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The Glorious Proclamation

"For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." - Luke 2:1-20.

THE MESSAGE of the angels to the shepherds on Bethlehem's plains sounds more and more precious to each child of God in proportion as he grows in grace and knowledge. As his eyes and ears of understanding open more widely to the lengths and breadths of God's great Plan of the Ages, that prophetic message is the more highly esteemed as an epitome of the entire Gospel. Nor can our attention be too frequently called to the great event which lies at the foundation of that message our Savior's birth.

It matters not that December 25th is not the real anniversary of the Savior's birth, but probably the anniversary of the annunciation by the angel Gabriel, the anniversary of the Virgin Mary's conception, our Lord being born nine months later on the calendar, or about October 1. One so great, whose birth, death, and resurrection from the dead means so much to the human family, may be remembered and celebrated any day, every day, by all who appreciate what he has done for our race. Since, then, the majority of Christian people have become habituated to the celebration of December 25th as our Lord's birthday, we need make no protest, but join with all in celebrating that day with rejoicing of heart, giving gifts and remembrances one to another, thus copying divine favor, which gave to mankind the Son of God as a gift of mercy and love for our redemption.

For four thousand years and more the promises of God, clothed in more or less obscurity, had been given to mankind, intimating that ultimately the great curse of sin and death which had come upon the world through Father Adam's disobedience in Eden would be rolled away, and instead of a curse, a blight, would come a blessing of the Lord with life-giving refreshment. In various types, figures, and shadowy promises this lesson had come down through the ages to the time of our Lord's birth, especially amongst the Jews, who were the divinely favored and covenanted people. And since the Jews were of a commercial spirit, many of them were to be found in all parts of the civilized world; and thus amongst every people the faith in the one God and the hope of Israel through a Messiah were more or less made known, so that at the time of our Lord's birth we read, "All men were in expectation" of a soon-coming Messiah. Doubtless this expectation was built upon the interpretation of Daniel's prophecy, which we now see clearly

marked the year of our Lord's majority, when he was thirty years of age and made his consecration to his work and received the begetting of the holy spirit, his anointing as the great antitypical high priest and as the great antitypical king over Israel and the world.

In olden times there were honorable cities and mean cities. Nazareth was generally recognized as one of the latter, while Bethlehem was distinctly one of the former-the City of David, Israel's beloved king. The Scriptures explain to us that Mary, our Lord's mother, and Joseph, her husband, were both of the lineage of David, and that in a seemingly accidental manner the prophecy was fulfilled which foretold that Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2).

The Roman empire at that time bore rule over the whole world, the Jews being subject to it, but waiting expectantly, restlessly, for the coming Messiah, who would deliver them from being subject people and make of them the ruling caste in his Kingdom, the dominion of the world. Rome's great emperor, Caesar Augustus, was in power at this time, and had sent forth his decree for a polling or census of the whole world for purposes of taxation, etc. Luke informs us that it was in response to this royal decree that Joseph and Mary went up to their native city to be enrolled, and that thus it was that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, and on account of the great concourse of people at the same time and for the same purpose, accommodations being scarce, the stable of the inn, or khan, was used by some as a lodging. Joseph and Mary, being of the late comers, were forced to occupy these humble quarters, and thus it was that the King of Glory, whose Kingdom is by and by to rule the world, was in the time of his flesh born in a stable and cradled in a manger.

Noble shepherds those must have been to whom the Almighty sent the angelic message respecting the birth of Jesus, the Messiah, which has rung down the ages and reached our ears-the message which thrills us the more in proportion as we are able to grasp its meaning. First a single angel appeared to the shepherds and allayed their fears, saying, "Fear not; behold I bring you good tidings." It would appear that fear is one of the dominating impulses of the human mind, especially in conjunction with any revelations from the Lord. Men realize -- even the best of the race -- that they are imperfect and that the Almighty and his laws are perfect. Instinctively the world seems to realize that a curse or condemnation of the Almighty rests upon it, and instinctively it fears a further curse and further condemnation, realizing its continual and increasing sinfulness. The same is true today with all except the comparatively few who are well informed respecting the divine character and plan. Thus the subject of religion is generally obnoxious to the world in general -- a subject which they prefer to avoid, because of a feeling of guilt and a dread of further knowledge and condemnation.

It is for the true children of God today, as it was for the angels at that time, to assure the world that God is better than all their fears -- that God so loved the world as to redeem them from the just sentence of death, the curse that came upon all as inheritors of Adam's imperfection and sentence.

"Good tidings" is another translation of our word "gospel." How beautiful the thought that the Gospel is really and truly good tidings. Alas, for the misrepresentations of God's plan, under which so many of his professed people misrepresent his character and his Word, and apply the term "gospel" to their various messages from the dark ages, teaching purgatory and eternal torment as the portion of the race. Let us get away from this false thought and get the truth that the Gospel is good tidings. The angel elaborated, saying that his message was good tidings of great joy, which should be unto all people. Ah, thank God, his plan is wider and deeper and higher and grander than anything we have ever conceived. The Gospel message is not merely to

be good tidings to the comparatively few that now have ears to hear and *eyes* to see its beauties, but in God's due time it is to be good tidings of great joy to all people.

As every member of Adam's race shared in his fall and in the curse of death which came upon him as a result, so every member of the race was included in the great redemptive sacrifice which our Lord Jesus offered and which was finished at Calvary. God's plan in Christ, as it is being worked out and shall ultimately be accomplished, will mean great joy for all people, and the tidings of this were given at the very moment of our Lord's birth, because he was the one through whom all the glorious things of the divine purpose and plan shall ultimately be accomplished.

The message took cognizance of the fact that it was to reasonable people, who would want to know why the unchangeable God, who had once pronounced a curse, should at any time so amend and alter matters as to supplant the curse with a blessing. The messenger states the philosophy of the divine plan, "Unto you is born this day, a Savior, which is Christ [Messiah] the Lord." There we have the key to the entire Gospel statement of how God could be just and yet be the justifier of sinners who accept Jesus. The word "Savior" here signifies life-giver, and how beautiful is the thought that as death is the wage of sin, the curse upon the race, this Messiah who was born is to be the one who will rescue the race from the sentence by giving them life again. The explanation of how he would give life was not given, nor was it necessary at that time; but now, in the light of developments, and with the explanations furnished through the spirit in the New Testament, we see how that our Lord's voluntary sacrifice of his life, dying the just for the unjust, settled the claims of divine justice against Adam and thus incidentally against all who shared his sentence.

