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Thanksgiving for the Coming Kingdom

"Thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise." - Isa. 60:18.

THIS is one of the songs in which Isaiah thanks God for the Age to come. "In that day," as he tells us in another place, "this song shall be sung in the land of Judah: We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." (Isa. 26:1.) "In that day," a phrase which he repeats perhaps forty times, "thou shalt say: O Lord, I will praise thee." - Isa. 12:1.

Usually thanksgiving is retrospective. The word remembrance is a natural companion for the word thanksgiving. Already we have all doubtless been looking back and praising the way God has led us day by day since Thanksgiving Season of a year ago. But our text suggests another cause of thankfulness -- the Coming Kingdom. If our faith finds God in the past record of our lives, that is much. If it sees God in the future, that is even more. All of us should have within ourselves the thanksgiving of a historian, recounting God's mercies of the past that have been preserved within our memories. Our hearts should also be in tune with the thankfulness of the Prophet Isaiah, as he contemplates the glories of the Age to come.

"Thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise." These words must have had a very real significance to the people living in Isaiah's day, for they were constantly exposed to the perils of war and invasion. There was *no* safety for them except in the defended cities, and even the strongest of these cities had often proved an insufficient defense. They knew what it was to see a land laid waste by a merciless foe who dishonored its women, slew every male capable of bearing arms, carried its children away captive to a foreign shore, seized on all its portable treasures, and burned or otherwise destroyed what could not be carried off. - 2 Chron. 28.

Moreover, the men to whom his promise was addressed were themselves captives and slaves in a foreign land. They, or their fathers, had passed through the horrors of an invasion such as we have just described. There had been no safety, no refuge, for them in any city, however high its walls,

however strong its gates; no, not even in Jerusalem itself, although both its location and its fortifications had combined to make it well nigh impregnable. Even this holy and beautiful city, as strong as it was fair, had been destroyed, its walls battered down, its gates blackened with fire. - 2 Kings 14:12-14.

To men in such hard conditions, and with such bitter memories behind them, what promise could be more welcome, or more inspiring, than that which the Prophet gave them? -- the promise that they should be led back to their native country and rebuild their beautiful city; and that, when once they were restored to their ancestral home, Violence should no more be heard in their land, nor Wasting and Destruction in their borders; that the governor of the new city and commonwealth should be Peace, their magistrates Righteousness; and that, gratefully conscious of their security and joy, in their freedom from all danger and all fear, they should call their walls Salvation and their gates Praise?

But *when* was this gracious promise to be fulfilled? When did the Prophet *expect* to see it fulfilled?

This promise, Isa. 60:18, appears in one of the last twenty seven chapters of Isaiah. Many grave, critical questions arise when the date and authorship of those chapters are discussed (see "The Question Box," this issue of the "Herald," page 158); but these questions, though of great importance from the critical point of view, are of -hardly any importance in so far as the meaning and beauty of the chapters are concerned. Critics of every school combine to praise them as composing at once the most spiritual and one of the most, sublime scriptures of the Old Testament, and in affirming that the main drift of them is so obvious that it can hardly be missed.

When was this gracious promise to be fulfilled? When did the Prophet *expect* to see it fulfilled? If, as we think, it was Isaiah who wrote this promise, he doubtless expected that it would have a partial fulfillment when the Jewish captives were restored to the land of their fathers, following the captivity -- the Great Babylonian Captivity -- which, as the Lord's Prophet, he had informed Hezekiah would surely take place. (2 Kings 20: 16-18.) And even if it should prove to be the case, as others think, that this promise (Isa. 60:18) was written by a later, a second Isaiah, the expected partial fulfillment would not be different. In either case, the partial fulfillment would be looked for on the return from the Babylonian captivity.

And in some measure, in so far as those Jews would permit, it *was* fulfilled in their experience. Their governor, Ezra, was a man of peace. Their chief magistrate, Nehemiah, was a friend and servant of righteousness. And though the tribes and nations around them raged against them, and took counsel together how they might destroy them, yet again and again, because God was with them, their wall was their salvation, and songs of deliverance were heard in their gates. If the *fulness* of the promised blessing never came upon them, it was because they would not fulfill the inevitable conditions of the promise; because they did not love righteousness, because they did not seek peace and pursue it, because they would not have God to reign over them.

WHY DO NATIONS RISE AND FALL?

Isaiah, however, was a *prophet*. Because of this we cannot suppose he was looking forward only or mainly to the outward and temporary conditions of his people. He was looking chiefly to their inward -- their moral and spiritual -- state, after the manner of a prophet. The Hebrew prophet, we know, was a forth-teller rather than a fore-teller. He was acquainted with God and knew the moral principles which underlay God's dealings with the nations-especially with Israel. Righteousness, he knew, tended to exalt a nation; and just as certainly unrighteousness had the opposite

tendency. (Prov. 14:34.) Looking back over the pages of history, who cannot see this principle manifested in the rise and fall of nations? The scoffer may say that God is on the side of the heaviest battalions, and no doubt he can cite specific instances to prove his point. But the history of nations clearly testifies that God does not long remain on the side of a wicked nation, no matter how heavy its battalions, or how many. Such a nation begins to slide and totter. Before long it ceases even to have the heaviest battalions. A drunken nation pawns its assets in the markets of the world just as surely as does a drunken man. The process may take a little longer, and he who cannot see the trend may be deceived. But when Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome get unsound hearts, they are on their way to dissolution; when Israel forsakes righteousness, she is on her way to captivity; should the United States depart from the principles providentially written into its constitution by our founding fathers, principles clearly enunciated in God's Word, it will betaking the road which leads to destruction.

From the time when God had said to Abram, "I am thy shield, and thine exceeding great reward," the patriarchs and prophets of Israel, musing on things to come, had habitually anticipated a time when all people should be lovers of righteousness and lovers of peace; a time, therefore, in which God would be their shield and their salvation, whatever the dangers to which they might be exposed, and would make them rich, whatever they lost. Like Abraham, too, they had learned from the very disappointment of their earthly hopes, to look for a better country, in which the righteous would dwell securely. And hence, throughout the *Gospel Age*, Isaiah's promise has been read, and properly read, as more than a promise to Israel--as a promise to *all men* -- *as* pointing onward to the Kingdom of Christ, that most true home and refuge of every righteous man, that secure asylum for the lovers and makers of peace.

