as in the light; and whether we can be as true to him when all pleasurable emotions have faded from our hearts, as when we walked with him in the light. There is a good purpose in all these shadowed valleys. They test the quality of the soul. They reveal our weak places. They unveil the stars that peer down through the interstices of a rock or tree. They make us follow the Shepherd closely, lest we lose him. They teach us the value of the rod and staff. Blessed are those who do not see, but who yet believe; and who are content to be stripped of all joy and comfort and ecstasy, if it be the Shepherd's will, so long as there is left to them the sound of his voice, and the knowledge that he is near.*"

The ancient Prophet of God seems to refer to such a possible experience when he says: "Who is among you that feareth the Lord [Jehovah], that obeyeth the voice of his servant [Christ], that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." - Isa. 50:10.

The story is told of a small company of tourists in Switzerland, who in order to reach a certain place at a definite time found it necessary to make a very difficult and dangerous journey over one of the mountains. A guide was employed who was acquainted with the route, but the particular dangers to be encountered were not made known to the tourists. They were informed by the guide that it would be necessary to make the journey at night. To the minds of the travelers this seemed strange, as they most naturally would reason that daylight would be the proper, the best, and the safest time to take such a journey. It would most naturally seem to them that if they could see the dangers to be encountered, they would be better able to avoid or pass through them in safety. However, they were told by the guide that if they desired to fill their appointment, they must trust themselves wholly to his care—he knew the way, he knew the dangers, and if they would place themselves under his care, he would bring them safely through. When the sun set behind the mountain, and darkness shut in all around, they started on their journey, the first few hours of which was up the mountain. They were then, called by their guide, to halt. At this point the darkness seemed more and more intense, and they were unable to see any of the conditions that surrounded them. After they had rested a while, the guide proceeded to give them very particular instructions what next to do. One of the tourists was instructed to take the guide's right hand; another to take hold of the one whose hand he held, and each in turn to do likewise until they were all standing side by side. The guide charged them that only when he gave the word for each stop were they to move. He further told them that after they had begun to move, as he gave the word, each in turn should lean backwards and he would find at his back a support which he was to lean hard against as he moved step by step, not forward, but to the side. The tourists not knowing what all this meant followed implicitly the instructions of their guide. After a few

moments, thus hand to hand, following their leader's commands, they were told that they might loosen hands as the danger was over. Proceeding a short distance further on their journey, they halted and encamped until the morning, not knowing what the real danger was. When daylight came and the sun shone out bright and clear, the guide pointed to a place on the side of the mountain, where a very narrow path, scarce wide enough for one to stand, led around the side. Back of the path was a perpendicular wall of rock, and in front was a deep chasm which lay hundreds of feet below. That pathway, said the guide, you passed over last night. As the tourists from their position of safety gazed at the narrow path, the shelving rock behind and the deep chasm below, they then for the first time realized the danger they had encountered. They then realized how utterly impossible it would have been for them to have stepped with a firm tread that path in daylight.

While it may not be of frequent occurrence, yet there are times in the Christian's experience when he realizes that there is nothing for him to do but to trust in the naked promise that the Good Shepherd is with him. The word of promise then becomes truly as real as if we heard his voice, "I am with thee"; "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." It is indeed well to be able to say, "What time I am afraid, I will trust Thee," but it is much better to be able to say, "I will trust Thee and not be afraid." One has said: "The darkness is sometimes too dense for us to be able to see Christ. But faith can always be sure that he is there; not because of the evidence of sense or feeling, but because he has said, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.' He cannot break his word. He has not left us alone. He is looking down upon us with unabated tenderness.

The depths may sever him from the apprehension of our love; but neither death nor life, nor height nor depth, can separate us from the strong grasp of his faithful and unchanging affection. Yes, 'the mountains may depart, and the hills be removed; but his kindness will not depart from thee, neither will the covenant of his peace be removed.'