Truly the more we see of the divine plan for our salvation, which began to take shape in the birth of Jesus, the more we feel like shouting with the angelic choir praises to the God of heaven, thankfulness for his mercy to the children of men. It mattered not that the babe born in Bethlehem was the Savior only in prospect, that he could not even be anointed to do his work until he reached manhood's estate thirty years later; it mattered not that even then it would be necessary for him to lay down his life gradually through three and a half years of his earthly ministry, to be finished at Calvary; it mattered not either that the resurrection was still three days after that, and his ascension forty days later, and that the blessing in general would be deferred for nearly nineteen centuries thereafter. As the angels could sing and rejoice at the first budding of the divine plan of salvation, so also can all who have faith in the ultimate outcome rejoice with joy unspeakable and give praise to God in the highest and to his Son our Lord.

Although nearly nineteen centuries have rolled away since that angelic message was delivered, it has not yet been fulfilled except in a limited measure by faith to those who have the eye of faith and the ears of faith, in all a "little flock." But the tidings of great misery for- nearly all people have been spread abroad in the name of Christ, much to the discredit of the divine plan and to the dishonor of the divine character. Instead of carrying joy the message has very generally carried grief and sorrow, especially to the kindhearted and more generously disposed. Indeed we may say that no message of the Lord Jesus, either true or false, has ever reached all people. Even today, after nineteen centuries of propaganda, only a comparatively small portion of the human family have ever heard of the only name given under heaven and amongst men whereby we must be saved -- "nor is there salvation in any other" (Acts 4:12).

What, then, shall we say of the salvation which is come to those who have truly accepted Christ as their Savior, and who are today rejoicing in him as such, and who by faith are seeing the salvation of God begun in their own hearts and yet to be fully accomplished under the whole heavens? This the Apostle calls the salvation by hope. His words are, "We are saved by hope"

(Romans 8:24). We are not saved actually; we are still surrounded by sin, pain, sighing, crying, and dying; the curse is not yet rolled away. All that the best of the Lord's people have received is salvation by hope, by faith. Yet this anticipation of the future salvation, of the resurrection from the dead, of a participation in the glory, honor, and immortality of the divine nature promised to the faithful, is so strong, so clear, that those who possess it are enabled to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, even in the midst of trials and difficulties and weaknesses and unfavorable conditions incident to the curse which still rests upon the race.

Yes, the angelic message was a prophecy of good things to be accomplished for the Church of the world during the Millennial Age. The Church is to have the first blessing. The first resurrection is to be composed only of the blessed and holy who shall live and reign with Christ during the Millennium, the thousand years in which Satan shall be bound,, and when the good influences of truth and righteousness shall enlighten the whole earth. The declaration of the Scriptures is that the deliverance of the Church will come early in the morning of that Millennial day, as the Prophet declares, "God will help her early in the morning" (Psalm 46:5).

But much as we rejoice in the glorious hopes of the Gospel set before us who now see, who now believe, who now rejoice with joy unspeakable, we are glad that the divine mercy and love are of such lengths and breadths and heights and depths as to encompass the whole world of mankind, and to provide a blessing for every member of Adam's race through him who loved us and bought us with his precious blood.

It will be during the Millennial Age that this prophecy of the angel will have its fulfillment, and the great Savior who has already redeemed us by his sacrifice will stand forth as the King, the glorified Messiah, and establish his dominion of righteousness in the world for the blessing and uplifting of every member of the race. In harmony with the words of the Apostle, those will be times of refreshing, "times of restitution of all things spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:19-21). If the Lord had based the hope of the world upon some works of merit or righteousness of the world's doing, then indeed we might have feared -- indeed the more we know of the world, the less hope we would have. But, on the contrary, the Lord has based the entire proposition for the future blessing, not upon our worthiness, but upon the worthiness and sacrifice of his Son -- to you is born a life-giver, which is Messiah the Lord.

How it adds to our enjoyment of the coming age blessings to know that the trials and difficulties of this present Gospel age are subject to the divine supervision in the interest of the little flock that is now being gathered in advance from amongst men--the "elect," the Church. We see how the present trials and difficulties are the chiselings and polishings necessary to our development in the fruits and graces of the holy spirit in the character-likeness of God's dear Son, our Lord, our Hope, our Bridegroom. How joyful the thought that soon the elect number called from the world to be the Bride, the Lamb's wife, will be completed and enter into her glory. How precious the thought that then they shall be privileged with their Lord and Master to extend the divine favor of blessing and uplift to the world. What higher honor or privilege or blessing could possibly come to any?

It was after the giving of the message of good tidings and great joy by the heavenly one that a host of angels appeared to the shepherds, saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men." This, too, is a prophecy. It is not yet true, but will be fulfilled in every particular in God's due time, which we believe is now nigh, even at the door. Not yet does God receive glory in the highest, not yet is there peace amongst men. Quite to the contrary. God's name is blasphemed, not only by those who vulgarly and in ribald jest take the divine name in vain, and not merely by the heathen who worship devils and think they are gods, but even by Christian people God's name is blasphemed every day. For be it known that blasphemy is any dishonorable misrepresentation of another. God be merciful to us, for at some time or other every one of us doubtless has blasphemed the holy name in this manner -- by misrepresenting the divine character and divine plan, by picturing the God of love

and mercy and justice and truth as the originator, the planner, the perpetuator of the eternal torment of the great mass of his creatures, born in sin and shapen in iniquity, born to sin as the sparks to fly upward.

But the Lord had mercy upon us because we did it ignorantly. And we also should have compassion upon others who still ignorantly misrepresent our God, and our energies should be continually bent to their assistance, that the eyes of their understanding might open more widely to perceive the lengths and breadths and heights and depths and know the love of God which passeth understanding.

Noting that peace on earth and good will to men have not followed the Savior's birth thus far, and discerning that this is a prophecy of what is to be accomplished during the Millennium, many have been inclined to change the translation of this verse so as to have it read, "On earth peace amongst men, in whom he is well pleased." However, by thus changing it the statement would not be true, for even the Lord's people have no peace on earth. Whatever peace they have is in their hearts, and based upon their faith in the Lord and in the glorious things which he has promised. Our Lord himself and the Apostles testified to this, assuring us that whosoever in this present time would live godly should suffer persecution, that a man's foes would be they of his own household, etc. (2 Tim. 3:12; Matt. 10:26). Let us not confuse ourselves, nor abridge the testimony of the Word, but with the eye of faith look forward to the day of Christ in which all these glorious things shall have their fulfillment, in which peace shall indeed fill the whole earth with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, bringing divine favor and rolling away the curse from the entire groaning creation, as pointed out by the Apostle.