PRESENT APPLICATION TO THE CHURCH

Moreover, while the promise is for natural Israel restored, and through Israel the whole world of mankind, in the Millennial Age, its underlying teaching is seen to apply to the Gospel Age Church. For some of us have learned, and others are beginning to learn, that if we seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, all other things will be added unto us according to our need of them. We have learned, or we are beginning to learn, that if men are really lovers of righteousness and lovers of peace, God is in very deed their Refuge and will become their Song.. We, the Gospel Age Church -- under a covenant of sacrifice to suffer with Him -- do not ask, we do not expect, to dwell in a fortified city which no adversary or apparent adversary can approach, to sit within gates and behind walls which will secure us from every stroke of change and sorrow and loss. God has provided some better thing for us than that. He *himself* has become our Salvation and our Shield -- He who can compel every change to minister to our welfare, and turn all our sorrows into joy. For such creatures as we are, in such a world as this, to be put beyond the reach of loss and grief and change would be but a doubtful good; nay, it would be a very obvious and indubitable harm, for it would rob us of the very discipline by which we are confirmed in righteousness, and driven to seek for peace (not in the fluctuations and transitions of outward life, but) in the quiet and indisturbable depths of a mind stayed on God and conformed to his will. And who can doubt that it is good for us to know that we are secure *amid* the shocks of change, the blows of loss, the chastisements of grief; to know that none of these things can by any means harm us, that they can only minister to our welfare, since they are all the servants of him in whom we put our trust. God himself has become our Salvation and our Strength; and if our walls are Salvation, should not our gates be Praise?

Rightly read, then -- read in the sunshine of that Gospel which was revealed to patriarch and prophet, but is much more fully revealed to us, these ancient words of promise throw a bright flood of hope over our life, the life that now is, the life we live in the flesh. They teach us where

we may find an impregnable and fearless Security *amid* all the insecurities of time, where we may find a joy unspeakable and inexhaustible *amid* all its sorrows, where we may find a sacred and unbroken Peace *amid* all its conflicts and cares.

FUTURE LITERAL FULFILLMENT TO ISRAEL AND THE NATIONS

This we take to be the deepest and richest meaning of the Promise-deepest and. richest because the most inward and spiritual. But we ought not to close this Thanksgiving meditation without pausing long enough to note that the promise is to have a very literal fulfillment here on earth. Israel, and through Israel the whole world of mankind -- all the willing and obedient -- will reach a country eventually in which Violence shall be no more heard and Wasting and Destruction shall be unknown; a city, the walls of which shall be Salvation and its gates Praise. The restored earth will itself become a literal paradise. St. John, in the Book of Revelation, takes up the wondrous tale sung by Isaiah, and carries it to a still more wondrous close. As he gazes upon the new heaven and the new earth which are to succeed the former, he says: "I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem,* coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and be their God; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death; neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away." - Isa. 65:17; Rev. 21:1-4.

* Not the old literal city rebuilt, but the new spiritual city.

St. John goes on, as you know, to describe the heavenly city in figures drawn from all that is most precious and beautiful and splendid among the "former things" - from fountains and rivers, trees and mountains, gold and gems; sun and moon, pressing them all into his service as he labors to depict the pure and glorious conditions of the life of the new city in the new Age. However we may understand his symbols, and they are, of course, only symbols, no one can read his words, glowing with color, radiant with light, without becoming aware that he is predicting an utter and most blessed change in all outward conditions on this earth for Israel and all the other redeemed nations to enjoy. For us, the Church, it doth not yet appear what we shall be; we do but know (and in this blessed knowledge rest content) that when our Lord Jesus doth appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. (1 John 3:2.) Unless we greatly err, we are, with him, to constitute this fair and wondrous city, symbolic of the new government -- God's Kingdom -- then to assume control of earth's affairs.

As yet we may not fully know all that may be implied in the wall of jasper, great and high, on whose twelve foundations are inscribed the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb; or in the twelve gates, each a pearl, guarded by angels, and bearing the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. But of this much we are confident: these and the other symbols related to this Holy City are intended to represent the glorious relationship that will exist between our Lord and his Church; and the various characteristics of God's new world order-the government being centered in Christ and his Bride. It was for this Kingdom, this government, that our Lord taught us to pray: "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven." For this glorious hope "Our thankful hearts, O God, we raise, and sing to thee our song of praise."

"Glorious things of thee are spoken, Zion, city of our God. He whose word cannot be broken Formed thee for his own abode. On the Rock of Ages founded, Naught can shake thy sure repose; With Salvation's walls surrounded, 'Thou shalt triumph o'er thy foes.

"Built upon this sure, foundation,
Zion shall in glory rise;
Men shall call thy walls Salvation
And thy gates shall be named Praise.
The redeemed of every nation
Shall with joy thy glory see,
And find rest from tribulation,
Hope and life and peace in thee."

- *P. L. Read.*

Acceptable Sacrifices

Part I

"Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." - 1 Pet. 2:5.

AMONG OUR readers are some who have expressed a desire to see more frequent treatment of what are usually designated doctrinal subjects in our columns, while there are others who would prefer that all our limited space should be devoted to the treatment of the more devotional doctrines, to the exclusion of the strictly "Plan" teachings. The publishing of this series of articles, or any other similar articles, should not be construed as taking sides with either group, but merely as a desire to see that each is given proper consideration. We will hope that each, in the spirit of brotherly love, will rejoice with his brother reader in that he is receiving the thing that seems to himself necessary to his spiritual welfare, thus giving a further exemplification of the beauty of brethren dwelling together in unity.

In view of the fact that the subject of the Sin offering has of late been having the attention of some of the friends, and we trust with profit, it has been thought well to review some of the Scriptures bearing on the matter in a short series of articles. And we are making an earnest appeal to our readers of both viewpoints on this particular subject, that they enter into this study with us, unprejudiced, and in the spirit of prayer and earnest searching of the Word. It is with no spirit of strife that we are examining this subject, and we trust that there will be no tendency through our presentation to "stir up strife among the brethren." We have as our great desire rather, to be peacemakers, remembering our Lord's words 'Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.' - 1 Cor. 13:8, 9; Matt. 5:9.

Distinction Between Teachings of Plain Scriptures and Those of Interpretation

The series is begun with full realization that it is not our province, or that of any other man, to force any interpretation of Scriptures upon any one. In fact, even the rejection of a plain statement of the Scriptures would give no license to "begin to smite our fellow servants." We would, however, charitably hope that the eyes already opened to see some of the precious truths that sanctify, would later see all those things which we believe are Scriptural, though in the Lord's providence some were for a time hidden from them. It would seem to us, however, a wise proceeding on the part of each one to very conscientiously re-examine any teaching which some other consecrated brethren believe to be based on plain Scriptures, to ascertain whether or not he may have been unconsciously changing, by human interpretation, any word or phrase, thus arriving at a "private interpretation," unwarranted by any Scriptural authority.

In studying the writings of any author, excepting of course the inspired Apostles, a sharp distinction should always be kept in mind between teachings proved by plain Scriptures and those which the writer endeavors to establish through an interpretation of Scriptures. In both instances danger arises because of the imperfection of the mental organism of the student; 'but in the latter instance, entire avoidance of errors, temporarily held at least, cannot reasonably 'be hoped for except as it shall be the due time for God to guide both imperfect instruments into truth. Then, too, all should remember that the time when the path is to be so plain that the wayfaring man though a fool need not err therein lies beyond the present dispensation. On the other hand, the picture representative of our time is one of a tabernacle set in the midst of a wilderness and so swathed in coverings as to have had every trace of exterior light excluded, leaving those who walked there entirely dependent upon the inner light. "God, who commanded the light to shine

out of the darkness, hath shined in **our hearts**, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, as it shined in the face of Jesus.' -- (2 Cor. 4:6.) "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord." - Zech. 4:6.