THY ROD AND THY STAFF

While walking in the "valley of the shadow of death" it is inevitable that we encounter sorrow, and it is not difficult to realize that when passing through this valley, we stand in need of comfort. The road to the heavenly Jerusalem passes through "valleys of Baca, where eyes are red with weeping and tears brim into pools." These sorrows may be from different causes. The Psalmist continues to enlarge upon and further elucidate the different ways that the Great Shepherd assists his sorrowing sheep.

"Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death. . . Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." It is most natural for us to inquire how it is that these two badges of the Shepherd's vocation can possibly bring comfort in the dark hours of adversity and sorrow. The word *rod* in this text is from the Hebrew word *shebet*. Its meaning is a sceptre. It is then the symbol of authority. It may be the authority of a king, or it may be that of a father. It is used in the latter sense in Prov. 22:15, "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the *rod of correction* shall drive it far from him." The rod is here the symbol of correction. It is used in this way also in Ezek. 20:37, which is part of a prophecy concerning Israel's restoration. Jehovah is addressing Israel of the latter times and speaks to them of his chastening rod. He tells them that "Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you saith the Lord God; and I will cause you to *pass under the rod*, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant." How blessed to know that God is a Father to spiritual Israel; that we are the special objects of his fatherly care. All of his spirit-begotten children need the rod of correction. "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." But how different is the object to be obtained by our heavenly Father from that of most earthly fathers. The inspired writer illustrating this point said: "We have had fathers of our flesh which

corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits and live? For they verily for a few days hastened us after their own pleasure, but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." (Heb. 12:9, 10.) How comforting it is to the child of God to know that in making use of the chastening rod, he does it in love, and "that like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear [reverence] him; for he knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust." The shepherd's rod being the symbol of authority and power, it is reasonable to suppose that it is also the weapon by which he strikes down our adversaries, "even though the same rod at times may be heavy with chastisements for ourselves." The shepherd's rod, then, is used *both* for protection and correction. How comforting is the thought that we have such an Almighty Protector who administers the rod of correction for our eternal good.

But what is meant by the "staff"? The word staff is from the Hebrew word "*Mishenah*." It means a *support, a stay*. It is the same word that is used in Isa. 36:6. The words are addressed to Hezekiah, king of Judah, by the representative of the king of Assyria. "Lo, thou trusteth in the *staff* of the broken reed, on Egypt; whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh, king of Egypt to all that trust in him." The Psalmist says: "This is my comfort in my affliction; for thy word hath quickened me." (Psa. 119:50.) Again, we have St. Paul saying: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and *comfort of the Scriptures* might have hope." (Rom. 15:4.) The earthly shepherd used both the rod and the staff for protection and correction. With the point of the staff the shepherd sometimes prodded the sheep that were careless, and with the crook he sometimes helped one out that had stumbled into the ditch. How glad we are to know that all power in heaven and in earth is committed unto our Shepherd and that under both his protecting and correcting care we are safe from all foes, and nothing can by any means do us harm, while we "walk through the valley of the shadow of death."

- R. E. Streeter.

Encouraging Messages

Dear Brethren in Christ:

Your letter of January 17th is in my possession and I thank you heartily for your expressions of love and confidence. I am sorry I cannot write in English so you would not have the trouble with the translations. When that which is perfect has come, then this will be no problem any more; and the day is nigh.

I thank you with my whole heart for everything for all the manifestations of your love and thought of us and your prayers, and not the least for the package. Words fail us to thank you appropriately and those who helped in this. The Lord alone knows what we feel in our hearts and how much, much you all have helped us with this, and the pleasure it affords. Everything is important in a country that has become as poor as ours. What does not fit one can serve other dear ones. (Heb. 6:10; Ruth 2:12.) Oh, dear brethren, how good it makes one feel in this present loveless time and world! And how pleasant is the communion of God's children who practice this love!