Not even with the inauguration of the Millennium will this prophecy be fulfilled: not until its close, when the human family shall have been lifted by the Kingdom regulations out of sin, sickness, pain, sorrow, and death, up, up to all that was lost in Adam - not until then will there indeed be glory to God in the highest, not until then will there be peace amongst men. Nor are we to understand that the entire race will be appreciative of the divine love and favor even after they have fully seen the righteousness of God in Christ manifested. On the contrary, the Scriptures seem to clearly teach that there will be a class who will then prove unfit for life eternal, unappreciative of the divine favor, and it is with pleasure that we learn that all such shall be utterly destroyed from amongst the people in the Second Death. Thus eventually, by the close of the Millennium, Satan and all wilful wrongdoers having been destroyed, the time will come as declared in the Scriptures when all voices in heaven and in earth and under the earth shall be heard praising God, him that sitteth upon the throne, and the Lamb forever and ever. Hosanna! Glory to God in the highest! Peace and good will to men! will be the final shout of a redeemed race when the great plan of salvation shall have been fully outworked according to the divine plan set forth in the Scriptures.

- *C. T. Russell (R3700-R3702)*

Christmas

I heard the bells of Christmas ring,
"No-el, No-el, No-el,"
The choirs then began to sing,
"No-el, No-el, No-el,"
And o'er the air the grand old hymns
Came to my room-and then
My thoughts harked back where once I stood
In far-off Bethlehem.

And, standing on the hillside there
The Shepherd's field lay green
Before me in Judea's sun,
All rugged land between.
And, in my fancy, as I stood I heard the angels sing,
And watched the fleecy, sleepy flocks
Follow their shepherds in:

[No better right had kings than they, --
Symbols of God's own Son
A Lamb slain e'er the world was made
For man by sin undone.]

And then a Cross before my eyes
Stood outlined on a hill,
A broken Heart before me cried,
A suffering form was still.
The heavy darkness gathered round,
An earthquake shook the ground,
"Tis finished" --Yea, upon that Cross
Man's substitute is found.

Two thousand years I saw roll on,
Sad is the story told
Of pestilence and storm and flood
And war from greed of gold. T
he son of widowed mother feels
No hand upon his head,
His funeral cortege moves along
To burial of the dead.

Jairus' daughters slumber on
No voice to bid them rise,
A world in travail moans her pain
No help comes from the skies.
And now as Christmas bells ring out
"No-el, No-el, No-el,"
The bitterest hours of that race
Are here for Israel.
And blue stars on our banners
Change to gold of heart-break when

A message comes from out the din
Of battle -- and 'tis then
That anguished hearts look upward --
"Lord, must these things always be?
The promise of Thy coming? When,
O, Lord, to set us free?"

To the Holy Book I turned then,
Saw upon the Gospel page
That all things had been as promised
Down the Jewish-Gospel Age;
That a King *shall* reign in justice,
Man, delivered from the fall
Will with one consent then serve Him,
King of kings, and Lord of all!

Yes, the great Time-clock is striking,
Never have its notes been wrong,
Ushering out life's night of weeping,
Bringing in earth's morning song.
Christians, *watch -- the* Bridegroom cometh
Satan's power no more shall sway
Quarreling factions, warring nations,
It is coming, that glad day
When the Bride, joined to her Bridegroom
Sees his glory, shares his throne --
When all in their graves shall hear him,
"Lazarus, come forth, O come."
Where, cold grave, is then thy victory?
Where, O death, shall be thy sting?
Let the Christmas bells ring loudly
Welcome to earth's coming King!

- *Grace M. Harris.*

The Place of Israel in the Plan of God

(At a convention held in Chicago, October 9, 10, 1954, a public lecture on this theme was delivered, illustrated by color slides of Bible lands, taken by the speaker in 1953 In view of the timeliness of the subject, we are publishing the discourse in full -- the first installment here, the concluding installment in the January issue; Ed. Com.)

SINCE MAY 14, 1948, more than six years ago, when upon termination of the British mandate the Jewish State of Israel was proclaimed, that nation, both its people and its land, have been making the headlines. Scarcely a day goes by without the newspapers publishing a report of some new development concerning them.

What is 'the Divine Plan for Israel? And why should it interest, both Jews and Gentiles? ,I answer: The Divine Plan for Israel is an important feature of the, Divine Plan for all mankind. Israel is the nation it has pleased God to choose. They are his chosen people -- chosen, not for favoritism, but for service -- to be the channel through whom his blessings are yet destined to flow to all mankind.

GOD'S SELECTION OF ABRAHAM

To get the record straight we must refer back to the first Book of the Bible. There, in Genesis 12:1-3, we read of the promise made by God to Abraham, whose name at that time was Abram. Listen:

"Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; , and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee, and in thee [and in thy seed - Gen. 22:18] shall all families of the earth be blessed."

There is no question but that God has fulfilled' a part of this promise, namely, to make the name of Abram great. I venture to say that most people who read these lines could tell us more about Abraham than about their own great-grandfather!

It is also worthy of note that at the time this promise to Abram was made, many of the families of the earth were dead and buried. Had Abram been under the impression that instead of being dead and buried, they were alive in heaven, he would not have attached much significance to the promise, but being under no such delusion, it was indeed glad tidings to him to learn that they, , too; were to be blessed.

This selection of Abram did not go to his head, as so wonderful a promise might easily have. done, but lest it should have that effect on his offspring, the children of Israel were expressly informed that it was not because they were a great nation, but for the exact opposite reason that they were chosen. Hear the words of Moses on this point, found in Deuteronomy 7:7:

"The Lord did not set his love upon you; nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people."

No one will question that mankind is greatly in need of God's blessing. On every hand the evidence is appalling that this world is in a very sorry state. Moreover, even if the problems of the living, which today baffle the ablest minds, were all settled tomorrow, no one has the slightest suggestion to offer as to a plan whereby we might escape the tomb! No sooner is a man born than

he is on his way to the grave-statisticians tell us, at the rate of over one hundred thousand a day! Is there no escape? No! I answer, none whatever, except as it shall please God to work a miracle. But is there any hope of him doing this? Yes, indeed, there is, Moreover, it is a sure hope, first, because God has the power; not only to eliminate sickness, pain, and suffering, and to solve all the perplexing problems of the living, but also to raise the dead; and, second, because in the writings of every one of the inspired Hebrew Prophets he has declared this to be his intention. I say this declaration is to be found in every one of the inspired Hebrew Prophets. Space will not permit me to quote them all. However, here is one sample. It is found in Hosea 13:14, where we read:

"I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I, will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction.

And is it this blessing, escape from the grave, nothing less than eternal life, that is to be brought to the world through Israel? Yes, I answer. That is the Divine Plan for Israel, so the Scriptures clearly teach.

THE PROMISE TRACED TO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL

Now that we have the Divine Plan for Israel clearly before us, let us see how far that Plan has progressed. What steps, if any, have been taken, to put it into effect?

Very early in our investigation we discover that, supplementing the promise that Abraham and his seed should be God's channel of blessing to mankind, God made a specific promise that Abraham and his seed should inherit land. No sooner has he obeyed God's command and journeyed to the land to which God guided him than he is promised, by God himself:

"Unto thy seed will I give this land." - Gen. 12:7.

In later chapters this promise is amplified:

"Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward; for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed [for 100 years? No!] for ever....