"Not Sufficient of Ourselves"

Accepting by faith the statement that "those things that were written before were written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the ages are come," we come to our Bibles in high anticipation of the things to be learned there on this and kindred subjects, not because we are "wise men after the flesh" (1 Cor. 1:26), but because we have already learned through the history of the Church and by our own blessed experience that throughout the Age "God hath revealed unto us by His Spirit" things which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."* To fail to give time to the study of any subject that gave promise of such revelations as are indicated here, would seem indisputable evidence of unworthiness of acquaintance with Him whom to know is life eternal. Whether or not then our searching shall reveal any of the mysteries hidden beneath the darkening coverings of that tabernacle, if approached in the spirit of true meekness, it will at least give evidence of our love for Him and our desire to more fully know Him.

*--See Sermon, "Who may Know God's Secrets," page 5, "Pastor Russell's Sermons".

Let us in humility confess that we are approaching one of the many subjects of which our knowledge is meager, and that we have known many well developed Christian characters who differed with us on this or that point in connection with it. As the Scriptures plainly inform us that there are due times for the revelation of truths to God's people, are we not safe in inferring, or may we not say that we have definite evidence that our Great Teacher's method of dealing with each individual pupil is similar-apportioning each bit of knowledge according to his preparedness to receive it, and according to his present needs of strengthening and assistance?

Reasoning Together with Him

Few subjects demand greater care in our approach, to the intent we may always bear in mind' that we are not "sufficient of ourselves to think [Diaglott: "reason"] anything as of ourselves, but" our sufficiency is of God." (2 Cor. 3:5.) If He shall teach us "line upon line, precept upon precept," it will be because we are found "casting down reasonings [Diaglott and margin] and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and 'bring into captivity every thought to the obedience Christ." (2 Cor. 10:5.) Let us come then in acceptance of one of the most startling invitations ever uttered: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord." (Isa. 1:18.) It is regarding the washing of scarlet sins until they become as white as wool that He would have us reason **with Him**. How it should humble us to a realization of the uselessness of **our** reasonings as we bow in the presence of His perfection. Such humility was necessary that the Apostle might be faithful in the 'performance of his commission, and without it we cannot hope to learn the things he was appointed to teach us. We would listen to him, and learn of his spirit as well as of his teachings. "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ: and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in Christ." - Eph. 3:8, 9.

Christ, the Center

If in searching we should arrive at any conclusions that, take out of the hands of our beloved Jesus any feature of that Plan, we may be confident that our efforts to reason together with Him have failed and that we have (we hope unconsciously), injected some thought of our own. Every finding should be "according to a plan of the ages [Diaglott], which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Eph. 3:11.) Note that it does not say that it was purposed in the Logos. We know that the man Christ Jesus was the Logos in His prehuman existence, and that the identity ever remains the same, but the thought we wish to impress, and which we believe the passage is intended to convey is this, that God's wonderful Plan of reconciliation was dependent upon the Logos leaving the glory He had with the Father and becoming the man Christ Jesus. (See Heb. 2:14-16.) Christ means anointed; and He was not anointed in heaven but on earth. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in a form of God, thought not by robbery to be equal with God; but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." - Phil. 2:5-8 See Diaglott.

That fact that before the foundation of the world, God had perfected all the details of the Plan of the Ages, every feature of which centered in Christ Jesus, before the foundation of the earth, must ever lie beyond the grasp of our feeble intellects. Through this same One, His Holy Arm, God has seen fit to reveal this Plan. The messages of the Prophets testifying of the sufferings and humiliation of the Messiah, even to His ignominious death on the cross, were not believed. Proud of flesh, Israel could not look for such a Savior. No, theirs would be a great, an honorable, a glorious Messiah, a warrior to lead to the pomp of victory. Their pride so blinded them that when He came to His own, His own received Him not. The preaching of faithful Prophets over many centuries had not prepared them for the Messiah that came. Nor is the preaching of the Apostles and other consecrated saints to antitypical Israel rewarded with better success. and, the Arm of the Lord, the true Christ of the Bible, is revealed only to those who are meek and lowly -- to those who are teachable as Jesus Himself was. Hear Him: "Follow Me, for I am meek and lowly" -- an invitation the proud of heart cannot hear. His way will have no attractions for such; but "the meek will He guide in judgment, the meek will He teach His way."

"Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the Arm of the Lord revealed? [It is manifest they could not believe] for He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant [far too tender to find any place in any human scheming], and as a root out of a dry ground." (Isa. 53:1, 2.) What more hopeless picture from the human standpoint could there be than this?-nothing but a shapeless root, no beauty, no sign of life-only death in evidence, and no trace of moisture in the ground to revive any life that might happen to be there. They say, "**He hath no form nor comeliness**; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him."

How apparent it is that it was Jesus' flesh, His humanity, -- and all which that implies, that hid from the eyes of the people the Arm of the Lord, the power of His salvation, the means by which Jehovah was reconciling the world to Himself. Because He was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief [Leeser: "disease"]" He was "despised and rejected of men . . . as one from whom men hide their face He was despised; and we esteemed Him not. Surely He hath borne our griefs [Leeser: "diseases"], and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. [Of all the billions of earth, only a little handful have believed His report. All others have turned away their face from Him, and even of that little handful, most have at times shamefully neglected Him but, though it was all foretold before ever He came to die] He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to His own way; and Jehovah hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." - Isa. 53:3-6, R. V.

In our studies we will turn to the tabernacle picture for a corroboration of these findings as to the Father's means of concealing the true beauties of the "altogether lovely One" until the due time.

- P. E. Thomson.

Where He Leads Me I Will Follow

"Return unto thy rest, O my soul: for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." - Psa. 116:7.

TO BE always hopeful and courageous in depressing circumstances is not an easy thing. The discipline of life seems often very hard; and we rebel against it, not because of its hardness alone, but because much of it seems so unnecessary. Sometimes it is the pettiness of our ordinary life that weighs us down; and sometimes it is the disappointing ineffectiveness of our efforts to serve God worthily. Our ordinary concerns look so poor and mean that we long to be free from them, so as to spend life in a nobler way; but we cannot get free; we are chained to the drudgery; we cannot rise. "This endless struggle just to live," we say, "this weary round of uncongenial work day after day, this endless buying and selling, this ceaseless toil of mere housekeeping, this narrowing down of my thoughts to the petty details of food and clothing; this irksome monotony of life where I have the same small things to attend to day after day, all the year through, unable to get above them or devote my energies to loftier things-why does God tie -me down to a life like this? Why does he not give me work to do in which I could better serve him, and at the same time better satisfy my own idea of what a noble life ought to be?"