Your message is a testimony of your love and compassion for those who suffer want. I ask myself again and again, Are we worthy and thankful enough for such love-not with words only, but by a life of love and thanks toward the Lord, who is the source of all blessings and gifts and who prompts the givers. In my life as a Christian I seldom have been impressed so much with the love of God's children as now, when it is shown in time of need. But I would guard myself carefully not to have my love for the brethren depending on their gifts, for we love the brethren because they are children of the same Father in Heaven and receive the same spirit from above. And I would like to state that we feel ourselves one with you because we see the same spirit actuating you; it speaks from your letters and writings. (Phil. 2:1-5.) It is not absolutely necessary that we see all points alike. Surely we see alike in the facts of redemption through Jesus Christ, as our dear Brother Russell has given them, and that we must give our life to Him in full sanctification in order to advance in holiness.

Your year motto in the "Herald," Watch! is timely. (Mark 13:37.) And this watching does not only mean for a certain year, it is an inner work of constant readiness and must be there always.

Only in the last few months have we had contact with the brethren, after we ourselves regained the inner composure. This contact was on December 27, 28 at a conference in Kassel, in which twenty-four brethren took part from the American and British Zones. We decided then what should and could be done to re-gather the brethren who had been scattered through the war, . . . to serve them with the words of Scripture. There we decided to give out a German periodical if the military occupations would permit it, and this we are now trying to do. The spirit at this convention was noble and good, as in the days of Brother Russell. Even though we hardly knew any one, there was harmony and love of the noblest quality. There was no friction nor quarrel about words. Great stress was laid on the need of retaining the liberty in Christ, though at the same time we recognized the need of contact with the brethren from all other lands who love the Lord and his wonderful Plan of Salvation. Yes, all really devoted believers should be esteemed even though they come from a different group of believers.

Especially did we want to keep in touch with the "Herald" movement. A committee of five brethren was chosen to carry out matters, amongst them my brother and the undersigned. These

matters I state to show you that only now have we contact with brethren who like ourselves live at present so far from their former homes. . . .

Now many, many thanks to you dear brethren for your constant prayers on our behalf. Be sure we do the same for you. So then we can meet daily at the throne of Grace, till we shall see Him face to face, if faithful to the end. Happy prospect!

At the same time I would thank you for the Bible, which is probably on the way now. The Lord reward you! I hope it will help me with the English language. I also thank you for the food package that you are sending to us now. Oh, how much need for thankfulness on our part! How much my brother and I would like to meet you here and have blessed communion. Could it be some time? . . .

Finally, I thank you for the news that you have sent some clothing to the brethren in Poland. It will bring joy to them, and I rejoice with them.

This is sufficient for today. I am a sufferer and live daily by the grace of God. **In** my weakness he has proven to be my strength. To him belongs the glory. With Heb. 6:10 and 13:20, 21, I commit you to God,

Your brother and fellow pilgrim -- Rev. 1:9,
O. S. -- Germany.

Dear Brethren:

Our hearts are running over with gratitude to our Lord. Surely he is a good Shepherd, and goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will stay in the house of the Lord forever.

Your dear package made our hearts so happy and our whole family thank you so much -- all who took part in sending it for us. May our Lord reward you for your kindness and love. We anew experienced the truth of the promise that he would open the windows of heaven and rain blessings upon us. Mother told me to read Luke 12:22-30, and I remembered his word: "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness of it." Mother always says we shall not want, all belongs to him and he will care for us and never let us suffer too much.

Your kind gift reached us in a trying moment, as we had not the least bit of fat nor meat and did not know what to give our little boy, four years old in February. Can you imagine what it means to receive a package with such precious things as we had not tasted for years, and when we were happy to have even dry bread and potatoes?

We are happy indeed to know that across the ocean there are brothers and sisters in the love of our Lord who take part in our misery and give us their love. Wonderful are the ways of our Lord! Just now, when we have spent nearly all the money we had saved, to buy food to keep us from suffering from hunger, your help comes. We will all use sparingly and also divide with some others who are very much in need. Your love for us is a new proof of the love of our Lord for us.