"Arise, walk through the land, in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an *everlasting possession*." - Gen. 13:14-17; 17:8.

How has the promise progressed, is it asked First, we note that it was not realized by Abraham personally. However, it was confirmed to his son, Isaac (Gen. 26:23, 24); and again, to Isaac's son, *Jacob*, whose name was changed to Israel. (Gen. 28: 10-15; 32:28; 35:9-15.) Thereafter the promise passed to Israel's twelve sons and to the nation of which they were the tribal heads.

After their experience with slavery in Egypt, and deliverance therefrom at the hand of Moses, the children of Israel were led into Canaan under the leadership of Joshua. Here in this, the land of promise, they dwelt, for centuries, and experienced the special favor of God. With them he dealt as he dealt with no other nation. (Psa. 147:19, 20.) According to his promises, detailed in Leviticus 26, he blessed them in basket and in store when they sought to walk in his counsels. He also graciously chastised them when they deflected from the paths of truth and righteousness, so

that their national conscience might be kept tender. While they walked in his statutes, he sent them rain in due season and blessed their crops. Their enemies fled from them.

On the other hand, when as a nation they departed from the ways of God, exactly the reverse conditions were permitted to come upon them. Rain was withheld. Crops failed. They were defeated in battle. Those not slain were taken captive. And then, since this treatment proved unavailing, the "seven times" of punishment, predicted in Leviticus 26 began to take effect:

"And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you *seven* times more for your sins. . .

"And if ye will not be reformed by me by these things, but will walk, contrary unto me; then will I also walk contrary unto you, and will punish you yet *seven times* for your sins....

"And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you *seven times* for your sins... .

"I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries unto desolation,

"And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you ... and ye shall perish among the heathen, and the land of your enemies shall eat you up."

GENTILE TIMES

That this expression, "seven times," had any chronological significance was, of course, not understood by those to whom the warning was given. History, however, has shown that such was the case. Israel was to become subject to Gentile rule, and the expression, "seven times," when rightly interpreted, denoted the length of time during which this would hold true. It was to be precisely the same period as that covered by two of the prophecies contained in the Book of Daniel. One of these was that of the great image seen in his dream by the Babylonian monarch, Nebuchadnezzar (chap. 2); the other was that of Daniel's own vision of four wild beasts. (Chap. 7.) The meaning of these two prophecies is not left to surmise. Each is interpreted in the Scriptures themselves to represent four Gentile World Empires: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, which in one form or another have held sway over the earth from that day to this.

A remarkable scale for measuring the duration of the periods indicated in the two prophecies has been furnished in the Old Testament. It is known as the year-day scale; that is, a day in prophecy stands as a symbol for a year. A year, sometimes called a time, and reckoned as containing 360 days, stands as a symbol for 360 years. This scale is subject to minor modifications, depending on whether lunar, calendar, or solar years are intended. Such minor modifications are, of course, important, and must not be overlooked when students are seeking precise computations. However, a detailed consideration of them would be going beyond the scope of our discussion here. Suffice it to say now that, using the year-day scale, Israel's "seven times" of punishment are seen to extend over the long period of 2,520 years.

That the year-day scale is a God-given key, becomes abundantly evident when we find that by its use not only the prophecy of Israel's seven times, that of Nebuchadnezzar's image, and that of Daniel's four beasts, but all other related time prophecies are readily unlocked.

Speaking in broad, general terms, we may say that, so far as Israel is concerned, the characteristics of this long period are three in number:

1. Jewish loss of dominion and independence, and their subjugation to, and suffering under Gentile conquerors.
2. Dispersion of the Jews.
3. Desolation of their land.

The period of Gentile Times would affect three factors in Israel's national life:

1. The land.
2. The throne.
3. The temple.

Insofar as the land was concerned, this period would extend from the desolation of their land by Babylon to the restoration of the Jews back to Palestine.

Insofar as their throne was concerned, it would extend from the fall of Zedekiah, their last king, to the restoration of the throne under Shiloh.

And, insofar as the temple was concerned, it would extend from the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem to the re-establishment of the worship of God on Mount Zion.

Stated very concisely, we may say that immediately prior to the commencement of Gentile Times the Jewish monarchy was recognized by God, and that immediately after the close of that long period God's Kingdom is scheduled to be established on earth.

ISRAEL'S DOUBLE

Another very striking set of prophecies concerning Israel's experiences ought not to go unnoticed, even in so brief a discussion as this. I refer to what is three times designated in the Scriptures as Israel's double.

From the time she became a nation, at Jacob's death, Israel had enjoyed God's favor continuously, until for reasons all too apparent his favor towards her was, of necessity, withdrawn. Whatever the length of this period of favor, for an equal period of time would she be required to experience his disfavor. Only when this period of disfavor had run its course, would he be ready, to take her back into favor again. Let us hear the testimony of three Prophets on this matter.

1. Jeremiah, in chapter 16, verses 14 and 15 (Jer. 16:14-15), says 'that the days will come when God will accomplish such a wonderful deliverance for Israel that his former miraculous deliverance of her from Egyptian bondage at the hand of Moses, would fade into insignificance. Then, in Jer. 16:18, he adds this further statement:

"First I will recompense their iniquity and their sin *double*."

2. Zechariah, in chapter 9, verses 9-12 (Zech. 9:9-12), predicts the coming of Messiah and then, speaking for Jehovah, addresses Israel in these remarkable words:

"Turn ye to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope. Even today do I declare that I will render *double* unto thee.

Here the word "double" is translated from the Hebrew word *mishneh as* in the prophecy by Jeremiah. It signifies a second portion; a repetition

3. A third Prophet, Isaiah, testifies concerning the matter in, these words:

"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye, comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her appointed time is accomplished, that her, iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord's hand *double* for all her 'sins." - Isa. 40:1-2 (margin)

Here the Hebrew word translated "double" -- is *kephel*, which signifies double, in the sense of having been folded in the middle.

In connection with these three prophecies it has been well observed: "The student of prophecy should notice that the Prophets vary- their standpoints of utterance, sometimes speaking of future things as future, and sometimes assuming a position future, and speaking from that assumed standpoint."

No better illustration of this principle of different prophetic standpoints can be given than the three prophecies related to Israel's double already noticed. Jeremiah foretold that the days *would come* when God would scatter them among all nations, and-that when they had received double, he would gather them again, by a more mighty display, of power on their behalf than when they came out of Egyptian bondage. Zechariah speaks as though living at the time of Messiah's offering himself to Israel as their king, and tells us that there, *in that very day*, their double began to count. Isaiah takes his position still further down the stream of time, and as though living at the very end of the period, announces the message of comfort to Israel that her double is *completed*.

That these three Prophets lived hundreds of years apart, and wrote things quite contrary to Israel's expectations, only serves to increase the force and value of their utterances.