If we take such questionings to God in- the still hour of meditation and prayer, however, we shall get his answer to them clear enough, just as he gave it to Israel by Moses long ago. He will tell us that what we call the drudgery of our common days is meant to do two great things that are absolutely indispensable; first "to humble us," and next "to prove us, and to see whether we will keep his commandments or no.

It needs not only divine teaching, but divine discipline in addition to the teaching, to make us content with faithfulness in very lowly things, instead of complaining that we have not greater things to do. We are eager to do great things. Our pride and self complacency are flattered by our having large services demanded of us. And God understands us well, and therefore seeks to purge us of this pride by giving us only common and humble things to do, that ostentation may not tempt the heart.

But the discipline is also meant "to prove us" whether we will keep his commandments or no; to see whether we are seeking simply to do his will, and are not pursuing our own. There is hardly one man in a thousand who sets himself steadily and humbly just to do the will of God with no ulterior aims whatsoever. If we all did that, there would not be a single unhappy heart in the world! In our impassioned longings for some other kinds of life than what is God's present will concerning us we are living in the region of dreams; and men are not sanctified by dreams, but by battles. When that old people of Israel listening to God at the fiery mount had a bright vision of the great and noble life they would enter on ere long, they thrilled with devotion to him, and vowed perfect obedience to his will in everything. But how long was it till they were bitterly complaining of the tiresome and poor monotony of those wanderings in the desert by which the vision was to be realized? And where are our vows of obedience too? Where are' our professions of living only according to his will? To have bright visions of what a noble thing life might be made to be is not to make it so. But all the time we are looking at our dream-pictures, God is taking a better way with us, though we see not what his meaning is -- training us to humble faithfulness by the seeming drudgery of commonplace duties in an uncongenial sphere: and he shows us this as soon as we get alone with him.

There is another and a keener discouragement, too, over which nothing can lift us so easily and so completely as a quiet talk with God—the discouragement arising not from the pettiness of our lives, but from our disappointing ineffectiveness and want of success in working for God's righteousness in the world. The discouragement grows often into despair, and we cry, "Oh that I had wings like a dove, then would, I fly away and be at rest!" That was the cry of a thoroughly dispirited man, yet not a worldly man, nor a man simply saddened by accumulating sorrows; rather, a man weary with the vain struggle against the opposing forces of evil, a man striving to fight against 'the sin around him, and to put down iniquity, yet finding his efforts thwarted on every hand, and almost giving up the battle in despair, saying bitterly, "I have spent my strength for nought and in vain. Can God mean that his work shall be only pain to me and defeat? Has he nothing better to give me than this?"

There are many such hearts in the world today; earnest Christian hearts, zealous for God, yet saddened by the feeling that all their efforts are in vain; not world-weary, nor sin weary, nor sorrow weary, but battle weary; looking at the difficulties on every side, thinking of their own weakness to stem the rushing tide of evil, and looking forward to the long-drawn fight that is before them still, till their courage fails, and they shrink from the depressing prospect of useless battle to the very last. For it is not the sharpness of the conflict, but the weary length of it, that often makes the heart give way. It is the never-endingness of the fight, the hopelessness of anticipating any triumphant close, that makes so many who are really soldiers of the King cry, "Oh that I had wings like a dove, to fly away and be at rest!"

But now let this depression be not nursed in the brooding mind, but taken into the secret place of communion with God, and how soon a different complexion is put upon the circumstances that cause it! What has he to say about it? What is his answer to the weary sigh? It is just to think of Christ. Who had ever so sore a fight as he, or more discouragements than he? Whoever kept up the fight to the very last as he? It was said of him before he came, "He shall not fail nor be discouraged till he have set judgment in the earth," and he will yet fulfill the prophecy. He has been waiting for his victory for nineteen hundred years, and is waiting for it yet, but waiting undiscouraged as well as undismayed, "expecting till his enemies be made his footstool." The unfailing and unfainting hopefulness of Jesus Christ may shame us out of our discouragement while following him as "fellow-workers with him unto the Kingdom of God." The one answer to all our despondency is Christ. If he had spoken as we so often speak, and felt as we so often feel; if he, seeing how small his success was, had folded his weary hands and given up the conflict, what then? And what was his review of his life when almost done? "I have glorified thee upon the earth, I have finished the work thou gavest me to do." That -was all, but that was enough. Can any of us wish to be able to say more? "Oh for wings," we cry, "to fly away and be at rest! But if Christ had said that, where would our redemption have been? Wings await us only as they awaited him—only when, like him, we have finished the work given us to do, and have fought out the battle to the end. Armor now; wings, if we are patient, we shall find in due time.

Yet, even meanwhile, the blessing of "wings" is not always denied; not wings with which to escape all troubles, but wings with which to rise above them. "They that wait upon the Lord shall mount up on wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." That is not a promise for the far distant future. It is a promise for the present; and each part of it will be at one time or another, fulfilled to the "waiting" heart. There will be soaring days, when we get so high above the world that we can feel as if we had parted company for ever with its sorrows and its temptations, when we can not only outrun the vexations of life, but outfly them, and feel as if they did not exist. God means us sometimes to have hours like these; but they are not the ordinary experience even of the best of men. The ordinary experience is a lower, and yet equally comforting one -- the fulfillment of the other part of the promise, "They shall run and not be

weary; they shall walk and not faint." Not so ecstatic an experience as the soaring, but quite as useful and possibly more safe, is this humbler experience given to those who know that they have no might in themselves, and wait for 'God's might to strengthen them.

And the order of these three promises is to be noted well, for they are often fulfilled to us just in that order and no other. It may seem strange that the loftiest attainment should be put first and the lower last; but this order is the true one for all that. The soaring days of every Christian generally come at an early stage. At the wonderful time of his "first love," his first experience of the riches of divine grace, his conversion days, he often rises wonderfully high above the world. Never, indeed, does he feel so completely loosed from its thrall, never does he rise to such a height both of joy and of surrender; his glowing feelings seem then to carry him up to the very gates of heaven.

But soon he has to come down from his ecstasies because God calls him to battle and service below, and then he learns to be thankful if only he can "run with patience the race set before him."

And later still he is humbler still. A larger experience of the world and of himself shows him that constant "running" even is a thing he cannot keep up. He is thankful then if he can but "walk" with God, leaning upon his everlasting arms, till he comes to the dark valley at the end of the pilgrim way, and finds that there is no soaring over it, nor running through it. He is glad of the Lord's staff to keep him from falling, and will only say, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil." But as he goes leaning on God, he finds that God's strength gives him the victory as completely as when he was able to soar.