Seeing all the misery and all the grief about us, we learn the truth of all that is written of these days, and we will be happy and raise up our heads and trust our Lord. We have reason enough to

be thankful, for he always held his hand over us. We did not suffer during the war. We did not lose our little house, while three others just about us burnt out. Father was permitted to stay at home and care for our family. My brother-in-law returned from East Prussia. He was badly wounded; the right side of his face is lame. The nerve is cut by a gun-ball that went in under the eye and came out in the neck. But he is well. His brain is sound and he can do his work. Our Lord saved his health, and we must thank Him for all His blessings. I know it was Mother's prayers that helped him when he was wounded. My husband, who was not in the truth, did not return, but I have the love of my Lord.

My mother's mother is still alive. She will be seventy eight years old in April, if our Lord wills. She is a true soul. She lost her house in 1943 by bombs, and since then she has, lived with us. Grandmother and Mother and I try to walk in the footsteps of our Lord. Grandmother sits all evening and reads the old "Heralds," and is longing for the better time to come.

Mother tells me to write you how much she enjoys the "Herald." I will try to translate into German the very nice poems in the "Herald." The translation of the "Herald" is a blessing to me. My heart feels glad and happy as never before. When I translated the "Thanksgiving Thoughts" I could not go to bed because I was so happy and could not sleep until I came to the end.

You ask us whether we are in need of clothing and blankets. Yes, we really are. Our underclothing is so bad that it is only a collection of nice patches. Mother has one pair of stockings, darned all over. When she goes out, I give her my stockings. The boy sleeps in his mother's bed, because warm bed-clothes are missing. I can sew, and I make all sorts of things out of the old clothes, and I would be extraordinarily glad to receive something. Many years have passed since we could buy anything, and I used many of our clothes to sew trousers and coats and shirts for the boy. If there is any possibility for you to help us, please do. We really are poor in such things... .

Mother and I pray for you, as you do for us. I cannot find the right words to tell you what my heart is feeling. May you all be happy in the love of our Lord. Do you know that your kindness and love and the translation of the "Herald" is such a great help to me, in becoming strong in the truth. Words fail me to describe my heart's joy. I will pray:

"Shew me thy ways, O Lord;
Teach me thy paths.
Guide me in thy truth, and teach me;
For thou art the God of my salvation;
On thee do I wait all the day."

I beg you, pray for me, that I might become strong and firm in the truth, to stand by myself and not to lean only on my mother. Maybe mother will not always be at hand. She is not well. This bad time has torn her nerves so that her right eye and her mouth on the right side are always trembling very much. Sometimes she is not able to open her eye. The doctor says there is nothing to be done now. Our Lord knows her, and when this illness is necessary for her it is all right. He will give his children only what is good for them. Mother knows: "In the day that I called thou answeredst me Thou didst encourage me with strength in my soul." .

We remain with hearty greetings and good wishes,
Your sister,
E. S. -- Germany

Annual Meeting of the Pastoral Bible Institute

All lovers of our Lord Jesus and friends of the truth are welcome to, attend the Annual Meeting of the Institute to be held at 2 p.m. in the office of the Institute at 177 Prospect Place, Brooklyn 17, N. Y., Saturday, June 5, 1948, as announced in our April issue. In addition to the primary business of the election of directors, opportunity will be given for consideration of such other matters as may properly come before the meeting.

Members of the Institute who are not receiving the "Herald" in their own name, or the name of a member of the immediate family, but who are readers of the "Herald," should so inform the office at once so the proxy forms may be sent them.

In addition to the present directors the following has been placed as a nominee:

T. G. SMITH, Gardiner, Me.

Recently Deceased

Mr. A. L. Brown, Vernon, III. - (February).

Mr. C. P. Bridges, Lynn, Mass, - (March).

Mr. B. F. Von Drehle, St. Louis, Mo. - (March)

Mrs. Caroline Eberly, Reading, Pa. - (March).