One other Scripture bears directly on this phase of our subject. It is found in Psalm 102:13, and reads:

"Thou shalt arise and have mercy upon Zion; for the time to favor her, yea, the set time, is come."

Evidently the same spirit which operated in Jeremiah, Zechariah, and Isaiah inspired the words of the Psalmist. The time to favor Zion, "yea, the set time, is come."

When is that to be? -- Is there any way of ascertaining this information? To this question I reply: Yes, I think there is. With, no desire to speak dogmatically, I am, nevertheless, convinced that we may know today, if not precisely, certainly within a very close approximation, our position on the stream of time.

I could not begin to adequately discuss that phase of our subject here. I will, however, make this general statement. As in the case of Israel's "seven times," so also in reference to their double of disfavor, these great time prophecies are not to be measured from any one particular year to another, but from one era to another. This is so, because the rise and fall of, nations must, in the very nature of the case, cover more or less extended eras. The fall of Israel and Judah covered a period of 160 years, culminating in the overthrow of their last king, Zedekiah. It should not surprise us then, if we find their restoration extending over a number of years, or decades, or even longer periods. What we should be on the lookout for is not a thunderbolt from the skies, but *a noticeable change* in the *trend* of events. We should be watching and intelligently reading the signs of the times, and noting how they are fitting in with the prophetic forecasts:

-P. L. Read.

Witnesses for Jesus

Part I

"Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." - Acts 1:8.

THE last recorded utterance of our Lord on earth is found in the text cited above. These words constitute the terms of the Lord's commission to his Church. Had there been no such commission, there could have been no Church. Although given over nineteen hundred years ago, this commission is still operative. The changing scenes of time have not altered its terms and conditions. These were to remain constant "until He come." They were to do so in three respects:

First: The *subject* of the witness, the *theme* is unvarying, "Ye shall be witness unto *me*." If we may coin a word here, "channelitis" is an infection to which the professing Church of Christ has been prone from the earliest times. The Lord has been equated with some human channel; some men, or organization, or system of truth. The rise and reign of antichrist was due to a false equation which made loyalty to the channel equal to loyalty to Christ. Our own day and generation is not wanting in examples of the devastating effects of this spiritual disease.

Second: The *object* or *purpose* of the witness remains constant. The witness, though not for the conversion of the world but for its evangelization, is in order that the Church might be selected and fitted for her future position and work. The consideration that the end of the Age is approaching very rapidly, does not alter the objective. Even though we should know, which we do not, just when the end is coming, this would be no reason for departing from the terms of our commission. The objective being to find and prepare the Church, our concern must be primarily for its members. Before becoming children of God, the believer passes through various zones of approach to God. Using the Tabernacle illustration, he may commence in the zone outside the Camp, entirely without God and without hope. He then may draw nearer and join the Camp condition as represented in the professing Christian Church. Not satisfied there, he draws nearer into the Court condition of personal contact with Christ and by faith receives forgiveness of sins. He then draws nearer still into the Holy by a complete surrender of his will to God. While the professing Church of Christ in any given place might contain all these elements, the special care must be for those who have come into vital relationship with God in the Holy. Indications that the Lord's Kingdom is near, should be a stimulus to the true Church members to increase their love for each other and their endeavors to assist in getting ready for the consummation of their hope. Nearness to the end is no reason why increased time should be given to these in the Court or Camp zones of approach. On the other hand, it is no reason why these zones should be neglected. It would be still in order to do good unto all men as we have opportunity, especially unto those who are of the household of faith.

Third: The *method* of witnessing remains constant in our commission. What a different world we live in as compared with the first witnesses for Jesus! In their day the art of printing was unknown; no books or tracts or leaflets to tell of the purposes of God. No radio to carry messages of his grace to the four corners of the earth. Notwithstanding all this, the method of witnessing is not really changed. Today, we witness as the Apostles and early Church did, with our lips and by our lives. The radio and printed page are only extensions of the witness with our lips in the same way as the use of a loud speaker carries the message to a wider circle of hearers.

In the estimation of Jesus, the witness of the lips is of no value unless it is an expression of the witness of the life. Postmen and ambassadors are both servants of the Crown. Both convey messages, but the ambassador is himself the embodiment of his message which is to represent his King and Country. This he does not merely by his words and actions, but by what he is *in his personal character*. Our position as witnesses is similar to that of our Lord himself. His mission was to reveal the Father. That is what man needed. Not merely to be told about God, but to see God manifest in flesh. As witnesses we hold the same position with regard to our Lord. His commission for us is that we should be Christ manifest in the flesh as he was God manifest in the flesh; that we should be the embodiment of the message, not merely declaring truths about Christ and the purposes of God, but manifesting by what we are, something approximating as nearly as possible to what he is. What an honor and dignity is this, and what a great responsibility!

THE CHRISTIAN'S HANDBOOK FOR SERVICE

It is common for large undertakings to issue handbooks for the guidance of their representatives. The Book of Acts could be called the Bible handbook for Christian service. It forms an indispensable link between the Gospels and the Epistles. In the Gospels we have a record of the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. In the Epistles we are introduced to churches already established throughout the Roman world. In the Acts we have the story of how the formation of these churches was accomplished by the fulfillment of the terms of the Church's commission. Not only so, but we can see in the Acts how each succeeding generation of witnesses, right up to and including our own day, can, by following its guidance, continue and complete the good work. Let us bear in mind too that the commission "Ye shall be my witnesses" means *you* and it means *me* if we are in Christ. There are no exceptions, and therefore the Book of Acts is of deep concern to us all if we would render acceptable service to our Master.

Let us take a brief glance at the structure of our handbook before noting four cardinal principles that run throughout its chapters. The Book covers a period of about twenty-eight years, from Pentecost to Paul's first imprisonment at Rome. There are also twenty-eight chapters in the Book, but that does not mean that we have one chapter dealing with each year of the period. The first seven chapters have to do with the events of the first two years, giving us a close-up view of the establishment of the Church at headquarters in Jerusalem. Chapters 8 and 9 deal with the establishment of the Church in Judea and Samaria, and also with the conversion of Saul in preparation for the wider witness, and covers a period of approximately two years. Chapter 10 tells us of the first Gentile convert, Cornelius; and chapter 11 of the first Gentile Church, at Antioch. Thereafter the Book is concerned with Paul's missionary journeys to the Gentiles, the last seven chapters dealing with his experiences leading up to the two years' imprisonment at Caesarea Philippi, and his journey to, and his two years' imprisonment at, Rome.

The Book of Acts thus shows how accurately our Lord's words were fulfilled, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem" (chapters 1 to 7, period two years) "and in all Judea and in Samaria" (chapters 8 and 9, period approximately two years) "and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (chapters 10 to 28, period about twenty-four years). The Book of Acts is then supplemented by the history in prophecy of the Book of Revelation, confirmed by the records of world history right up to the last generation of witnesses, represented in the Church of today.