Now, the manifold discouragements of life are sure to oppress -us terribly so long as we are merely alone with ourselves, brooding over them; but they will quickly disappear when we are alone with God; for then we look upon them with his eyes, weigh them in his balances, measure them by his tests; and as we review them in his light, there comes into us a great hope, a great courage, and a great peace.

- *Selected.*

God Seeketh Such

PART 4

"The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be his worshipers." - John 4:23, R. V.

IN the closing thought of the last article the suggestion was made that our worship of God, in its fullest, widest sense was expressed by us in our whole-hearted submission to his will, and that by that submission, actuated by the spirit and purpose of his Plan, we were entering into some measure of cooperation with him in the outworking of that Plan. Our consecrated life, yielded up in compliance with his will, is the "worship" that he seeks, and in which he finds supreme delight. That is the truth of that great matter in its larger, wider sense.

But we must needs bring this wider, comprehensive view down to the level of our common work a day experience, and seek to understand how it works out there. And, in this closer survey, the many little things that make up the sum of life may not seem so satisfactory to our view as that greater, wider, ideal worship seems to be.

Perhaps there is no place in all our life where the spirit of our worship can reveal its temper and quality as when we meet together in the Name of the Lord. If, in that sacred hour, our spirit of devotion is cold and merely formal, we may be sure it will be cold and undemonstrative when we are face to face with daily life. If our spirit of devotion is to be warm and genial when mingling with "the common round," it must needs be warm and deeply demonstrative in the upper room -- in the place apart. These two manifestations must be of one piece (or pattern), though that seen in the "meeting room" is the germ and substructure of it all. If a satisfactory temperature of devoted response is manifested there, most likely it will be manifest elsewhere; if it is not manifested there, then it is unlikely to be manifest anywhere. Our attitude of respectful reverence before the Lord in that solemn hour, may be taken to be the thermometric test of our consecrated life of submission to his will. Our sense of the presence of our Lord in our Church gatherings may with certainty be taken as the indicator of our sense of his presence in our daily life. If we do not view him as realistically present with us in the one, neither shall we visualize him as present with us in the other. What then does his presence mean to us when we gather in his Name?

Many years ago there came into our lives a wider understanding of the Divine Plan than any other Bible students had seen since the Apostles fell asleep. It opened up to us many of the dark sayings of the Holy Book and made its message clear and convincing to our minds. Its satisfying presentations concerning the ransom and its consequent restitution work brought solutions to many of our problems and perplexities. In addition, its soul-inspiring "Call" to follow Jesus in the way of sacrifice, won our hearts, awakening our deep affections for our Father and our Lord and made us "count it all joy" to become "dead with him" now, in order that we might live with him when "caught up" and glorified.

Very truly at that time our understanding took on a most wonderful "length and breadth"! But has there, in the meantime, been a corresponding development of "height" and "depth"? Has the "heart" kept step and balance with the "head"? Has our reverence grown in proportion with our understanding?

From our general observation of the situation, almost everywhere, as we have been given to see it, we are reluctantly persuaded that such is not the case.

Perhaps it is not difficult to find extenuating reasons for this lack of step and balance. We are living in a day which in some sense, bears correspondence with that of the Apostle John. Former expectations have miscarried, and at this time we have passed beyond what to us were once well-established landmarks, and now we live on from year to year without other authentic chronological mile-posts before us. It is not correct (as some would have us think), that we once accepted the year 1914 as the "beginning" of the "End period." That year was held to be the terminus of all Gentile power. In that year the "Kingdom" was due to "come," with Jewry returned to favor and to power. To the best of that former belief, the "old world" was there due to pass away and the new and better world begin. And we firmly believed we would be gathered Home to be forever with the Lord before that better world began. Today we are stepping forward over what is proving to be uncharted ground, with no sure landmark or signpost immediately ahead to point the way, or say "how long" ere the destination will be reached. We know some brethren expect a new landmark a few years hence, but the arguments adduced do not appeal to this pen. No line of argument yet presented is convincing.

All we can say is that where once expectation was alert and keen, an uncertain outlook now prevails. Again, as in the days of John, where once intense activity prevailed, an almost total silence reigns. Amid so much uncertainty, much of the old chronological belief has been cast overboard by some, with nothing new and sure to take its place-and sad to say, when once the unloading has begun, the difficulty for some has been to know when to stop. Alas! that in so many cases "good cargo has been unshipped with the "unfulfilled," and what was "of faith" has been jettisoned with what was "of credulity."

Are we now finding fault in referring thus to this lack of certainty, or apportioning blame to any one for this defect or that? By no means! No one has been to blame because former expectations were not fulfilled. But -- and this is the query we wish to put -- Did all this baffling and disappointing experience deepen our reverence for God, and quicken into fiercer flame our devotion towards his great Name? Undoubtedly some will be able to answer affirmatively, and say with truthfulness that these frustrating circumstances drove them nearer to the Lord. But can we all say the same? For some there came an undoubted loss of faith, with a consequent loss of trust, and an even more deplorable loss of "first love," as the time-features failed!

Then, as if to accentuate a situation already critical, there came a period of acute controversy and bitter separation, in which heart and mind lost much of their former peace and poise, while communion and fellowship became exceedingly difficult all around. We mention this, only that we may ask, Did all that unhappy experience conduce to a deeper spirituality, and tend to promote a more careful regard for holy things?

Take the situation of those former days at its very best, from the earliest days of the "truth activity," what then do we find? Even at the time when that activity reached its zenith in the Class Extension and Photo Drama work, what real opportunity did we find to stress or cultivate "the worshipful" and "the devotional" to their proper heights and depths? In almost every case our witnessing was made in public lecture halls, in cinemas, in schools, and in numerous other buildings of an entirely secular nature -- many of them quite drab and unpretentious -- without the least thing about them to touch the deeper springs of the inner life. True enough they served the evangelistic purpose then in hand-but were they always all that they might, have been? And furthermore (the object being what it was) both lecturer and staff were bent upon convincing those who had come to "hear," and thus, at its best, the atmosphere of the lecture room or debating theatre tended to prevail.

This is not an adverse criticism of those intensive days--indeed far from it--it is only stated: that we may note that this impact of mind upon mind--of reasoned argument upon reasoning (especially if hostile) minds -- did not always tend to stir the deep appreciation of the heart towards the deeper aspects of the Truth.

And then again, in how many instances did those little Classes, when started on the way, have to meet, in sheer necessity, in some little dingy room with nothing but coldly secular associations on every hand. Classes in some larger cities may have been more fortunate, and had the comfort of better conveniences, but taken in the aggregate, the situation and atmosphere of the assembly hall was anything but conducive to the reverential and worshipful pose of mind.