Like colored threads which form the pattern, there run throughout all those wonderful chapters of the Acts, teeming with information, interest, and adventure, four great principles, which govern our witness for Jesus. These could be represented by four key words, *Presence, Program, Power,* and *Protection*. Throughout the Gospel Age the Church as soldiers of Christ have been engaged in a long campaign in the war between good and evil. As Commander-in-chief our Lord has been

ever *present* with his troops in the field. As a great Leader beyond all compare, he has been conducting the campaign according to a definite *program* or plan. While engaged in the long conflict, superhuman as their tasks have been, the soldiers of Christ have never been lacking in the *power* to fight the good fight of faith, nor have they, to use a modern term, ever lacked the indispensable "air cover" *protection*. Our success and our joy in the Master's service will depend on our recognition of and alignment with these four principles. It is of the utmost importance that we look to the Lord alone for direction as to one personally present with us; that we be assured that we are on his program; that we constantly receive of his power; and that we are joyfully conscious of being under his protection.

PRESENCE THROUGHOUT THE AGE

First, the Lord's *Presence*. In Matthew's record of the Church's commission this fact is emphasized. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, . . . and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the Age" (Matt. 28:18-20). This fact of the continuing presence of Christ with his Church is illustrated in the frontispiece to the Book of Revelation, where we see him depicted in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. Throughout the Gospel Age in all the checkered experiences of the Church as outlined in the succeeding chapters of the Revelation, the Lord has been present with her to comfort, strengthen, and sustain. Wherever two or three have gathered in his name, all the days, even to the end of the Age, they have found Jesus in the midst.

The opening words of the Acts are arresting. Luke, the beloved physician, was the author of the Acts as well as of the Gospel which bears his name, and in verse 1 he refers to the Gospel as the former treatise: "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach, until the day in which he was taken up." We can emphasize the word "began," for the Acts make it clear that the Lord Jesus, present with and working in and through his Church by the holy spirit, has continued doing and teaching throughout the whole course of the Gospel Age.

So prominent is the holy spirit in the Acts that the suggestion has been made that the term "Acts of the Apostles," could better be rendered, "Acts of the holy spirit." Since it is clear in the Book that the holy spirit is identified with the Lord, in one instance being called the spirit of Jesus, the Acts of the holy spirit are the Acts of Jesus. It is important to remember when reading the Acts, that when it speaks of the holy spirit, it has reference always to the Lord behind it. The thought is not that he is present by proxy through the holy spirit, as a substitute, but that the holy spirit is the medium whereby he makes his invisible presence known to us. Like the carrier wave in wireless, the holy spirit is the medium whereby the Lord can convey to us his messages and influence and power. On the evening of his betrayal, the Lord had much to tell the disciples about the holy spirit. One of the things he said about it was that when it came, "it would not speak of itself." Weymouth translates this as, "it would not speak as originating what it says." When listening to the wireless, we know that the set does not originate the message, that it is transmitting only what it receives. Similarly the Lord was informing the disciples beforehand, that when this mysterious power began to operate, they were to bear in mind that he was present with them and communicating in this way to them. During the forty days following his resurrection, the Lord, although present, could not communicate with them except by assuming human form. After Pentecost, the holy spirit which had been *with* them in the person of the Lord, was now *in* them, and a means of contact established thereby.

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Let us look now at some of the instances where this fundamental principle of the Lord's continuing presence with his people is emphasized. Acts 13:2 reads: "As they [the prophets and teachers of the Church at Antioch] ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the holy spirit said, 'Separate *me* Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.'" Here the Lord is speaking, and we should not think of this as being in the nature of a long distance message from some one far away, but as a voice from One who throughout all the days even unto the end of the Age has been "closer than breathing, nearer than hands or feet." The distance separating us is not a distance in space but in nature, a distance bridged over meantime by the medium of the holy spirit, and will be annihilated by and by when the body of our humiliation is made like unto his own glorious body.

In Acts 16:7 we have another reference. It reads: "After they [Paul and Silas] were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the spirit, of Jesus suffered them not." (The most ancient manuscripts read: "the spirit of Jesus.")

In Acts 8:29 we have the illustration of Philip being sent to the desert to meet the Ethiopian eunuch., He came upon him sitting in his chariot and reading Isaiah 53. "Then the spirit -said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot." Another instance we have in Acts 10:19, where Peter had been given the vision of the sheet let down from heaven. "While Peter thought on the vision, the spirit said unto him, Behold, three men. seek thee. . . . go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.", Thus, the holy spirit is evidence to the Church, then and now, of the Lord's continuing. presence with his people.

Nearly two thirds of the Acts have to do with the Apostle Paul's experiences. It is interesting to note how very near and very real the Lord's presence was to him. Five times, it is related in the Acts, that the Lord appeared to Paul in a vision. The first was that most memorable one of all in Acts 9:4-5. On the way to Damascus, breathing out threatening and slaughter, he was arrested by the bright vision and the voice that said, "'Saul. Saul, why persecutest thou me?

I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." Connected with this is a companion vision to Ananias recorded in Acts 9:10-12 of the same chapter: "To him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias ... go into the street which is called Straight and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus for, behold, he prayeth, and hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in." The Lord was here as in all the other instances giving to Paul a miraculous manifestation of a presence which was always with the Church though unseen. After three years had passed, Paul returned to Jerusalem, and in the temple there he had another vision. It is recorded in Acts 22:17, 18: "While I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance; and saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me." Eager to undo, if possible, the evil that he had done, Paul asks that he might remain and witness in the city where he had blasphemed the name of the Lord, only to be told, "Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles." The years rolled by, and Paul in his third missionary journey arrived at Corinth. He had just come from a discouraging time at Athens, and the Lord again appeared to him in a vision. It is recorded in Acts 18:9: "Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city."

PAUL'S DESIRE TO WITNESS AT ROME GRATIFIED IN THE LORD'S WAY

For years Paul had treasured the idea of going to Rome in person and preaching the Gospel there. Time and again he had been hindered from accomplishing his desire, but at last the Lord opened the door of opportunity. In Acts 23:11 he appeared in a vision to Paul concerning the matter: "And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome." At last Paul was to have his longed-for

experience, but in the Lord's own time and way. He was to go as a prisoner, and before he got there, he had to spend two years in prison at Caesarea Philippi and then suffer a disastrous shipwreck on the voyage to Rome.

All these illustrations abundantly confirm and emphasize the fundamental principle that the Lord himself according to his promise has been in the midst of his Church, initiating, directing, and controlling their service for him. If this had been borne in mind, it would have prevented the sad experiences caused by "channelism," from which the Church has suffered so much.

PROGRAM

THIS brings us to our second point. The Book of Acts illustrates throughout the principle that not only is the Lord in the midst of the Church, directing and controlling, but that he is doing so according to a definite program. Our Commander-in-chief has a precise plan of campaign, as we should expect, in spite of all the appearances to the contrary, which sometimes are puzzling and perplexing. The unity of spirit existing in the early Church was wonderful, but how quickly after the Apostles fell asleep did dissension and division arise, culminating in the great apostasy. In the Bible Student movement in these last days, how united and happy we once were as a people, yet how soon did we have a repetition of the history of the early Church. In the hymn, "Onward, Christian Soldiers," we sometimes have sung,

"We are not divided;
All one body we,"

then we have thought of all the different sects and parties professing to belong to the Lord's army, and we have wondered why. Now, if there was one thing the disciples noted in Jesus above others, it was his qualities as a leader. He was never at a loss. Never uncertain or hesitating. He spoke with authority and acted with authority in a way which inspired them with the utmost confidence, and this, too, even when the course he was taking seemed to be leading to failure. It is stimulating in the Acts to see that the Lord is still in command; still steering the ship of his Church; entrusting the helm to no one else. In spite of seeming failure time and again, the Church has been held to her chartered course by her Captain. As illustrated in the Book of Revelation, the voyage has been long and dangerous; the seas tempestuous, the gales almost continuous; dangers lurking everywhere, in cross currents, rocky coasts, and sunken reefs. But the Church has not foundered. Thanks to her Captain she shall be brought in safety to the heavenly Port. Soon now, we believe, the Church of God will be safe at last, the harbor past, safe in the Father's Home.

Let us notice now some evidences from our handbook in confirmation of this second fundamental principle that the Lord is directing and controlling according to a definite program. This is emphasized in our basic text, Acts 1:8: "Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." This program has been carried out to the letter. Notice that it was a three-point program. To use modern terms, we have operation No. 1, Jerusalem; operation No. 2, Judea and Samaria; operation No. 3, the world. The Book of Acts proceeds to tell us how these three operations were taken up in consecutive order. The first seven chapters tell of the consolidation of the Church at Jerusalem, the headquarters. Not till this was accomplished do we read in Acts 8:1: "And at that time there was a great persecution against the Church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria," and went everywhere preaching the Gospel. Observe that it was not the Apostles who took the initiative in launching operation No. 2. They did not say, "Well, brethren, have we not been about long enough in Jerusalem? Is it not time we were going out to Judea and Samaria?" They probably never thought of it. But the Lord was guiding, and when operation No. 1 had been completed, he removed his protecting hand, and the persecution came which carried the Gospel to fulfill operation No. 2.

A WORLD WITNESS PREPARED FOR AND LAUNCHED

Again, no sooner is operation No. 2, Judea and Samaria started, than the Lord began his preparation for operation No. 3, the world witness. The persecution which initiated the witness in Judea and Samaria was due to the activities of Saul of Tarsus. Saul, however, had been a witness to the martyrdom of Stephen, and it was a sight he could never forget. It prepared him for the vision on the Damascus road recorded in chapter 9. The Lord took him in hand, and for three years he was being prepared in the solitudes of Arabia, in readiness for operation No. 3. Meantime operation No. 2 was under way, and as Judea and Samaria became fully evangelized the door was opened to the Gentiles, as recorded in chapter 10, with the admission of Cornelius into the Church. While chapter 10 tells us of the first Gentile convert, chapter 11 tells us of the first Gentile Church. Acts 11 is one of the most important chapters in the Bible, recording the end of nearly 1500 years of exclusive favor to natural Israel. Note Acts 11:19 of this chapter: "Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, traveled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the Word to none but unto the Jews only." Observe now the bombshell in the next verse: "And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians [full blooded Gentiles], preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them."

Observe here again, that the leaders of the Church in Jerusalem had nothing whatever to do with initiating this astounding proceeding. They did not get together and say that it was time now to go on to operation No. 3, since Judea and Samaria had been fully evangelized. On the contrary Acts 11:22 would seem to indicate that they were rather perturbed about the matter, probably wondering if matters were not being carried too far. We read: "Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the Church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch." The Lord, who had initiated the launching of operation No. 3, overruled that Barnabas should be sent up on a mission to see what was happening. He was the very man for that service, and the one who had befriended Saul of Tarsus when he had returned to Jerusalem from Arabia. The next move naturally falls into line. When Barnabas saw what was happening, and the opening up of so promising a field of service, he did not go back to Jerusalem for assistance. He went for the man whom the Lord had been keeping in reserve. Can we wonder who inspired him to take the step recorded in Acts 11:25-26: "Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: and when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch." How easily and naturally the Lord shaped the course of the Church according to his own program.

Nor did the Lord merely initiate these three operations, leaving matters to carry on of themselves thereafter. In Acts 16:6, 7, we are told that Paul and Silas were forbidden of the holy spirit to preach the Word in the province of Asia, and when they assayed to go into Bithynia, the spirit of Jesus suffered them not. Instead, in Acts 16:9, we are told of the call from the man in Macedonia to go into Europe. Again in Acts 18:9, 10, when Paul went to Corinth, the Lord made known to him that he had much people in that city. How wonderful is the supervision of the Lord over the whole field of activity. Not only is the operation as a whole provided for, but the direction of the movements of his servants thereunder is under his control. He points to Europe when they would stay in Asia. He allows them to go quickly from Athens, but when they come to Corinth he says, Stay here. He does not merely know where his people are in the mass, but where they each live. He can, in Damascus, go to the house of a humble follower called Ananias and direct him to a certain street and a certain house in that city where another of his called ones is staying. In a wonderful way the Acts illustrates the truth that "the Lord knoweth them that are his." Undoubtedly, the Lord was himself steering the ship in those days. Let us believe he is doing so now, not by any human channel, but by the holy spirit operating in each believer. Each of these is, so to speak, on a private line to the Lord and should wait upon him for directions as to how he may serve him. As for special movements for special occasions, let us remember what some one has well said that "revivals are not got up; they come down."

- A. D. Kirkwood, Great Britain.

Wise Counsel from a Faithful Pastor

"Stand, fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke, of bondage," - Gal. 5:1.

WHY NOT abandon all human systems and confessions, now used for tying men's tongues and consciences, and let each other "stand free to study God's Word untrammelled, and to build, each for himself, such a creed as he shall find authorized in God's Word; adding to his creed, or subtracting therefrom continually, as he continues to grow in grace and in knowledge and in love of God? This is the attitude which God designed; this is the liberty wherewith Christ makes us all free.

Why surrender our liberties and enslave our consciences and tongues to a sect, or the decisions of majorities in sects? If all of God's children were really free, thus, it would not be long before they would be at perfect oneness of heart and nearly at one in faith and work-the only true union.