Such disadvantage as there was might have been measurably overcome had all elders and speakers been possessed of deep devoutness and piety. But were all ministering brethren so richly blessed? Added to this was the amazingly wide range of truth to be absorbed; and with such poor, slow minds to "take it in," it is scarcely to be wondered at that our seasons of communing came to take on somewhat of the nature of a "school" or "class," in which instruction was imparted by those "quick to understand" to those not so amply blessed. Nor need we wonder if a quest and hunger for some fresh "new thought" took possession of many minds and crowded out the deeper purpose which always ought to characterize our coming together "in his Name." That it has taken us these many years to come to realize that the first purpose of our "gathering" should be to worship God, to give thanks and praise to his worthy name--is readily understandable under the circumstances! It has been thus with every advance movement of the Truth, and our own experience has been no exception to the rule.

Of course, we sang our hymns, and prayer was duly made in the course of our "study," or "service," but how often did the whole company sense and react to the Unseen Presence "in the midst"? How often did we pray to "Our Father which art in heaven," and then think and act and speak as though he actually *was* there--millions of miles away from our little meeting-place! Did we always think we were "drawing near" to an immediate Throne of Grace, from which an All seeing Eye -- like some within -- the vail Shekinah Light -- was looking down and noting all we said and did? Perhaps to some this may seem mere imaginative sentimentalism, for we know that this conception of the Unseen Presence in the midst is not apparent to the coldly critical, rational mind. Nothing but the responsive "eye of faith" can see and sense "Him who is Invisible"; and perhaps it was because our communion belonged more to the plane of "the reasoning mind" than to that of "faith," that we were not always sure if we had worshiped God in the manner due to his Holy Name, or had 'been present merely "at the Class." Perhaps if the eye of faith had been more in evidence, we may, at times have spoken and acted quite differently from what we did.

We have heretofore sought to find such extenuating reasons, as we rightly could, for our lack of reverential respect for the Holy Name, but we humbly beg to say, in all sincerity, that we believe the time has come when our religious life -- or should we rather say spiritual life -- should take on height and depth, equal to its length and breadth; and that our God-consciousness should become, at least equal to the breadth of our truth consciousness. Every reform movement at its beginning has started out with some broader expansion of truth, leading thus to a wider outlook. The need for depth of experience to correspond came only at a much later time. It is as though the heart needs a longer time to ripen and mature than the understanding of the mind. One wonders if we ought not now to have reached the stage where depth of experience should balance our breadth of understanding.

How **His** this balancing to be brought about? Depth of experience calls for two things in particular: (a) more of the private closet approach; and (b) a more reverential response in the

"ecclesia" gatherings. Regarding -the first, not only do we need to go aside for prayer, we need also to take the "closet" mood with us wherever we go, so that when disengaged from other pressing tasks, if only for a mere moment of our time, we can "lift up our hearts" to make contact with our attendant Lord, and thus find a short season of comforting communion. This momentary lifting of our soul to him can break the stress and tension of our modern life for us anywhere, at any time. It conduces to a keener and more intense spiritual sensitivity and keeps faith and love alert and alive. It thus makes the presence of our Lord in our life "a living, bright reality" -- a "help" in time of need; and is well worth trying out by every child of God.

As concerns the second, let us see what Scripture has to suggest: After our Lord had given instruction how to proceed with the offending brother, even to the point of telling "it to the Church" (Matt. 18:15-17), he then proceeded to say, "What things soever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and what things soever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

Now, while from the connection with its context this binding and loosing may have to do primarily with Church discipline (even to the point of censuring or disfellowshipping some recalcitrant or defiant member of the congregation), it is obviously of much wider application than that, by reason of the words, "What things soever." This wider application is also made manifest by the words next following ". . . again I say unto you ..." Here a new and further declaration begins to be made, The declaration continues to say, "that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them."

"Gathering together in my Name" is thus shown to be of much wider import than "disciplinary" gatherings alone. It is intended to apply to every kind of "gathering," duly arranged and agreed, even by so few as "two or three."

The proper sense of these words implies that if "two or three" (or any larger number) agree to come together in his Name, at some certain hour, and in some certain place, such a "binding" or agreement is duly noted up in heaven, and such agreement is also "bound" in heaven. Then, when the appointed hour is come, and we have gathered in his Name, - the heavenly presence also will present itself "in the midst," and he, unseen yet not undetected, will have come to be a partner in the "fellowship."

That promissory declaration of our Lord makes our little gatherings (and big ones too) something exceptional. Because we have agreed to come together in his Name, and because our agreement is acknowledged and agreed in heaven, the heavenly Visitor will come forth to take his rightful place "in the midst," in the place, and at the hour by us agreed.

Perhaps the little gathering may be convened in some drab little room down some out of the way back street -- no matter, "He" will be there! Or perhaps it may be called in some humble home, where, till the appointed hour, the whole varied round of domestic life would be in full swing; never mind, "He" will be "in the midst." Be the meeting large or small, neath lofty dome or humble roof, his promise can be trusted to stand good, and "there am I in the midst" is a certainty.

The coming of the hour appointed changes the significance of meeting room or auditorium. From that moment it becomes the "House of God" -- a heavenly Bethel, for he, as well as we, will be in attendance there. Happy indeed are they who, going to that gathering, expect to find him there! For these there will be no disappointing absences.

Now if it be thus true that our Unseen Lord punctually presents himself "there," could any child of God consider it an act complimentary to the Majesty of his dear Name to be late (needlessly late) at that meeting place? Surely our early arrival, "there" is at least, a first and primary element in that respectful reverence due to that great Name! A mere trifle, do you say, even if we are a little late? Unpunctuality is no trifle in an audience with a King!

Now supposing we have arrived in good and ample time, what shall our demeanor be, and with what expectations have we come? Supposing at such a gathering some old friend, unseen for years is there, enhancing thus our joy, would we sit and chatter with our friend in all the "small talk" and "tittle-tattle" concerning all those years? Does the pleasure of meeting friends outweigh our expectancy of meeting with our Lord? Naturally our cup of joy is full, and there is much we want to say, but shall we not remember the other more distinguished Visitor, who has promised to be there? What then is the purpose that brings us together in his Name? Is it first and foremost to ponder and probe some problem of our intellectual faith? to study and discuss the theme or subject for the afternoon or night? Have we come to listen to some gifted tongue explain the heavenly verities? Well and good is this, for "hearing" and "discussion" have their place, but is there not one further reason for our presence "there"? Have we not come for an audience with our Lord and King? Have we not come to give thanks and praise to his blessed Name for all his Shepherd care and tender faithfulness? Have we not come to thank our 'God and Father for all his excellent Greatness and wonderful Love?

It is here that the value of some dear "man of God" in "addressing" or "presiding" at the gathering is of worth untold. If, out of the academic discussion of an abstract truth, he can bring it (or its application) down and home to the hearts and circumstances of that congregation, how true it is that he can cause every heart to rise up in gratitude to God, and thus send up before his Face that odor of worship and reverence which is, to him, as incense sweet.

At such an hour and in such an atmosphere the "logical" debater and rabid doctrinaire seem entirely out of place. Indeed the insistent attempts of such to keep the thread of argument solely on the "reasoning plane" almost seems to indicate that they either forget or ignore the presence of the Lord "in the midst," for surely no member of a congregation would dare intentionally to push matters to a point of wordy warfare, beneath His piercing Eye. The very consciousness of that blessed Presence, sanctified and devoted "for their sakes" (John 17:19) would surely preclude such procedure. Questions there surely would and must be, but in what spirit would they be asked? Answers there would and must also be, but in what tones would they be made? Differences also there would and must be -- circumstances being what they are -- but in what mood would they be approached? In that hallowed atmosphere, both speech and discussion would take on more respectful reverence, and evoke in both hearer and participant that deeper response which characterizes the "true" worshiper. Within that sacred hour, hearts would "burn" with deep appreciation as once they did on the "Emmaus" way; and departing thence, a sense of deep thankfulness, born of a vital, living faith, would keep those hearts in perfect peace.

This is no attitude of wishful thinking or of religious sentiment run astray. It has been experienced and proved ten thousand times by the most saintly of souls in bygone days. And it is true today, as those who put it to the test repeatedly can testify.

The essence of acceptable "true worship" -- still sought for by our God -- arises mainly out of two things: first, that never to be forgotten recollection that he is always "in the midst" of his assembled "two's and three's" (or be the number what it may); and second, that attention to the little things betokening respect for his Holy Name. The little Church assembly is the nursery in

which the fragrant plant can be raised; propagated there, it will weather and become indigenous in the wider life. If the Church life is what it ought to be, the reverential worship which God seeks in his own true child will permeate and interpenetrate every act of life. If the spirit and the truth of the great Plan actuates the inner life of the Church, I will surely prompt and activate its members, while engaged in the daily task and common round. And thus our loving God and gracious Father will find what he "seeks" in us; and we shall find in him our "all in all."

On the walls of our homes we sometimes see the motto: "Christ is the head of this house, the unseen Guest at every real; the silent Listener to every conversation." Per Laps if we could register a variation of this motto upon our minds (and hearts) even if not upon the walls of our assembly halls, to read as below, it might help to bring us up more sharply to a sense of our privileges in Christ in spirit and in truth. Here is the variation: "Christ is the Head of this Ecclesia; the Unseen Guest in, all our fellowship; the Silent Listener to every conversation."

That deeper reverence is an essential need of our troubled times. It is the quality to give poise and balance when disappointment occurs. The chilling influence of dispensational disappointment has damped the warmth and enthusiasm of many hearts, and with this damping down has disappeared, in many cases, the quick responsiveness to the Good Shepherd's care. A disturbed state of mind leads to a disturbed state of heart, which in its turn leads on to a less reverential and worshipful attitude before the Lord. In this disturbed, unreverential state, the many tokens of his presence "in the midst" are overlooked, and become, in time, no longer expected or desired, and the many tender endearments of the Lord produce no helpful or salutary effect, and joy and happy praise then very quickly evaporate.

Too often we begin this sad decline by forgetting what he said about his Presence "in the midst," while concentrating more upon the definition of the text. A spirit of debate thus supplants the attitude of worship, and we (and others too) must leave the presence of the "Presence" unblessed and unhelped.

Dear brethren in the Lord, ought we not to be more mindful of our Heavenly Father's "search." There are many things for which he has no need to "search" - they are his of creative right! There are many hearts in this sad world for which, as yet, he makes no search; they are all steeped in sin, and subject still to vanity. (Rom. 8:20.) He will yet come forth some later day, to seek and exalt all who may then be "found" in Christ. (Phil. 3:9.) In that final search will be completed the assembling of his Elect. His "finding" in that final search will be conditioned, in the main, by what he "finds" today.

Today he is "seeking" such as *can* and *do* worship him in spirit and in truth. Let us be very mindful of what he "seeks" today -- for then we may have good assurance concerning his "finding" in that later day!

Yes, the disciple whom Jesus loved has the right word for us today:

"God seeketh such."

- T. Holmes, Eng.

The Question Box

ISAIAH CHAPTERS 40-66

Question:

The last twenty-seven chapters of the Book of Isaiah have their historical setting at the close of the Captivity and the Return from Exile. Please harmonize this with Isaiah 1:1, which states that Isaiah's vision was seen by him "in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah," the last of whom died about one hundred and fifty years before.

Answer:

According to the scholars, the Book of Isaiah consists of sixty-six chapters, which fall into two very distinct collections of prophetic discourses, (chapters 1-35 and chapters 40-66) which are separated by a stretch of narrative or history (chapters 36-39).

Each of these two distinct collections of oracles are themselves the combination of earlier collections, some of which are entitled Isaiah's while others make no claim to be from his hand.

Quite evidently the prophecies are not arranged chronologically. An example of this may be seen in the fact that Isaiah's own commission to be a prophet, which certainly took place prior to the commencement of his ministry, is not recorded until chapter six.

The facts outlined above, no scholar disputes. However, since the scene of the last twenty-seven chapters seems to be wholly laid in a time when the Return from the Captivity was close at hand, and Cyrus, the great deliverer, actually present, many modern scholars have been led to suppose that these chapters were written by an unknown writer (a second Isaiah), who lived a century and a half later.

Others, of no less scholarship, however, have given their reasons for holding to the traditional view that all sixty-six chapters were written by one and the same man, Isaiah, the son of Amoz. (Isa. 1:1.) Amongst a number of considerations urged, they point out, with good reason we think, that the first thirty-five chapters would be incomplete without the last twenty-seven. For example, the words which tell how "the redeemed of the Lord shall walk there, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy" -- words which appear in chapter 35 (verses 8-40), are but the prelude -- a most natural prelude -- which leads on to the yet more glorious proclamation with which the last twenty-seven chapters open: "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God. . . . Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for your God." - Isa. 40:1-3.

Those scholars holding to this traditional view, regard the last twenty-seven chapters as prophecy, in the restricted sense of prediction; or rather in the sense of a combination of the essential element of prophecy, namely, forth-telling, with the special or occasional element, namely, prediction, a fore-telling of things to come.

This leads to a related question which we have next to consider, in the following paragraphs.

Question:

What was the function of an Old Testament prophet?

Answer

Richard G. Moulton, in "The Modern Reader's Bible" has written very instructively on this subject. The following is little more than a condensation of his remarks.

In approaching this subject one misconception needs special notice. It seems almost impossible to eliminate from the popular mind the idea that "prophecy" means "prediction." Yet this is a purely modern modification of its meaning. It rests upon a false etymology: the *pro* in this word is not the *pro* which means *before hand* (as in *prospectus*), but the other *pro* which means *in place of* (as in *pronoun*) a prophet is one who speaks in place of another. Where Moses had been shrinking from the mission to Israel on the ground of his inefficiency as a speaker, and Aaron was granted him as an assistant in this respect, the words are:

"See, I have made thee [Moses] a god unto Pharaoh; and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet."
- Exodus 7:1.