We exhort all God's true Church -- the one Church, which includes all consecrated believers to awake to the principles of the Reformation, to a recognition of the right of individual judgment upon religious questions. Demand Scriptural proofs for all you are asked to believe; take neither the decisions of Rome, nor those of Westminster; nor those of any smaller councils or synods, as final settlements of the question, "What is truth?" And be sure that you believe and confess nothing that you, do not understand fully' and clearly. To subscribe to, or confess, what you do not understand, and therefore cannot truly believe, is solemn lying in the presence of God and witnesses, no matter if it be true that others, by the hundred, have done the same before you.

Require of all who shall attempt to teach in the name of the Lord, the *exact words* of the Lord or the Apostle which they, claim support their teaching. Get the chapter and verse and look the matter up for yourselves, critically, examining the text and the context. Weigh and test every item of teaching which you receive as your faith, regardless of how much you esteem the person who presents it. We know that no fellow-mortal is infallible, and, that His Word is the only standard by which God wishes to square and measure and build up our faith.

The foregoing paragraphs, as many of our readers will have recognized, are condensed from the *Reprints*, pages R1168 and R1136. They contain wise counsel indeed, from a pastor who surely was faithful. It is in agreement therewith that the ministry of the Pastoral . Bible Institute, both by the printed page and by the spoken word, has been rendered. (See the special notices in reference to the Editorial Committee and the Pilgrim Service, which regularly appear on Page 2 of this journal.) May we who have sought to follow) this wise and faithful counsel "through the years" -- "through evil report and good report" -- be granted grace sufficient to continue therein; careful that, though others may count us" deceivers, especially in our handling of the Word, we may yet remain true-scrupulously careful to maintain integrity of Heart and life, and in our teaching, giving no cause for stumbling-no offense in anything, that our ministry, (the ministry of the Gospel) be not exposed to justifiable reproach. For we are not as many, which corrupt the Word of God,, but as out of a heart of transparent sincerity-yes, as under prompting from God and in his presence, we write and speak in Christ. - 2 Cor. 6:8; 4:2; 6:3; 2:17.

- P. L. Read.

The Question Box

"A new commandment. I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." - John 13:34

Question:

In what sense was this commandment new?

Answer:

It was not new in the sense that a command to love had never before been given. Such a commandment "was written in the very constitution of Adam and Eve." (See *Scripture Studies*, Vol. VI, page F350.) Moreover, love to one's neighbor is enjoined in the Old Testament. (Lev. 19:18.) But the law of love which Jesus here gave was new in two senses: (1) It was to be a love *for one another*, and, (2) they were to love one another *as Jesus had loved them*. Let us briefly consider his commandment from these two points of view.

1. They were to love one another.

The love here enjoined was not a love which was to apply to the entire human race (as in the case of the law of love written in the constitution of the first man), nor was it to be especially applicable to the members of the nation of Israel, as might be said of the law of love stated in Leviticus. It was given (not to all men, nor yet to Israel, but) to the footstep followers of the Master. It was to embrace them all, but only them. Moreover the earlier laws of love were not thereby repealed, even for them. This constitutes an additional obligation.

This commandment, therefore, was new in that it was to commence from a new center, even from Jesus himself; and was to embrace an entirely new circle -the Church. It would thus be suited to new circumstances. The Church which is his Body was about to be founded, and love was to be the mighty influence animating its members, the powerful bond uniting the members of that Body to each other and to Jesus, their Head. His Body-members, united to each other in love, were to be his love bearers to the world. To the world the constant love which would be seen in the relationship of the members of the Church to each other would be taken as a proof of their discipleship. "By *this* shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love *one to another*." - *Verse 35*.

2. They were to love one another "as I [Jesus], have loved, you."

Scholars tell us that the Greek word here translated "as" means more than a simple comparison; it indicates a conformity, and characterizes the mutual love of Christians as *being of the same nature as that which unites Jesus to his footstep followers*, each returning to his brother the love with which Jesus loves him.

When our Lord gave them this new commandment he was within a few hours of his death. His love for them, which had always been strong and unremitting, had never been greater. "Having loved his own which, were in the world, he loved them *unto the end*." (Verse 1.) If, therefore, their love was to be in conformity with his, it would mean a willingness on their part to suffer for

their brethren similarly, even unto death, and this conclusion is actually drawn by St. John in his first epistle. There, in chapter 3, verse 16, he says: 'Because he laid down his life for us, we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren..'"

There is an instructive paragraph on this question from the pen of Brother Russell in *Reprints*, page R4549. We quote: "The 'New Commandment' represents a higher law than was given to the Jew under the Law Covenant,; hence higher also than will be given to Israel and mankind under the New Covenant. The New Commandment mentioned by our Lord is not the Father's commandment at all, but the command of our Head, our Teacher, to all those who have entered the school of Christ and who are hoping to become 'members' of the Anointed One -- members of the Mediator, Prophet, Priest, and King of the new dispensation. Justice could not give this, new command; all that justice could command is expressed in the law given to Israel, namely, supreme love of God and love for the neighbor as for one's self. This new commandment which the Lord gave applies only to the Church of this Gospel Age. In effect it is this: If you would be my disciples, if you would share my throne and glory and immortality, you must have my spirit. You must do more than keep the Law. You must be more than just. You must be self sacrificing. If you would share my glory, I command and direct that you love one another as I have loved you. (John 15:12.) I have loved you to the extent of laying down my life for you sacrificially. You must have this same spirit and cast in your lot with me in self sacrifice, or you cannot be my disciples, nor share my glory, and associate in my work as the Mediator for the blessing of Israel and mankind. Whosoever will be ray disciple must take up his cross; and follow me, that where I am there shall my disciple be. Surely no one can doubt the Savior's meaning-my disciples must die with me."

Our Lord's new commandment was most loyally obeyed. And the flame of this entirely new affection on earth, streaming forth from the holy fires burning: in the early Church, proved a most mighty influence in the spread of the Gospel. And we, too, are determined, are we not, that our fellowship shall be similarly attested; that men shall be constrained to say of us, as of them: "See how these Christians love one another!"

- P. L. Read.

"O for a heart more like my God,
From imperfections free;
A heart conformed unto Thy Word,
And plasing, Lord, to Thee.
A heart in ev'ry thought renewd,
And full of love divine,
Perfect and right, and pure, and good,
A copy, Lord, of Thine."

Recently Deceased

Br. James H. Cole, Buena Park, Cal. - (Oct.)
Sr. Effie Gilber, Santee, Cal. - (March)
Sr. R. W. Godfrey, Roanoke, Va. - (Oct)
Sr. Mary Lysek, Magnolia Springs, Ala. - (Oct.)
Br. M. Matthews, Dayton, Ohio - (Oct.)
Br. Robert Nairn, Santa Cruz, Cal. - (Oct.)
Sr. Grace Swartz, Columbus, Ohio - (Sept.)