As Aaron is thus the mouthpiece, of Moses, so regularly in Scripture the prophet is the mouthpiece of God. Of course prophecy, like any other form of literature, can contain, and in fact does contain, prediction; but such predictions are the accident, not the essence of prophecy. Yet in traditional interpretation the idea that prophecy must be prediction has distorted the study of the books; particular passages, often of minor importance, have been over accentuated, while the spiritual richness of the books when read as literary wholes, has usually been missed.

In this broad sense every one who stands forth as a representative of God has a claim to the name of prophet. Moses thus speaks of himself; Deborah is called a prophetess. But there is a more specific sense to the word. Israel began as a theocracy. The government of God was exercised through such as Moses and Joshua. Later, when the people insisted upon visible kings, prophets, who had hitherto appeared sporadically, became a settled order, ready at any moment to appeal from the secular kings to the Divine Ruler of Israel. They were prophets as representing the Theocracy. They were not the equivalent of pastors -- they were statesmen; and not statesmen merely, but opposition statesmen. They did not minister to sympathetic 'congregations, but flung themselves into active life as antagonists of the prevailing system.

To this must be added an important distinction between the earlier and the later prophets. The earlier prophets, such as Elijah, were men of action. There is no "book of the Prophet Elijah;" men like Elijah and Elisha enter into literature as heroes of stories which others narrate. But the later prophets, like Isaiah and Jeremiah, without ceasing to be men of action, are also men of letters. Thus for these later prophets there is a double function. To their own day and generation they, like their predecessors, are leaders of national action. But beyond this function their literary gifts have fitted them for a wider and perpetual audience. The same spiritual message which they have from day to day fitted to passing emergencies, they now, through these, other literary channels, convey to succeeding generations.

This double function of the later prophets has a bearing upon the interpretation of prophecy. As an illustration, consider the first chapter of *Isaiah*. We call it discourse. But in what sense is it discourse? If it be read side by side with one of the orations of *Deuteronomy* a great difference will be found. In every sentence of the latter we are conscious of the presence of a great audience, and the influence of an audience upon a speaker. The oration was actually spoken by Moses to an

assembly of Israelites. In the chapter of *Isaiah* we have impassioned oratory, but without anything to suggest a visible audience or a particular occasion. The matter of this chapter will no doubt have been used by Isaiah on fifty or a hundred occasions; used as a whole or in parts; in formal address, or passing remonstrance, as he labored, in season and out of season, in his prophetic vocation. The content of the chapter is something different -- the essence of the message, the concentration of these multiplied prophetic ministrations, stripped of what is accidental or occasional, has adapted itself to a different literary type, and become universalized in its appeal. And what is true of so simple a thing as discourse is yet more true in application to the more elaborated prophecies of the nature of rhapsodies and doom songs. This should be especially borne in mind when studying the "Rhapsody of Zion Redeemed" -- a happily phrased caption which Moulton gives to the last twenty-seven chapters of Isaiah, discussed in the preceding question.

Much of what we have presented foregoing applies equally to the New Testament Prophets. An instructive paragraph from *Scripture Studies, Vol. VI*, page 246, is in point here. We quote:

"The word 'prophet' is not generally used today in the broad sense in which it was used in olden times, but is rather understood to signify a seer, or foreteller. The word prophet, however, strictly signifies a *public speaker* -- an orator. A seer of visions or a recipient of revelations might also be a prophet, in the sense of a declarer of same; but the two thoughts are distinctly separate. In the case of Moses and Aaron, Moses was the greater, being the divine representative, and the Lord said to him, 'See, I have made thee a god (mighty one or superior) unto Pharaoh; and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet' - spokesman, mouthpiece. (Exod. 7:1.) ... Several of the Apostles 'were seers in the sense that they were granted a knowledge of things 'to come; they were nearly all prophets too, that is public orators -- especially Peter and Paul."

The meaning of the word does not change even when applied to our Lord. Moses had spoken of the Prophet which should arise, like unto himself (Deut. 18:15, 18; Acts 3:22); while, when our Lord came, the-people' said of him: "This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world." (John 6:14.) In the exercise of his office as prophet, our Lord represented -- was truly in the stead of, the spokesman, mouthpiece, or word of -- God. As Brother Russell points out today's Manna (This is written September 25) even now our Lord "gives us, as our *Prophet* or Teacher, wisdom by his Gospel."

"Jesus, our Shepherd, Savior, Friend, Our., *Prophet*, Priest and King, ,Our hearts in gratitude ascend; Accept the praise we bring."

It is in this same sense of forthtelling, expounding, instructing (rather than foretelling) that the word applies to the great Prophet of the Age to come. Of that Prophet our glorified Lord Jesus is to be the Head, the glorified Church, the Body members. For ourselves, we may give thanks that the privilege is still ours of making our calling and election sure to membership in this company; for the world of mankind as a whole, we may rejoice at their prospect (all unbeknown to them, but nevertheless sure) of being granted an opportunity for deliverance from present sin and death conditions to everlasting life in the Millennial Canaan to which this great Prophet shall lead them.

- P. L. Read

Words of Encouragement

Dear Brethren:

I am sure you will be interested to learn of the London Convention. I suppose upwards of 400 attended for the semi-public meeting Saturday night. Probably the average attendance was only half that number. It was, for these days, a well attended gathering and well representative. We hope, more we pray, that each may have taken something back home with him. The addresses were varied in matter and delivery. Brother Thomson's message was much appreciated. His experience and ability, coupled with the fact of his absolute consecration, make his talks a' benediction. There is no doubt that-he is called to be an evangel in our midst, and we pray the Lord-bless-him in hiss stay over this side. He has learned that addresses are not occasions to show how *much* one knows, nor are they a time to open flood gates just as though the speaker has been waiting years to get something off his chest Too much learning *is a weariness to the flesh*. We breathe and love, and these things should be stimulated. Matthew 25: "When saw we Thee in prison?" -- naked, hungry, etc. -- things to *do*, comfort to *give*, a *practical outcome of true religion* as James has it.

The object of my letter is to tell you the above and to let you know that we had great joy in receiving Brother Paul, and also in receiving the messages that came from. all my loved ones on your side. Is it not wonderful that when we love a person we cannot have too much of his company? it is as though love transforms and even has the power of extracting good from others. So that if one does not love, the good that might be done is not done. Jesus said, "I would have gathered thee as a hen gathers her chicks, but *ye would not*." "The good He could have done was restricted. Yet He went about *only "doing good*."

Please give our Christian love to all the brethren there, and with it would you couple. Romans 15:13. Since I cannot reach unto them I pray my Father to. I am still grateful for my privileges enjoyed at the hands of so many of the Lord's own.

Yours by His Grace,
S. A. C. -- Eng.